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ADDRESS ON EFFECTIVE VOTING.

By MISS CATHERINE HELEN SPENCE.

Among the many congresses held in Chicago this year, there has been one which has led to definite action, and focused into one point the discontent of the many and the aspirations of the few. A league has been formed for active propagandism by the advocates of proportional representation—what I call effective voting. It is not with me a thing of today or of last year. For thirty-two years I have written on this subject, and if any man had come forward to do that I am doing now I would have loyally helped him; I should have rejoiced in his successes and sympathized in his disappointments.

It is said that many of us women spend our lives in waiting for the coming man, who often does not come at all, and sometimes when he does come she might have done better without him. I have waited long enough for the coming man, and I as a single woman have had to take up lecturing myself, and, in point of fact, I have done fairly well, both with life and with lecturing. When I have been asked if I do not wish that I were a man, I have replied no, not much. I feel like the Jewesses who, when the men publicly thanked God because He had made them men and not women, thanked the Eternal Father because He had made them according to His pleasure. When I have been further pressed and asked if I did not wish I were a man for the sake of the cause of proportional representation, I have replied that I am stronger in and for that cause as a woman than I would be as a man, because I have no political ax to grind. I have not even a vote. So I can occupy the platform of absolute disinterestedness when I plead that the men who are supposed or presumed to represent me should be equitably represented themselves. This can only be done in your America by escaping from the district lines for congressional and state elections, and from the ward system in municipalities.

Truth is greater than falsehood, and wisdom stronger than folly; and if we do not by our political machinery exclude the intelligent and the wise from our federal, state and municipal councils, these would leaven society, and make themselves felt in every department, especially in the political. But if from defective machinery or other causes, the representation is not really equal, and intelligent and conscientious minorities are shut out, the whole balance is overthrown, and party exercises a mischievous influence. Now some minorities believe that their particular reform will cure all evils. The woman suffragists fancy that if they have votes and use them they will moralize politics. Will they? As soon as it is seen that the earnest, conscientious women have votes and use them, will not the party politicians, who are so eager to get ignorant aliens put on the rolls that they may use their votes for party victory, will not these induce all the women whom they could command, cajole or corrupt, to register as voters, and the result is that the votes for these interested men will be swelled by the votes of these women, and the
adverse majority would be only the larger. Therefore, I have said all along that the woman's suffrage and proportional representation should go together, or the first will be a mere delusion.

The prohibition party believes and declares that universal abstinence from alcohol in every shape will put an end to poverty. Will it do so? It is a question whether the whisky power would not be greater if the workmen could live on less and waste less. If he became a vegetarian and could maintain his family and himself for less money, unless economic conditions are altered, the result would be that wages would fall below their present level, and that the profits of capital and monopoly would be greater. It is partly because the English workman considers beer a necessary of life that his wages are at a higher level than on the Continent of Europe, and the temperate and vegetarian peoples of India and China are the worst paid laborers in the world. I heard a lady at the Suffrage Congress say to and exhort all good men to come to the polls and vote, and she asserted that it was on account of their criminal abstention that politics were so corrupt. But if all the good men in America were to exercise the suffrage privilege, unless we get rid of the present party system, that is built on the duel between two parties, and two parties only in your separated districts, they might benefit themselves by doing the duty of citizens, but they would not moralize politics, for this reason, that if one hundred Democrats voted, and one hundred Republicans voted also, they would not change the situation. A few wavering and corruptible voters could turn the scale, and thus virtually carry the district.

I believe I should have a vote, and expect in time to have it, but it would be little pleasure to me unless I can make it effective for the return of one man of whom I approve, without neutralizing the vote of any man who differs from me, or wasting the vote of anyone who agrees with me. It is by the exchange of the competitive for the cooperative spirit in politics that they can be sweetened, elevated and moralized, and by the method of voting which I shall show you as an object lesson, you will see that each vote has equal weight, and that all are effective. It is so simple that a child of eight years of age by merely reading the "Instructions to Voters" printed on the back of the ticket or ballot can tell the result. As you see by the ticket or ballot, all you have to do is to put "1" to the name of the candidate you prefer over all others, "2" to the name of the one next in preference, "3" to the next, and so on. So then if the candidate you prefer has too many votes or too few votes, your vote is passed on accordingly to the next, and is used and not wasted. Thus is the simple vote of Thomas Hare and John Stuart Mill apprehended by a child. The quota needed by any one candidate for his return is found by dividing the whole number of votes polled in the electoral district by the number of representatives needed. In the election for six poets to fill six vacant seats on Parnassus beside Apollo and the muses, the sixth part of this assembly who vote are entitled to carry in one, and not that half plus one should carry in all six, leaving the half minus one without any. This last is stupid injustice, but effective voting is justice, common sense and arithmetic.

