

Equal Rights for All!

The Civil War was over—or was it? Nowhere would this question be raised with greater doubt than when reading the contrary views expressed in the Iowa press on the place of the newly-emancipated Negro. Even though the Negro represented a fraction of one per cent of the total population in Iowa, his very presence presented widely conflicting views. On the one hand subscribers to the *Anamosa Eureka* of December 30, 1869, might read the following editorial:

The Negro in 1870

Another decade is near its end. 1860 opened with the Slave Power firmly seated on its throne, the Dred Scott decision spreading its black pall over us, Kansas in the hands of southern ruffians protected by the President and Supreme Court, the Republicans preparing for a desperate fight to wrest freedom from the clutches of slavery, and the northern church, so long blind and subservient, waking up to the needs of the hour.—The autumn of that year saw the Democratic party divided at Charleston and Lincoln elected. Then commenced the work of secession. State after State withdrew in arrogant mock-dignity; Sumter was surrounded by hostile batteries and Stanton startled the imbecile Buchanan and his southern cabinet by pronouncing the word Treason.

Lincoln came in and war followed.—The cost of this war was nine thousand million dollars and a half million

of lives, the penalty paid by North and South for outrage and oppression of four million blacks during two and a half centuries.—We paid dearly but it was our salvation. Slavery is dead. The age is put ahead full a hundred years. The church is relieved of a horrible incubus. Schools and education are spreading over the hitherto benighted South. The North, too, feels the vivifying influence of the new age. From this time forward our country marches onward, free from the curse, the stain and the stigma of holding fellow men in chains—because of the color of the skin, the reason given, but in reality because of the lowest and most brutish avarice. We paid heavily and are still paying for disregard of the law of Right; but that settled, it is a lesson that we should not forget as we advance on the path of our destiny. Rome, Greece, Judea went down in their barbarisms; we have risen above ours and before us lies a future more grand and more glorious than that of any present or previous nation. Well may we take courage in view of the future, and when the coming decade closes may we have made equal or, if possible, greater progress in all that exalts a nation and brings universal good to all and ourselves nearer to the universal Brotherhood of Man.

In sharp contrast to this sympathetic view was the vitriolic editorial in the *Ottumwa Copperhead* of June 16, 1870. Obviously, there was no compromising to be considered by this editor:

White or Black — Progress or Mongrelism

There has come a period in the history of this country in which it is to be decided whether our destiny is for good or evil. It is now to be chosen whether these States are to go on in the path of civilization and refinement, or take the other road, the one on which poor Mexico is traveling.

History is monotonous in giving us examples of what a people must look for in the event of mixing with an inferior race. There is not an instance on record where the whites become partners in government with the blacks, but that miscegenation followed and a mixed hybrid race incapable of self-government, subject to frequent revolutions was the consequence.

We are not going to discuss the flood, negro slavery or the war. The living present is enough now to deal with.

Are we to allow the infamous plot which has been planned by traitors to the white race to be carried out, and thus convert the country we live in to a second Mexico?

The operation of the Fifteenth Amendment and the Enforcement Act, makes us partners with the negroes in the government.

Are we to accept the partnership?

The question must be answered *now*.

There is but one organization around which the friends of a white man's government can rally. If the democratic party should by any means fail in the crisis, or become weak on this white or black question, posterity would curse democracy as a traitor to civilization.

How important it is then that every available means should be used for a rapid and effective organization of the democracy to meet this issue.

Every man who calls himself a democrat has a responsibility resting on him.

Every newspaper, calling itself democratic has a fearful responsibility, and the people should watch with jealous care the movements of democratic papers in this eventful crisis.

Spot those which talk about "accepting the situation."

Support none but white men's papers!

Since the Republican newspapers outnumbered the Democratic press, 147 to 39, it can be assumed that various shades of opinion would be expressed under both political banners. There were also 22 neutral papers being printed in Iowa in 1869-1870 and their view can best be illustrated, perhaps, by the well-known "colonization" plan which was widely discussed by those seeking a middle-of-the-road answer to the Negro question.

The idea of repatriating the Negro to Africa through a colonization program, which has been seriously advanced by some since World War II, obviously is not a new one. The same was true a century ago. During the 1850's, and immediately after the Civil War, efforts were made in various Iowa communities to raise funds to send Negroes back to Africa. However, on January 1, 1870, the *Davenport Democrat* chided the Iowa Colonization Society for not having met in ten years when their avowed purpose was to send Negroes to Liberia.

