

Behind the Yellow Banner:

Anna B. Lawther and the Winning of Suffrage for Iowa Women

by Steven J. Fuller and Alsatia Mellecker

The color note of the evening was yellow and the large banquet room was gay with suffrage banners, jonquils being used in profusion on the tables. An amusing and attractive feature was the tiny doll impersonating a suffraget [sic] with which each guest was presented during the last course. The diminutive suffragists were gowned in yellow satin and wore "Votes for Women" banners across their breasts.

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The social event of the season — a suffrage banquet in honor of Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association [NAWSA] — had been the talk of Des Moines for weeks. The concern of the women attending the 1916 banquet and meeting was the status of the Iowa campaign for woman suffrage. Catt met with a group of eager and confident women during the visit. The long-awaited victory seemed close at hand. Since 1894 Iowa women had been allowed to vote on school, municipal, and bond issues, but the right of full franchise had



A 1908 parade in Boone, Iowa, in support of woman suffrage. (ISHD, Des Moines)

eluded them. In 1916 a resolution to amend Iowa's constitution to grant full franchise to women was to be put before the state's voters in the June primary election.

Getting the resolution on the ballot had not been an easy task. Supporters of woman suffrage in Iowa had been working diligently for forty-five years to secure a constitutional amendment. According to Iowa law, the resolution had to pass both houses of two successive legislatures before it could be put to a popular vote in a general election. Every Iowa legislature since 1870 had considered the resolution, but it wasn't until the 1913 and 1915 sessions that the legislation passed both houses. The men who would go to the polls on June 5, 1916, would decide the political and democratic future of the state.

Realizing the importance of an orderly election campaign, Catt encouraged Iowa suffragists to organize throughout the state and not let any area go uncanvassed, regardless of size. Following her advice, efforts were made to organize the state by appointing working chairmen in each precinct and county, raising money, training speakers, and waging an extensive campaign in the newspapers.

Fairy sprites and gypsy maidens mingled with the gayly frocked society throng which made the fourth annual suffrage ball a social and financial success last evening at [the] Hotel Chamberlain.

The ivory and champagne tinted ballroom was festive with "Votes for Women" pennants and palms behind which T. Fred Henry's orchestra was grouped. Daffodils and jonquils used on the punch tables accentuated the suffrage color.

The Dubuque Equal Suffrage League met for the first time on March 11, 1916. Anna B. Lawther was elected county chairman.

Now that the Iowa suffrage campaign has opened in earnest and the antis are becoming active, it seems to have become fashionable to emphasize the "votes for women" proposition upon every social occasion.

In a March 17, 1916, letter to the editor of the Des Moines Capital, one supporter of woman suffrage described her recent experience at the polls and expressed frustration about being unable to vote on more than school, municipal, and bond issues:

I was greatly amused last Monday at the polling place where I went to vote on the school bond issue. When I reached the polling place it somewhat resembled an island — well at least an island is a body of land entirely surrounded by water — and the polling place was entirely surrounded by men. There were men of all sizes, height and complexion, and they seemed to delight in making what they no doubt thought [were] witty remarks about the women voting.

I asked a lady with me if they didn't have a law in Iowa prohibiting men from congregating around the polls and staying there and almost blocking the entrance to the building.

Well we finally were able to push our way through this crowd and got inside. After we were handed our little school bond ballot, the only thing we could vote on, I was jostled aside by a man who pompously walked past us on to where the real voting was taking place. I looked at him and recognized him as a man who could not read or write. And I wondered how he would know how to mark his ballot.

Well, I started to look over my ballot again, when I walked another of these superior beings, and I knew him and knew that he never owned any property or anything that was taxable in his life; in fact only last winter he had appealed to the county for aid. Yet he could go and vote.

Then just as we were leaving[,] two foreigners who could scarcely speak a word of our language, entered and were allowed to vote on all issues. There were we four (4) American-born women, all of us taxpayers, we could read and write, and could vote intelligently, yet we were denied the full right to vote. Well I hurried out of there before I would see any more, and at the door was a man just entering who was staggering drunk. I don't know whether he was allowed to vote or not. But I presumed he was.