All reformers should turn their eyes toward such methods of representation as would be just to the many and just to the few. At present outside parties are either lamentably
weak or mischievously strong. They are powerless when they try to carry in an honest representation of their own opinions; they are strong when they sit on the fence and offer their votes to that one who offers the most advantageous terms. To give them their fair share of power, no more and no less, is the aim of effective voting.

The old parties of Republicans and Democrats have each a noble record and some grand traditions; but in this breathing, suffering world, we can not live on a record or grow by mere tradition. Why shall the large, earnest minority of the Prohibitionists not have real representation? and if the Populists have a sixth part of the votes in a six-member district, or an eighth part in an eight-member electorate, why should they not carry in their preferred disciple as an apostle into the representative body? It is the same with the Socialists and with the Single Taxers. So long as all these are struggling for platform and their platform alone, the ticket is prepared by the caucus leaders, and the red-eyed corporations smile; but if all of these combined to demand equitable representation for all—including the Republican and the Democratic parties themselves—their strength would be irresistible, because the honest and conscientious Republican and Democrat, who submit to machine politics as a necessity, would be glad of a method which assures to the real majority a real ascendancy, and to all minorities equitable representation.

Everywhere since I came to Chicago I have met with earnest reformers who desire to improve existing administrations of public matters, especially along the lines of poor laws and child saving. I find, that in Australia we have secured benefits which are not now in America. This is not because the Australians are more wise and more just than the Americans, but because you are thwarted and hampered by what you call "politics," which in that sense does not exist in Australia at all.

The taking of "the children of the state," as we call them, the dependent and destitute children, out of institutions, and placing them in foster homes to lead a natural life, both for the advantage of the child and the saving of public money, is opposed here by the politicians who want the patronage of institutions and who would turn out a good administrator, like the superintendent of your great Illinois Deaf and Dumb School, who really founded the institution, to put a Democrat in his place. In our changes of ministry, the only people who go out and who come in are the six responsible cabinet ministers themselves. The civil service has such security that even occasional vacancies must be filled up according to regulation, and the "outs" can not promise places to their adherents if they get in, nor are the present office-holders tempted to become active electioneering agents in order to retain the ministry, which alone can keep them in their places.

As for our municipal elections we only vote for mayor, councilors and auditors, and the political question does not interfere with these. It is character and business ability that are needed. Now, by your ward politics, by which the intelligent minorities are prevented from combining, your great cities are taxed heavily for work badly done or not done at all. Last week, within a stone's throw of the Windsor Park Railway Station, surrounded by great hotels having thousands of inmates, a dead horse lay for six days under an
August sun, seen and smelled by every one Vain were repeated remonstrances to the police; and I was told that the most effective means in England and in Australia, writing to the newspapers, would be useless here.

Verily, you Americans are the most much-enduring people in the world. Professor Bryce says the difficulty of getting enfranchised from "machine politics" is caused by the essential conservatism of the American people. Social freedom you have, and the whole atmosphere is sweet with it; but this seems to blind you to the slavery of the party machine in politics, and to the neglect of your city governments to do the work you are heavily taxed for. No city in Europe or in Australia would endure what citizens in Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia submit to with nothing but private and ineffectual grumbling And let no one say that it is on account of the foreign element in these great cities that municipal administration is so corrupt. Who uses this foreign element? Who pays the money and who profits by the bargain? Who is eager to put the ignorant alien on the roll? Americans, to be sure. Americans who prefer the triumph of party to the good of state. Who employ these ignorant voters and votes as a means by which to win the stakes? When I heard in the Congress on Civil Government the comparison of the parties to gamblers playing for high stakes, I felt tempted to interpolate, "and these stakes are not their own, but the money paid by the citizens for honest work, and not for dishonest gambling."

Thus all that is faulty and mischievous in your American institutions depends on your majority or plurality system of representation, which has been inherited from your English forefathers.

I do not know if you in America suffer as much from merely local interests in political matters as we do in Australia and in Canada. The large electoral district will retain much that is good in local representation, and will do away with much that is belittling and mischievous.

You may say that this is a large reform, that it demands besides a change in the method of voting, a reconstruction of districts so as to allow quota representation room to play. I never said that it is a small reform. I have not given my life to tinkering at old methods, old and imperfect, but for the sake of radically changing them; and I believe that if the collective conscience of America is fairly aroused, it will be strong enough to affect this indispensable reform. The Proportional Representation League is intensely interested and in earnest, and means to arouse this collective conscience, not merely to protect, but to act and to conquer.

Your parties are Republican and Democrat. Our parties in Australia have advanced beyond yours and are actually the parties of capitalists and laborers. It was when I first saw these parties organized for offensive and defensive war that I abandoned the part of an occasional writer for that of public lecturer on any platform open to me. I traveled all over my own province of South Australia, and addressed between fifty and sixty public meetings with ballot papers with the names of well-known political men as candidates.
The problem of our day is to devise some means of reconciling the claims of capital and labor, and I felt assured that if these were pitted against each other in every electoral district in Australia as enemies, they would be embittered against each other, and it would become more and more difficult to harmonize their actions. It is by the admission of the best men of both parties, and also of representatives of outside parties into our legislature, that some modus vivendi may be found.