It is worth recording that a distinguished Muscatine Negro, Alexander Clark, who had advocated the election of General Grant as President in 1868, was offered a consular post in Haiti in 1872. Unable to accept it at the time, Clark did accept the position of Minister Resident and Consul General to Liberia in 1890. He was the second Negro to serve in this capacity.

Woman's Suffrage

Then, as now, the female of the species was deeply aroused and, sometimes, even belligerent in her demands for equal rights under the law. The movement to achieve equal political rights for women had been organized at a meeting called at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 by Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It was not until 1869, however, that the first state, Wyoming, granted full suffrage to women.

That year, 1869, is significant in Iowa history, especially as it relates to women. Thus, the P.E.O. Society was formed at Mount Pleasant in 1869. In addition, Belle Mansfield, the first woman lawyer in the United States, was admitted to the bar at Mount Pleasant in 1869. The following year this same Belle Mansfield was one of several Iowans to sponsor the first Iowa Suffrage Convention at Mount Pleasant.

There were some strong-minded women in Iowa who proved real assets to the suffrage movement. In addition to Amelia Bloomer in Council Bluffs, such women as Mary Newbury Adams and Lucy C. Graves of Dubuque, Mary Darwin of Burlington, Annie Savery and Martha Callanan of Des Moines, and Belle Mansfield and Ruth Dugdale of Mount Pleasant, to mention a few, played a leading role in the move to gain woman's suffrage in Iowa.

Although Iowa did not accord suffrage to women until half a century later, the great national leaders of the movement found an attentive and sympathetic audience in the Hawkeye State. Not that a majority of the press was even slightly inclined to favor the emancipation of women. Over a long period of years the tendency of many editors was to view lightly, if not derisively, the demands for woman's suffrage. Thus, on June 19, 1869, *The Iowa Age* of Clinton, under the caption "Fussy Women," declared:

Good gracious, what a fuss the woman question is kicking up.—Many a hen-pecked husband is getting a cold bite and a hard bed, while the wife of his bosom is unbosoming herself of some of her insupportable wrongs. Between the "Sorosis" and the "Revolution," "George Francis Train" and the "d—l," the sterner sex are coming out at the little end of the horn. As long as the disease confined itself to the New York vicinity the west didn't seem to care. But suddenly Chicago has been taken down with the most virulent type of "sorosis," and as vaccination will not stop the spread of the disease, we may expect it to cross the Mississippi at an early day.

When it comes, what do the masculine portion of God's heritage propose to do? It is no use to dodge the subject. Sorosis is coming. It looks very much as though the coming man will be a woman, and whether she comes on a velocipede, on horseback or on a rail, her head is pointed this way, and we must receive her, and the question now uppermost in everybody's mind should be, How shall she be received?

The AGE is willing to receive her with "open arms,"

but we fear the new movement will require something more. As we understand it, it is out of masculine arms woman is now trying to extricate herself. The restraint put upon her by the brute called man, is just what she is trying to break away from. Her wrongs have become so multitudinous, and so directly traceable to man's inhumanity, that "before the law" she must be made man's equal ere she can see even the faintest glimmer of a prospect of relief. She is now an unwilling prisoner, sentenced for life, by her liege lord—and she wants the prison doors opened and the shackles removed from her tiny wrists. In a word, she wants to quit domestics. She has got tired mending dilapidated pants, sewing buttons on old shirts, d--ning stockings, and making little things for babies which are or which are to be, and she wants elevating.

An Ottumwa editor was less kind in his remarks on the subject of woman's suffrage. Under the caption, "The Shrieking Sisterhood," of June 20, 1870, *The Copperhead* declared:

Ottumwa has been inflicted, during the last few days, with an epidemic—The Female Suffrage Complaint has raged to a considerable extent. We have been inundated with the Shrieking Sisters.

On Sunday night a female lectured at the Methodist Church on Temperance. The sister enunciated the doctrine that wine should not be used in the sacrament. Prohibition, stringent laws to prohibit both the manufacture and sale of intoxicating spirits were the only effective measures that could be adopted.

Right on the heels—pardon the allusion—of her came the veritable Madame [Amelia] Bloomer of Council Bluffs, and another celebrated sister from Ohio.—A convention was held at Taylor and Blake's Hall on Monday

evening. The sisters shrieked but the benches were empty. Evidently the "oppressors" have things all their own way in Ottumwa.