(ISHD, Des Moines)

Anna Bell Lawther was born in Dubuque, Iowa, on September 6, 1872, the daughter of William Lawther, Sr., and Annie Elizabeth Lawther. She attended Dubuque public schools, prepared for college at Miss Steven's School in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bryn Mawr College in 1897. She stayed on at Bryn Mawr for several years after receiving her degree, serving in various official capacities. In 1912 she returned to Dubuque and embarked on what would be a distinguished political and public career.

Lawther worked for suffrage until 1920. After passage of the Nineteenth Amendment she focused her attention on politics and education. In 1920 the Democratic National Committee selected Lawther as an associate national committee member for

Iowa, an appointment that took her across the state, explaining the merits of the Democratic party to the newly enfranchised voters. In 1927 she ran unsuccessfully for state auditor.

In 1921 Lawther was appointed to the state board of education — the first woman to receive such an appointment — and served until her retirement in 1941. In recognition of her dedication to education, a dormitory built on the campus of the University of Northern Iowa was named after her in 1948.

Other distinctions included receiving several honorary degrees from various state colleges, serving as secretary for the Mt. Pleasant Home for the Young and Aged, delivering the first convocation address at the State University of Iowa by a woman, and serving as director of the Iowa Suffrage Memorial Commission.

One of the hostesses to take advantage of such an opportunity for suffrage propaganda was Mrs. Walter S. Brown, who, with Mr. Brown, entertained the 500 club at dinner last evening.

Yellow, the suffrage color, predominated in the table appointments — in candles, place cards and flowers. The subject of "Votes for Women" was presented in a mirthful manner by mottoes and various kinds of literature, and was cunningly designed to arouse the interest of the guests at the same time that it entertained.

Iowa voters rejected the constitutional amendment resolution, voting it down by a margin of 10,325 out of 337,459 votes cast. Many woman suffrage supporters claimed that the resolution's defeat had been caused by election fraud. Informed by their attorney that there was no way to rectify the errors since the

to their clothes.

They are buying yellow sports suits and yellow sports hats to match.

On the Country club golf links there will be bright splotches of yellow this spring. Mrs. Aletta Early Sloan and Mrs. Percy Coffee are among the suffrage sports clothes advocates. Mrs. Sloan, a member of the board of the Votes for Women, bought her yellow suffrage togs yesterday. She is a golf winner and an ardent suffrage worker.

"I understand the suffragists have made yellow the popular color," said Mrs. Sloan yesterday as she tried on a canary colored golf hat. "Everyone is talking suffrage now and I think it is a fine thing to wear yellow. I intend to wear the color almost altogether this year."

Yet the 1916 Iowa Equal Suffrage Association convention, held in Des Moines between



This well-used sign urged Iowa voters to approve the woman suffrage amendment to the Iowa constitution at the polls on June 5, 1916. (ISHD, Des Moines)

election concerned a constitutional amendment, the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association [IESA] decided not to conduct any formal investigation. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was not willing to let such a thing pass, however. They instigated an investigation of the election procedures and official returns in forty-four counties. The findings of the investigation, presented in a two hundred-page report, were summarized by the *Des Moines Register* in October 1916: "The W.C.T.U. can draw but one conclusion from this condition, namely, that they were defrauded out of their right to the ballot."

Des Moines suffragists are loyal to the cause even

September 19 and 21, was not characterized by pessimism and regret over the June election defeat, but rather by renewed hope and a fighting spirit. Miss Flora Dunlap, the outgoing IESA president, said:

No state could carry on so well organized, so active and successful a vote getting campaign as the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association without having as one result a large group of trained efficient women. A group of women like this is prepared to work. Having borne defeat we are better prepared for victory.

Dunlap had been the IESA president since 1913 but was ready to yield to new leadership. The convention unanimously elected as head of

the association Anna B. Lawther, the Dubuque County chairman of the June 1916 campaign. Although the suffrage amendment had been soundly defeated in Dubuque County, Lawther's efficiency and organizational skills made her the favored candidate for the IESA presidency.