And there is an object lesson for America to be read and studied in Australia now. We are passing through a severe financial crisis, brought on by two main causes; first, the collapse of the land boom, which was always and everywhere a most mischievous thing, and, second, the steady fall in the price of our products. Not to the depreciation of silver; silver has not depreciated. It buys as much of everything as we want to buy now as it ever did. But it is owing to the appreciation of gold, which makes our public and private indebtedness so much heavier. All the Australian colonies have this financial difficulty, but in the two colonies, New Zealand and South Australia, which have had the courage to impose direct taxation, and, above all, which have taxed land values, excluding improvements, we see a wonderful difference for the better as compared with New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, which will not adopt such methods, but which seek to balance the revenue to the expenditures by increase of customs duties. New Zealand is prosperous and has a surplus revenue. South Australia has been deeply implicated in the misfortunes of the adjacent colonies, and she depends so much on the large silver mines which are close to her border and largely owned by her people, though they are actually situated in New South Wales. So the silver question is trying her greatly. But still she stands, and is increasing her direct taxation and decreasing her indirect. This plainly proves that a change in economic methods differentiates between peoples otherwise equally circumstanced.

I am sometimes accused of having only one idea, that of proportional representation; but I have really so many ideas that it is hard for me to keep to my text, as at present. The reason why I insist so much on a change in electoral methods is that I believe a real representation of the whole people, and not of a mere segment of the people, is the key to unlock the doors for all other reforms. First secure that the people are equitably represented, and then see what earnest, conscientious men can do. Better men will come forward, and more citizens will exercise their right of suffrage, under better circumstances.

I could give whole columns of figures to show how the present method leaves half the citizens unrepresented, and how a great many vote for the successful candidate because he is the only offered. But I do not consider the figures necessary, as the fact is tacitly acknowledged. I shall proceed to give a practical lesson. The first objection brought forward is that the new method is too difficult for the average voter, and the second that it is too difficult for the average poll clerk. I shall first make you vote, and then make you count. Imagine you are a subscriber to a circulating library, and you have a right to one book. You send your list, your book ballot, by a messenger, of six books you would prefer, named in the order of your preference. But you do not expect him to bring you more than one book, and that one to be the nearest your first choice
that can be obtained. It is the same way in an election. You mark your preference, and your vote will be effective in the return of the first man on your list who needs your vote and can use it.

(Ballot papers are then handed around among the audience, and eighty-two ballot papers are filled up.)

Now, in order to ascertain the quota, the number of eighty-two was divided by six, the number of seats to be filled by the poets previously mentioned, the names of the candidates being given further on. This division gives a quota of thirteen, with a remainder of four. There was one void vote, six names having been marked with a cross, which indicated no preference, and this reduced the remainder to three. The names of the candidates were as follows: Browning, Bryant, Burns, Byron, Longfellow, Lowell, Moore, Scott, Shelly, Tennyson, Whitman, Whittier, Wordsworth.

(After the ballot papers were received, thirteen members of the audience stepped forward to take the votes, according to the figure "1" denoting first choice on each ballot. Longfellow was the most popular candidate, and has received thirteen votes, his full quota, before the count has been more than two-thirds taken. All subsequent "1" votes for Longfellow were then transferred to the man marked "2" on each voter's paper, which varied according to the voter's choice. There were sufficient of such for Tennyson to make up his quota of thirteen, and he also was returned, and all subsequent 2's were given to the one marked "3." At this stage of the proceedings all the votes had been counted once, and only two out of the six were returned by full quota. We, therefore, had to go to the less popular poets, who had no chance of making up thirteen votes. One poet had a single vote that was given to "2" on the ballot paper; another had three dealt out in the same way, unless, as often happened, the second or third vote had been given to Tennyson or to Longfellow, who did not need it at all, or to the candidate eliminated or out of the contest.)

Thus we worked up all the votes of the unsuccessful candidates until we made up six full quotas of thirteen, and had three ballots over. This was given as a specimen of effective voting. Those who took the votes and those who looked on and listened could see that no vote was wasted. The same principle will apply to 820, to 8,200, or to 82,000 votes, and it would be impossible for any party to obtain a greater share of the representatives than their proportion of the votes entitled them to have. Here you will notice, too, that nobody voted against anybody, but simply indicated what he wanted done with his vote in every possible contingency.

Where party spirit is strong the partisan will vote the party ticket, as he will select from the list of candidates those of his own views. But in a wider field, and in a larger list than is used at present, character, ability and integrity will receive both first and contingent votes. Even though "outsiders" can not carry in a candidate of their own, still they can, by their contingent votes, greatly modify the representation. By the present method many votes are simply lost, and often, by this means, the most objectional (to the voter) of the parties is returned.
In political matters, as in all other things, let us seek righteousness and justice, and many other good things will be added unto us.