



G. W. S. A.

CONSTITUTION
AND
RULES

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CONSTITUTION
AND
RULES

OF THE

Canadian Women's Suffrage
Association

INAUGURATED AT A PUBLIC CONVERSAZIONE

HELD IN THE

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER OF TORONTO

ON 9th MARCH, 1883.

“To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.”—ISAIAH lviii., 6.

“As liberty to exercise the faculties is the first condition of individual life, the liberty of each, limited only by the like liberty of all, must be the first condition of social life.”

HERBERT SPENCER in “Social Statics,” page 217.

CONSTITUTION

AND
RULES

Canadian Woman's Suffrage
Association

INCORPORATED AT A PUBLIC COMPASSION

1884

CITY OF TORONTO

ON SEPTEMBER 1884

To those the text of which is printed in the paper before you is the
the original copy of the Constitution of the Association.

As there is no other copy of the Constitution of the Association in
the hands of any person, the text of the Constitution of the Association
is hereby printed in this form.

It is hereby printed in this form.

Opinion in favor of the present system, which entirely subordinates the weaker sex to the stronger, rests upon theory only; for there never has been trial made of any other; so that experience, in the sense in which it is vulgarly opposed to theory, cannot be pretended to have pronounced any verdict.

JOHN STUART MILL.

ARTICLE I.—The name of the Association shall be, “The Canadian Women’s Suffrage Association.”

No human laws are of any validity if contrary to the laws of nature; and such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority mediately or immediately from this original.

BLACKSTONE.

It seems a first principle—an axiom : that every householder or taxpayer should have a voice in electing those who spend the money we pay, including as this does, interests the most vital to a human being.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

ARTICLE II.—The object of the Association is, to obtain for women the Municipal and Parliamentary Franchise, on the same conditions as those on which these are, or may be, granted to men.

So far from the truth is the reiterated statement of certain honorable M. P's. that "women do not desire the franchise," that in my large experience I have scarcely ever known a woman, possessed of ordinary common sense, and who had lived some years alone in the world, who did not earnestly wish for it.

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

I consider it most unjust and invidious that women, who are ratepayers, should be denied the franchise.

LADY LOUISA GOLDSMID.

One thing we may be certain of—that what is contrary to women's nature to do, they will never be made to do by simply giving their nature free play. What they can do, but not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from.

JOHN STUART MILL.

ARTICLE III.—The officers of this Association, to be elected annually, shall be, a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of not less than twelve members. The Executive Committee shall have power to add to its number, or fill up vacancies which may occur. Three shall constitute a quorum.

Derived, as it is, directly from the Divine will, and underlying, as it does, the right organization of society, the law of equal freedom is of higher authority than all other laws. The Creative purpose demands that everything shall be subordinated to it. Institutions and social forms must just marshal themselves as it commands. It dates from creation ; they are of yesterday.

HERBERT SPENCER.

In the administration of a State, neither a woman as a woman, nor a man as a man, has any special function, but the gifts of nature are equally diffused in both sexes; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, and in all of them a woman is only a weaker man.

PLATO "Republic" II, 280.

ARTICLE IV.—The fee for membership shall be one dollar per annum, payable on admission, and no member shall be eligible for office, or entitled to vote at any election of officers until the annual fee is paid. The financial year shall end 1st March.

As the usages of mankind vary so much, let us hear how it is to be shown that the sphere we assign to woman is the true one—that the limits we have set to female activity are just the proper limits. Let us hear why on this one point of our social policy we are exactly right, whilst we are wrong in so many others.

HERBERT SPENCER.

The first condition is that citizenship shall be voluntary; the second, that it shall confer equal privileges (or rights). We may consider civilization as a progress towards that constitution of man and society required for the complete manifestation of everyone's individuality

HERBERT SPENCER.

ARTICLE V.—The regular meetings of this Association shall be held on the second Thursday of each month at eight o'clock P.M.

By life I everywhere mean the true idea of life, or that most general form under which life manifests itself to us, which includes all other forms. This I have stated to be the tendency to individuation; and the degrees or intensities of life to consist in the progressive realizations of this tendency.

COLERIDGE.

The right to share in the choice of those who are to exercise a public trust, is altogether a distinct thing from that of competing for the trust itself. If no one could vote for a member of Parliament who was not fit to be a candidate, the government would be a narrow oligarchy indeed.

JOHN STUART MILL.

7

ARTICLE VI.—To become a member it shall be necessary to be proposed by a member and accepted by a majority of the Executive Committee, and by a majority of those present at a subsequent monthly meeting of the Association.

7

In the case of election to public trusts, it is the business of constitutional law to surround the right of suffrage with all needful securities and limitations; but whatever securities are sufficient in the case of the male sex, no others need be required in the case of women.

JOHN STUART MILL.

Equity knows no difference of sex. In its vocabulary the word man must be understood in a general and not in a specific sense. The law of equal freedom manifestly applies to the whole race—female as well as male.

HERBERT SPENCER.

ARTICLE VII.—A majority of the Association shall have the right to elect as honorary members any persons proposed by the Executive.

Objections to the equal freedom of woman on the ground of her inferiority amount to this—that because woman has weaker faculties than man, she ought not to have like liberty to exercise the faculties she has.

HERBERT SPENCER.

The majority of women of any class are not likely to differ in political opinion from the men of the same class, unless the question be one in which the interests of women, as such, are in some way involved, and if they are so, women require the suffrage, as their guarantee of just and equal consideration.

JOHN STUART MILL.

ARTICLE VIII. — The Annual meeting shall be held on the second Thursday in March, to receive the report, the statement of accounts, to elect officers, and to transact any other business which may arise.