Educating the public had been the main goal of Iowa suffragists since 1870. However, by 1916 it was time to work on the political structure as well. The two major political parties, foreseeing the ultimate success of the amendment, began to change their attitudes. The Progressive, Democratic, and even the Republican parties had endorsed woman suffrage during the summer of 1916. Delegates to the IESA convention agreed it was time for intensive lobbying efforts and for direct challenges to political candidates to openly support woman suffrage.

A suffrage tea will be held Tuesday afternoon at 3 o'clock at the home of Miss Augusta Eighmey, 1337 Main Street, the second in the series of social events under the auspices of the local Equal Suffrage association. The program will include a group of songs by Mrs. Frederick W. Keator, of Olympia, Wash., and Miss Lawther and Miss Bissell will give a report on the state board meeting which they attended at Des Moines during the past week.

In April 1917 two important events took place. The United States entered World War I and both houses of the Iowa legislature again passed the resolution for a constitutional amendment granting full franchise rights to women. Lawther sent a newsletter to all her county chairmen in that month, declaring, "We must go over plans for keeping our organization together in this time of stress and at the same time make it a channel of usefulness to the nation."

Registration cards were sent to county chairmen asking them to enlist all suffragists in

special war work along the lines of increased food production, Americanization, child welfare, protection of women and children in industry, and participation in Red Cross activities. Liberty Loan drives were directed by men and women alike.

The Iowa Division of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense was formed in Des Moines in June 1917. The IESA merged its work with this committee and appointed Anna Lawther as its representative. The other members of the committee were officers of various women's groups in the state. The committee's chief purpose was to organize the work by women of the state in support of the war effort.

Lawther attempted to bolster support for woman suffrage during the war by openly stating, "The women who are most active thruout [sic] the state as leaders of war work are 99 per cent suffragists." Further, "The new war service should be done as much as possible under our own banner so that we may keep together our organization and increase our numbers. Women all over the country are doing their bit. We can best do ours in preparing all women for citizenship." Lawther painted a different picture in her correspondence, however. She was enraged that the women's war efforts were being carried on almost unnoticed by the political powers. "Every where the suffragists of Iowa are doing their utmost to win this great war for democracy, and every where they are feeling a bitterness that our own nation falls far short of being an ideal democracy while the women are disenfranchized [sic]."

Issues other than war work were discussed at the IESA's 1917 convention in Des Moines. The legislative committee reported that there were two types of partial suffrage that could be enacted by the Iowa legislature without changing the state's constitution: presidential and primary suffrage. A law could be passed allowing presidential suffrage because the federal constitution allowed individual states to deter-

mine how presidential electors should be elected and "this power [was] quite apart from the state constitution governing other elections." Primary suffrage was a possibility because "at the primaries only an expression of opinion is given in order to nominate candidates and the primary is not an election." While continuing to investigate these two possibilities, the committee would continue to press for a resolution to resubmit the constitutional amendment to Iowa voters. If both houses passed it in 1918 it could go before the voters in 1919.

Anna Lawther was reelected IESA president at the 1917 convention. She praised the war work undertaken by suffragists in the aftermath of the 1916 electoral defeat, and won the wholehearted support of the convention delegates.

The IESA members' decision to concentrate their efforts on the legislative scene, coupled with the entrance of the United States into the war, tended to change the composition of the IESA. Rather than a mass organization, the IESA became a small group of hard-core activists. Anna B. Lawther, Dr. Effie McCullum Jones, Mrs. W.W. Marsh, and Mrs. Frank Dodson, with a handful of other suffragists, waged the battle while the remainder of Iowa's women planted victory gardens, rolled bandages, and attended club meetings.

After the defeat of the 1916 referendum, the IESA's work was increasingly divided between securing the vote for Iowa women and helping Carrie Chapman Catt and the NAWSA get a national woman suffrage amendment passed and ratified. Lawther's correspondence with Catt and others reflected her attitude toward Iowa women, who were seemingly complacent about their political status, and more concerned with war work than suffrage work. In a March 1918 letter to her county chairmen, she urged them to get each primary candidate to

declare himself on the issue of woman suffrage, whether he was running for "mayor, treasurer, recorder, [or] dog-catcher." Lawther also mentioned the next Liberty Loan, which was to be floated in April, "We must not let those opposed to our cause have a slight excuse for saying we do nothing but work for suffrage. I know every suffragist is at work for the war harder than she has ever worked for suffrage."

