

This Century-Old Satire Perfectly Exposes a Continuing Double Standard for Male Voters

by Maureen Shaw



Men are too emotional to vote."

When was the last time you heard that critique? Indeed, in an era plagued by the continuing "war on women" and the ridiculous assertion that women should stick to online

dating rather than the electoral college, it's nice to see men subjected to the same ridicule, for a change.

But while online media has been known to flip the script in order to expose double standards, this satire was written over one hundred years ago. It's telling that after more than a century of advocacy on the part of the women's suffrage movement, the same types of stereotypes that were lampooned by our feminist foremothers continue to hinder equality movements today.

This Election Day, restrictive voter ID laws notwithstanding, we all have a constitutional right to

cast our ballots. But, historically this wasn't always the case; blacks, non-property holders and women were kept away from the polls for years.

The women's suffrage movement took decades, with women championing both sides of the argument. It may be hard to believe, but the founder and leader of the National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage was a woman, Josephine Dodge.

To demonstrate the association's hard line against suffrage, Dodge published "Some Reasons Why We Oppose Votes For Women" in 1894, which included such gems as, "Because the ballot has not proved a cure-all for existing evils with men, and we find no reason to assume that it would be more effectual with women," and "Because the woman suffrage movement is a backward step in the progress of civilization."

Some Reasons Why We Oppose Votes for Women

Because the basis of government is force—its stability rests upon its physical power to enforce its laws; therefore it is inexpedient to give the vote to women. Immunity from service in executing the law would make most women irresponsible voters.

Because the suffrage is not a question of right or of justice, but of policy and expediency; and if there is no question of right or of justice, there is no case for woman suffrage.

BECAUSE IT IS THE DEMAND OF A MINORITY OF WOMEN, AND THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST IT.

Because it means simply doubling the vote, and especially the undesirable and corrupt vote of our large cities.

Because the great advance of women in the last century—moral, intellectual and economic—has been made without the vote; which goes to prove that it is not needed for their further advancement along the same lines.

Because women now stand outside of politics, and therefore are free to appeal to any party in matters of education, charity and reform.

Because the ballot has not proved a cure-all for existing evils with men, and we find no reason to assume that it would be more effectual with women.

Because the woman suffrage movement is a backward step in the progress of civilization, in that it seeks to efface natural differentiation of function, and to produce identity, instead of division of labor.

Because in Colorado after a test of seventeen years the results show no gain in public and political morals over male suffrage States, and the necessary increase in the cost of elections which is already a huge burden upon the taxpayer, is unjustified.

Because our present duties fill up the whole measure of our time and ability, and are such as none but ourselves can perform. Our appreciation of their importance requires us to protest against all efforts to infringe upon our rights by imposing upon us those obligations which cannot be separated from suffrage, but which, as we think, cannot be performed by us without the sacrifice of the highest interests of our families and of society.

Because it is our fathers, brothers, husbands and sons who represent us at the ballot-box. Our fathers and our brothers love us; our husbands are our choice, and one with us; our sons are what WE MAKE THEM. We are content that they represent US in the corn-field, on the battle-field, and at the ballot-box, and we THEM in the school-room, at the fireside, and at the cradle, believing our representation even at the ballot-box to be thus more full and impartial than it would be were the views of the few who wish suffrage adopted, contrary to the judgment of the many.

We do, therefore, respectfully protest against the proposed Amendment to establish "woman suffrage" in our State. We believe that political equality will deprive us of special privileges hitherto accorded to us by law.

Our association has been formed for the purpose of conducting a purely educational campaign. If you are in sympathy with this aim and believe as we do in the righteousness of our cause, will you not send your name to us and pass our appeal on to some one else?

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSED TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE,

35 West 39th St., New York City.

Luckily for future generations of women, Dodge wasn't the only woman with a strong opinion and a capacity for publishing. Enter Alice Duer Miller, journalist and activist, who used her pen as a mighty satirical sword. Years after Dodge published her document espousing political inequality, Miller wrote and circulated a brilliant response in 1915 titled, "Why We Oppose Votes for Men":

1. Because man's place is in the army.
2. Because no really manly man wants to settle any question otherwise than by fighting about it.
3. Because if men should adopt peaceable methods women will no longer look up to them

4. Because men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphere and interest themselves in other matters than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.
5. Because men are too emotional to vote. Their conduct at baseball games and political conventions shows this, while their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them peculiarly unfit for the task of government.

Maureen Shaw is a contributor to Identities Mic and the founder of sherights.com. Her writing has appeared on the Huffington Post, Feministing, Jezebel, Fem2.0 and more.



Charles Dana Gibson

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- Alice Duer Miller, 1915