

ACTIVITY: Selections & Questions – Women's Suffrage

The North Carolina Convention of the National Suffrage Association Annual Report, 1919, Gertrude Weil papers, PC.1488, State Archives of N.C. [Note: typos in the original have been corrected.]

Our second – educational – aim has been directed at preparing the women of the State for an intelligent, conscientious exercise of the franchise right when it became ours. To this end we have offered a fourfold program: (1) Program on Americanization: Studies of the People and Movements that are building up the American Nation, published by the University Extension Bureau; (2) Study Course in Citizenship for Women, published by the University Extension Bureau; (3) a series of six papers for loan to leagues, written by members of the Greensboro League; and (4) a list of suggested topics for public addresses as scheduled by the Raleigh Woman's Clubs.

As we take stock of our present status we find that though the ballot is almost within our grasp there is still much to be done, though the details of our program may differ somewhat from those of last year. Month by month the list of ratifications lengthens. We must make sure that our own Legislature ratifies, even though it be after the necessary 36 States have done so. In education we still have a big problem before us. Let us push on vigorously in our effort to prepare our women to become valuable and desirable VOTING citizens. Our responsibility is with ALL the women of the State, not merely the avowed suffragists. The others must also be impressed with their responsibility to use the ballot when it becomes theirs and to use it intelligently. The task is so big that we must see every agency and resource available - the suffrage league, the woman's club, the public dinner, the lecture platform. We must get ready for the vote; and we have so little time to do it - the fall elections are almost upon us!

What role does education play in the fight for the right to vote? Why do you think such a large emphasis is placed on education?

What do you think she means when she says "valuable" and "desirable" voting citizens? Why does she use these two words?

Whom do you think she is referring to when she says, "ALL the women of the State"? Who may have not been included at this time?

What role did these groups or events play in the push for women's suffrage? "The suffrage league, the woman's club, the public dinner, the lecture platform."

I cannot overemphasize the importance of organization as an immediate necessity. In order to get our work of ratification and education accomplished, to reach the people in the State that we should reach, we MUST extend our organization, start new leagues in every locality where none exists.

High school students frequently write for material for debates, clubwomen for material for papers, magazines for mailing lists, leaders of political parties for diagnosis of our political situation in one phase or another, and committees for support of this or that candidate for national or state office.

Woman suffrage has never been an end in itself, but a means to the development of women as citizens and the improvement of government through women's direct influence. When women become enfranchised, as we seem likely to be within the next few weeks, we shall still have a big task before us. For women need much training and experience before they can become generally valuable voting citizens and before they can bring about the desired changes in our local, state and national government.

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On a separate sheet list the tactics and strategies that were effective? Cite parts of the text that explain the example and why it worked.

Other than education, what tactics did the National Suffrage Association use to achieve their goals? Do you think these were useful? Why or why not?

What does Weil mean when she says suffrage has never been an end in itself?"

What is the "big task" she speaks of?

What might "the desired changes" be?

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What role does education play in the fight for the right to vote? Why do you think such a large emphasis is placed on education?

Answers may include that emphasizing education would help offset skepticism from male voters that women could not handle the franchise; also in an era of literacy tests women voters needed to show that they were responsible.

What do you think she means when she says "valuable" and "desirable" voting citizens? Why does she use these two words?

Another reference to educated and responsible voters.

Whom do you think she is referring to when she says, "ALL the women of the State"? Who may have not been included at this time?

The concern for inclusion is likely referring to the anti-suffragists and promoting responsible voting with them too. Answers may include that women of color and poor, uneducated women may not have had the attention of suffragists.

What role did these groups or events play in the push for women's suffrage? "The suffrage league, the woman's club, the public dinner, the lecture platform." These were public platforms to share info and opinions in days before social media.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of organization as an immediate necessity. In order to get our work of ratification and education accomplished, to reach the people in the State that we should reach, we MUST extend our organization, start new leagues in every locality where none exists.

High school students frequently write for material for debates, clubwomen for material for papers, magazines for mailing lists, leaders of political parties for diagnosis of our political situation in one phase or another, and committees for support of this or that candidate for national or state office.

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On a separate sheet list the tactics and strategies that were effective? Cite parts of the text that explain the example and why it worked. These may include establishing local organizations, lobbying, writing and speaking in as many forums as possible, classes for women including new immigrants.

Other than education, what tactics did the National Suffrage Association use to achieve their goals? Do you think these were useful? Why or why not?

Answers may include building organizations at local levels and writing for a variety of publications. Opinions on the effectiveness will vary.

What does Weil mean when she says suffrage has never been an end in itself?"

Women voting responsibly to affect positive change on society is the end.

What is the "big task" she speaks of?

Preparing women to vote and do so responsibly.

What might "the desired changes" be?

Answers will vary but may include eliminating child labor. [In other states women voted for Prohibition but it was enacted in NC earlier (1909)]; federal regulations of food safety.