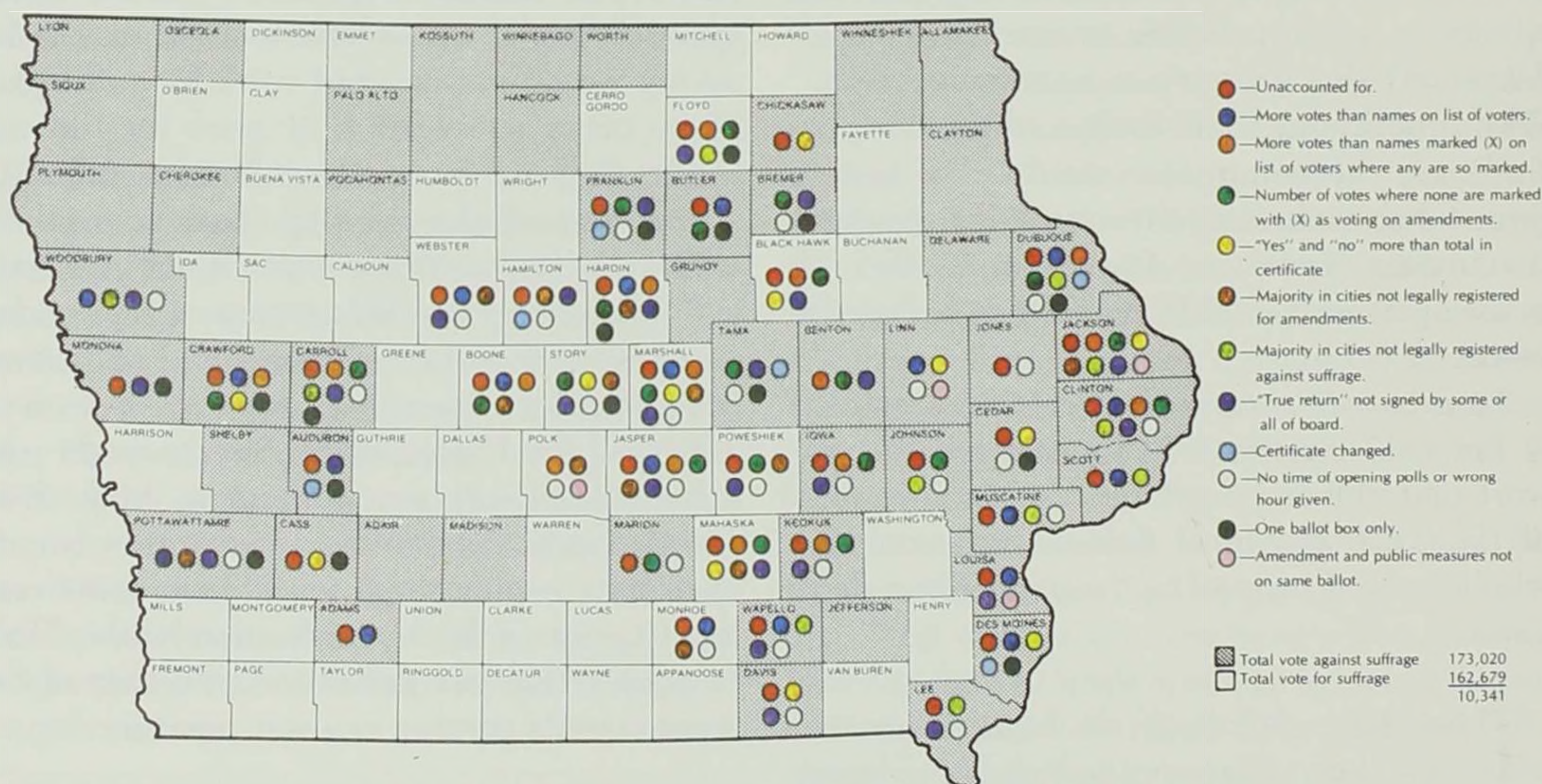
Even though the war might have been taking time away from suffrage work, it did give Iowa suffragists badly needed assistance. It provided an organizational framework, and additional ideological arguments to use. When it appeared the United States Senate might pass a federal suffrage amendment in May 1918, Lawther sent yet another letter to her county chairmen, urging them to publicize the event and to prepare for the ratification battle, "Talk to people that you see of the necessity of the amendments passing as a war measure."