Aside however from badinage, does it not look silly, this idea of full-grown women running around the country talking about their Rights. It would seem, to judge from the numerous meetings held in the country, the fiery speeches of these people that the women of America are suffering under the most fearful wrongs ever inflicted on humanity.

This is the idea a stranger would gather, but then how supremely ridiculous it looks to those who know the real situation! A band of "strong-minded females" "galloping" around the country tearing their throats and smiting their breasts with the ostensible purpose of revolutionizing a wrong, but really with the intent of making themselves notorious!

Bah! the subject is too sickening.—We refrain from further comment.

Just when their campaign seemed to be bogging down in Iowa the cause of womankind received several boosts. The admission of Belle Mansfield to the Iowa bar attracted nation-wide attention and focused the spotlight on Iowa. Secondly, the rise of Phoebe Sudlow from principal of a Davenport public school (reputedly the first woman principal of a public school in the United States in 1859) was followed by her appearance on the program of superintendents and principals in Des Moines in 1869. Five years later she was named superintendent of the entire Davenport school system and two years later, in 1876, she was

elected the first woman president of the Iowa State Teachers Association. The editor of the *Maquoketa Excelsior* of December 23, 1869, took note of an item in the *Marshalltown Times* stating that a female—Miss Allie H. Jameson had just been commissioned a Notary Public by Governor Merrill. The *Times* heartily recommended Miss Allie as "one of the finest looking and most praiseworthy young ladies of Marshall county."

To cap it all, the House of Representatives of the Iowa General Assembly unanimously elected Miss Mary E. Spencer as Engrossing Clerk, the only person to be unanimously elected by that body. "If she be good looking," the *Davenport Democrat* wisely observed, "and if she is not engrossing enough for the whole House, we have put a false estimate on the young lady." Miss Spencer was shortly put to an important official test as recorded in the *Iowa State Register*:

An episode occurred in the Senate of Iowa yesterday which marks the new era in the legislation of the State, and one which will long be remembered. Soon after the Senate was called to order, the Doorkeeper announced, "Message from the House," and Miss Mary E. Spencer, Engrossing Clerk of that body, appeared and modestly said, "Mr. President." That officer replied, "Miss Clerk," and Miss Spencer proceeded to read in a clear and distinct voice a message from the House in relation to certain bills which had passed that body. At the conclusion of the message the Senators approved of this first official act performed by a woman in the Iowa Senate, by a general

clapping of hands. The world moves, and no part of it moves faster in the pathway of progress than our own Iowa.

The Indians of Iowa

One other group, although not as articulate in its demands, since they preferred to be left alone to pursue their own way of life, was the Tama or Mesquakie Indians. They had returned to Iowa a scant dozen years before and had found a domicile on the Iowa River. Their main problem was with the Federal government over the payment of their yearly annuities and their right to return to Iowa. On December 2, 1869, the *Knoxville Iowa Voter* recorded:

Thousands of the citizens of Iowa are ignorant of the fact that in one of the best settled Counties of the central portions of the State may be found the permanent home of a band of Indians numbering no less than 268 souls. They own and occupy, in the western part of Tama County, 419 acres of the best land in the Iowa River valley, purchased with their own money at five different times, as shown by the deeds on record in the County. The Chicago & Northwestern Railroad, between Tama City and Orford [Montour], passes directly through their land; and the traveler is sometimes surprised, in passing through a portion of the country, dotted with fine farms and handsome cities, to find himself suddenly in the midst of a village of wigwams, with all the paraphernalia of savage life around him. There, in Tama County, with its fifteen thousand white inhabitants, surrounded by churches, schools and all the elements of civilization, are 71 men, 87 women, and 110 children, clinging with the

tenacity that seems to be inherent in their natures, to all the superstitious rites and rude habits of savage life.—*Iowa State Register.*

Small bands of roving Indians returned to Iowa from time to time. The following, carried in the *Grand Junction Head-Light* of February 5, 1870, tells of a party that may have been Mesquakie, or possibly even Sioux or Potowatomi:

There is a party of Indians, of about fifty in number, counting the braves, squaws and papooses, all together, camped in the lower part of the township, and among them there is one M.D., who offers his professional services to the surrounding county at "reduced prices." Any one wishing medical advice of Dr. Black Dog will find him at his wigwam. There is no indication as to whether residents of the area availed themselves of Dr. Black Dog's services.

The Tama Indians continued to live in almost total obscurity throughout the 1870's, a condition which they sought and greatly appreciated.

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