

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Culture can change for the better (2)

Next to the abolition of slavery in 1865, the greatest culture change in American history was the 1920 ratification of the 19th amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote.

Today, of course, it would be well nigh impossible to find anyone, even among the most hard core extremists, who would oppose women voting

But for centuries, women had very few rights. In colonial America, a women's place was considered to be in the home, raising children and managing domestic affairs, but always subservient to the authority of her husband, father, brother, or other males in her family.

As the movement to abolish slavery won more proponents in the 1840s, a few women activists expanded their campaigning to women's rights as well. A convention of women in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, is generally considered the beginning of the women's suffrage movement. Yet even at that convention, a resolution calling for women's right to vote was not adopted unanimously.

Years of protests and lawsuits won some initial victories in the late 1800s when Utah, Wyoming, and other western states extended voting rights to women.

But the movement really gained traction during the First World War, when women in Europe and America performed such valuable national service that it was no longer plausible to claim women were intellectually, constitutionally and temperamentally unfit to vote.

Interestingly, President Woodrow Wilson, who had at one time taught young women at Bryn Mawr College, was adamantly opposed to women's suffrage for years until he reversed course in 1918, shortly after the United States entered the war.

The House passed the 19th amendment in 1918, with just one vote to spare, but it was defeated in the Senate, twice.

Wilson then called a special session of Congress, where the amendment passed both the House and Senate. Within a few days thereafter, three states ratified the amendment, but 36 state legislatures (three-fourths of the states) needed to do so. In August 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state, by just one vote in its House of Representatives, to put the amendment in force.

Whether the cause was ending slavery or empowering women, what seems self-evident today did not seem so when these issues were being decided.

Likewise, protecting our planet will require another dramatic change in our thinking.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



SUFFRAGETTES were widely ridiculed.

DANGER!

Woman's Suffrage Would Double
the Irresponsible Vote

It is a **MENACE** to the Home, Men's
Employment and to All Business

IT TOOK 72 YEARS from the first Woman's Rights Convention in 1848, officially calling for women's suffrage, to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 guaranteeing women the right to vote.