By June 1918 Catt was instructing each state to prepare for ratification. Lawther believed that Iowa needed trained workers to carry out the tasks demanded by the ratification effort, but attempts to get workers from other states were unsuccessful. She arranged with William Penn College, Oskaloosa, to hold a three-day suffrage school. Applicants had to be at least twenty-one years of age, and had to promise to work for the cause for at least four weeks. They also had to pay their own railroad fare, but meals were furnished by the IESA and lodging was provided by William Penn College. The faculty included members of the IESA board, the faculty of William Penn, and "one or more prominent women from outside the state." The subjects taught were "History of the Woman's Movement," "Suffrage Arguments," "Organization," "Finance," "Public Speaking," and "Parliamentary Law." Approximately twenty women attended the school, promising their month to the cause.

The IESA legislative committee attempted

The Vote on Woman Suffrage, 1916

ABSTRACT OF VOTE ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION OF JUNE 5, 1916, FOR 44 COUNTIES
SHOWING SOME OF THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES CONNECTED THEREWITH



The W.C.T.U.'s forty-four county investigation of voting irregularities that occurred during the June 5, 1916, election resulted in an elaborate map from which the information for the above map was drawn. Both the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association and the W.C.T.U. believed that the woman suffrage amendment had been defeated by election fraud. Shaded counties indicate the counties where the 1916 suffrage proposition was defeated. (ISHD, Des Moines: Iowa Suffrage Memorial Commission Suffrage Campaign Records)

to lobby the legislature and special interest groups to support woman suffrage. Their attempts were not all successful, though in June the Iowa State Federation of Labor passed a resolution asking that the federal “Suffrage Amendment be brought out immediately for consideration by the Senate, and be favorably acted upon by the members.” Dr. Effie McCullum Jones, corresponding secretary of the IESA, pressed W.C. Cross of Burlington, a potential candidate for the Iowa Senate, for a statement of his position on the woman suffrage issue:

You will understand that the members of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association are deeply interested in your nomination to the State Senate this fall. In view of the

fact that your party . . . has endorsed woman suffrage, it might probably be taken for granted that the candidates on the party ticket will vote favorably on all suffrage legislation that may be presented. We should be glad, however, for a special assurance on that point . . .

To this blunt appeal, Cross scrawled his response:

I opine a person would make a very poor jurymen, who would render a verdict before the trial of the case, and for the same reason, I think a man would make a very poor State Senator who would commit himself on any question before his election.

Cross was not elected, and his position

remained unknown.

Catt was relentless in striving for national legislation. At the end of July Catt was gearing up for Senate consideration of the woman suffrage amendment in late August. She wanted to know what the IESA could do for the national organization and vice versa. Catt sent the following eight questions to Lawther, and received answers to each, descriptive of the state of the Iowa campaign:

1. Are you planning to carry on the petition work for men and women? *[Yes.] In some counties the petition for the women is being circulated first but in others . . . where the men are better suffragists than the women they will be circulated at the same time.*
2. Are you going ahead with it now? *[Yes.] At least ten of the twenty women who agreed to work for one month after the suffrage school in Oskaloosa will give the month of August or part of August . . .*
3. Will you be ready for ratification in January? *[Yes.] We feel that we ought to be ready for ratification in January. That at least is our aim. The two parties gave us very good endorsements and that ought to help us a little. I have a feeling however that the big business of Iowa is quite opposed to us and will do what it can to offset anything we do. . . .*
4. Can you not do the work without outside help (We should send our workers to the doubtful states)? *From the present outlook I think we could get on without outside help . . .*
5. If you are going to ask any assistance from the National, what is likely to be its nature? *I do not think we in Iowa ought to ask assistance of the National at this time. . . .*
6. Is there any special requirement in your state not now covered by our literature? *The Literature is satisfactory, but I fear not enough women take time to read it. They are so devoted to bandages, packing food boxes for the soldiers, knitting and reading recipes for saving sugar and canning that suffrage literature is put aside for the future when it may not be needed.*