It is as reasonable to suppose that a family is as wisely governed and adequately cared for which has only a master and no mistress, as to believe that the country has all its wants understood and provided for in the absence of the feminine element from its legislation. The fact that women are different from men affords the strongest argument in favor of their equal exercise of the franchise.

FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL.

I am every year more convinced of the value that the granting of this Parliamentary suffrage would be not only to women, but to men as well. Everything that is now being done to enlarge the sphere of women's lives needs that help which woman's possession of the franchise would afford. The removal of her electoral disabilities would be a great good: it would foster public spirit and a sense of public duty in women.

MRS. M. G. FAWCETT.

ARTICLE IX.—At the request of ten members the Secretary shall call a special meeting. At such meeting no subjects shall be discussed but those mentioned on the notice summoning it.

I entirely sympathise with your wish that the franchise should be extended to women

MRS. RICHMOND RITCHIE (Miss Thackeray.)

It is because it seems to me that to give women the franchise would be a very great step towards the uplifting of the whole sex, that I take special interest in it.

ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON, M.D.

The inequality of rights between men and women has no other source, than the law of the strongest.

JOHN STUART MILL.

ARTICLE X.—No special meeting of this Association shall be called without three days' notice having been given.

What, when closely examined, is this notion that the rights of women are not equal with the rights of men? Simply an evanescent form of the theory that women have no souls.

HERBERT SPENCER.

A future belief that subordination of sex is inequitable, is clearly prophesied by the change civilization is working in men's sentiments.

HERBERT SPENCER.

ARTICLE XI.—No article of the Constitution shall be altered except at the monthly meeting, and after a month's notice of such proposed alteration has been given.

Command is a blight to the affections. Whatever of refinement—whatsoever of beauty—whatsoever of poetry there is in the passion that unites the sexes, withers up and dies in the cold atmosphere of authority.

HERBERT SPENCER.

Not encroachment but mutual self-sacrifice, born of mutual love, will yet be the ruling principle. There is nothing Utopian in this. We may already trace the beginnings of it. Such an attitude is not uncommonly maintained in the dealings of honourable men with each other; and, if so, why should it not exist between the sexes?

HERBERT SPENCER.

ARTICLE XII.—No pamphlet, circular, or letter, original or selected, shall be put forth to the public by any member, apparently in the name, or with the authority of this Association, until the same has been submitted to, and approved by, any three members of the the Executive Committee, who may be appointed for that purpose.

To be willing to exercise rule in marriages destroys genuine love, for it takes away its freedom, thus also its delight; the delight of exercising rule which succeeds in its place, begets disagreements, sets minds at enmity, and causes evils to take root according to the quality of dominion on the one part, and the quality of servitude on the other.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG (A C 10173).

Sentences selected from the addresses given at the Inaugural Conversazione of this Association in the City Council-Chamber of Toronto, on the evening of 9th March, 1883—quoted in the order in which they were given.

As there are many women in our land who hold property and pay taxes that ought not to be denied the franchise ; and more than that, the justice of their claim is not denied by gentlemen. They admit we have the right and need only ask for it in order to get it. Hon Premier Mowat said so in his Vaughan speech. We do ask for it. We are here for that purpose.

MRS. D. MCEWAN, President.

We ask to have the franchise extended to our properly qualified women, because it is just. Justice is the heart-principle of every true Canadian ; and every form of injustice removed from us as a nation, is a good gained for all our people. We ask this privilege, not as a selfish benefit, but so that whatever of good is in us may have an ever increasing influence on the upward and onward development of the people.

MISS JENNIE FOULDS, Secretary.

I have had this question in my mind a good deal for some time past, and the longer I ponder it the deeper the impression grows that what is asked is simple right and justice.

Ex-Alderman JOHN HALLAM.

I am decidedly in favor of extending the franchise to women, subject to the same qualifications demanded of males, for all election purposes. I see no reason why it should be withheld, since ladies possess as high an order of intelligence as the sterner sex.

ALDERMAN BAXTER.

I do not feel called upon to commit myself in my official capacity, yet personally I do not know any good reason why ladies should not have a voice in municipal and parliamentary affairs. Their intelligence on many of the problems presented

to public men is equal, and in some respects superior, to that of the male sex.

MAYOR BOSWELL.

The demand now being made is not to serve any visionary purpose. The duties to herself and to society which woman could perform by the use of the ballot are plain and important. The question of education, of city management with regard to the laws protecting health, and the position of women in other respects, are surely subjects with which she is peculiarly fitted to deal.

MRS. S. A. CURZON.

The withholding of the "right" amounts to a "wrong."

W. BURGESS.

The question interests nearly all temperance workers. I beg leave to read you a series of selections from speeches by well-known gentlemen at the recent meetings of the Dominion Alliance.

THOMAS BENGOUGH.

As well might we enact that a woman shall not be allowed to hold or acquire property at all, as embody in our laws the principle that a woman, simply because she is a woman, shall not have "right" to those responsibilities of a governmental kind which we have chosen to base upon the acquirement or inheritance of property or income. On this logical basis we rest in support of our claim for the enfranchisement of women, and we do not hesitate to call our position impregnable.

JAMES L. FOULDS.

It is a necessity of the times we live in that women should cultivate their sympathies in a wider field than they have been accustomed to do. The extension of the franchise would prove a powerful means to that end.

MRS. FRAY, Toledo.

I have always thought very highly of the intellect and ability of all my fellow men, and it is only by a very gradual and painful process (which I will endeavour to record) that I have been reduced (?) to a perception of equal intellect in my "fellow beings"—women. But I *have* come to that at last.

J. W. BENGOUGH, Cartoonist and Editor *Grip*.

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