7. Have you made your budget for your ratification campaign and planned to raise your money? *We have made a budget which ought to cover our expense and is probably more than we shall get from the "tight" suffragists of the state. . . .*
8. Can Iowa pay its last year's quota to the National? *Iowa has paid . . . all but \$100 to the National of the \$500 we pledged in December. I hope we can pay at least \$500 for the year 1918.*

Lawther concluded her response by adding, "You say you hope our helpers are cheerful doers. I can't say that many of them are but a few are going on doggedly [*sic*] trying to get the work done in the hope of final victory. Once more I want to say that the whole business would be hopeless if Dr. [Effie McCullum] Jones did not work fourteen hours a day. I find that ten to twelve hours is my poor limit . . ."

In this one letter Lawther explained the condition and attitude of the IESA. Its support was largely cosmetic, and hard workers and money were scarce. The optimistic outlook for the federal amendment, moreover, was threatening state legislation. "The tactics of our opponents," Lawther wrote Catt, "[are] to tell every suffragist that it will come any way why waste time demanding it. It does the business of stopping all but the most ardent." In fact, Lawther believed that there was not enough support in the state for a suffrage referendum to pass if the federal amendment failed: "I feel sure that we will have a dreadful time . . . if the amendment should not pass in December." To which Catt replied, "I think you may go to the Legislature and ask it not to subject you to a referendum since the amendment is coming on from Washington. I suggest you let it stand at that."

With Lawther feeling discouraged about the chances of suffrage at the state level, she suffered a personal setback. Her mother suffered a fatal heart attack, and Lawther wished to quit the movement to care for her father. Alerted to

the situation by Effie Jones, Catt pleaded with Lawther,

I beg of you do not do that. No one human being has a right to give her entire strength to the care of another human being. At present it seems good and right for you to do this, but it will mean that you are giving up your duty and your place in the world for another person.

Lawther did decide to go on, but only because a replacement could not be found:

The difficulty of going on with the work is that I can not go and come as I have done for nearly three years or even for all my life for that matter. But for the last three years I have given all my time to the cause and gladly but now I can not possibly give so much. I wanted to have some women selected who could do that thing but I find that no woman is willing to undertake so large an order and so it has been decided that I am to remain as President but that Dr. Jones will fill the speaking engagements over the state.

When the federal amendment failed in October 1918 the chances of successful Iowa legislation seemed even more doubtful. In November Lawther wrote to Catt wondering whether a referendum could pass in the state: "If the whole contry [sic] can not vote by that time there is no reason why we should expect to be able to do it. Besides if we should and a democrat could slip in in the state for a national office the Republicans will hesitate to enfranchise any more women."

Lawther's fears about a referendum were removed by forces beyond her control. The Iowa secretary of state, William S. Allen, had failed to meet the requirements necessary to put forth the suffrage referendum. The law required that the secretary of state notify the next legislature that the previous legislature had passed a constitutional amendment, and that by passing the same amendment, it could be

submitted to the voters. The secretary of state's office neglected to publish this fact, therefore the referendum was effectively killed. Lawther, while outraged that the referendum was stopped by seemingly unethical means, was greatly relieved. She wrote to Catt,

Apparently our prayer is answered in the gross carelessness of our secretary of State. . . .

. . . but it is also a godsend that it works out as it does. My idea is now that we must go to these Republicans and make them promise that they will ratify the first minute they can in order to offset this crime they have done by their neglect.

Catt was not as pleased as Lawther, however. The NAWSA was surprised at the ease by which suffrage measures had just passed in both Michigan and South Dakota, and believed that Iowa could win if women worked hard enough. Lawther disagreed.

If you had tried to work for suffrage as I have done in Iowa for the last two years you would be more than pleased that the campaign is off. I hate to tell you how stupid the women have been about the work. They for the most part were ashamed to mention suffrage during the war lest some anti should accuse them of being 'Bolsheviki'. They plead with me to turn all our attention to winning the war — by that they meant working for furlough homes — knitting and talking of saving food.

The proud wearers of suffrage yellow had indeed disappeared: "it was quite awful that Dr. Jones, Mrs. Marsh, Mrs. Dodson and I seemed to be the only women that kept suffrage alive."

Even so, Lawther was attacked by Catt for having let the referendum fail. In a stinging rejoinder she wrote:

Now, my dear Miss Lawther, I must tell you that I for one have always believed

that the suffrage amendment was lost not through normal opposition on the part of Iowa men, but through fraud so skillfully [sic] concealed that it was not discovered. . . . The friends of suffrage were not alert in Iowa. . . .

The National Association asked you to secure that referendum and agreed to stand by you in the conduct of the next campaign. I think you will make a great mistake if you do not thoroughly advertise the fact that the excuse of forgetfulness is not an acceptable one. . . . you should howl about it from the Mississippi to the Missouri.

Lawther, nevertheless, believed that the error was an honest mistake, and one that actually helped the cause. After receiving another letter of explanation from the secretary of state, she wrote Catt, "He claims not to belong to the unscrupulous group and I believe he does not, but belongs with me in the stupid class. I shall write him in a day or two and ask him to help us to wipe out this disgrace on himself and the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association."

Attention turned to the national amendment. In preparation of its passage, the IESA gathered signatures for petition and tried to forecast the mood of the Iowa Senate and House concerning ratification. The legislators, as it turned out, were more inclined toward suffrage than the women of Iowa. The petition drive resulted in "A few feeble petitions . . . in each mail." The influenza epidemic that swept Iowa and the nation was also a major factor in the low response. In the legislature, however, victory seemed assured as early as December 1918. And in January, Governor William L. Harding publicly supported the amendment, thereby making the Republican party's support for ratification public knowledge.

The NAWSA, responding to this support, wanted the Iowa legislature to pass a resolution calling upon the United States Senate to pass

the federal amendment. The IESA, consulting with their legislative committee, believed this was impossible. Unfortunately, Catt learned that the legislative chairman for Iowa, Mrs. Frank Dodson, had consulted a male lawyer and was furious:

I have my doubts about the capacity of Mrs. Dodson as a legislative chairman. . . .

As I understand it, the only thing you have in the legislature is a primary suffrage law which I should say was about the poorest thing which Iowa could put up. . . .

I strongly recommend that Iowa should get a state amendment submitted in this Legislature. If they sell us out in Washington, you will at least have a referendum in Iowa after 1920. . . .

I think you [Lawther] had better go down to Des Moines, yourself, and see if you can't catch up with your [neighboring states].

Lawther replied that she would go to Des Moines but that she was *persona non grata* because she had helped oust the chairman of the Republican National Committee. She went on to say, "They think I am a dangerous woman — and maybe I am." The women of Iowa, claimed Lawther, were more interested in having the National Biannual meeting of the Federated Clubs in Des Moines in 1920 than in obtaining the right to vote. Later Lawther wrote, "I do attribute all of the backwardness of our State to the women of the State who have either never had the vision or completely lost it." As to Iowa women's fears of being called Bolsheviki or Socialists, Lawther expounded, "I want to say that it begins to look as if the Socialist Party is the only one that holds out a welcome to the women of the Nation. But by there [sic] route suffrage seems a long way off for the women of Iowa." Lawther's low spirits were revealed in a letter written to an officer of the IESA when she suggested that "we might

have a pleasant time talking over our woes and the stupidity of cornfed people."

The IESA's legislative committee, headed by Mrs. Dodson, did try to get a primary suffrage bill approved by the Iowa legislature, but primary suffrage was passed over for "full suffrage." The woman suffrage amendment was approved by the legislature, but would have to be approved again by the next legislature, and then by Iowa voters. The legislators who arranged the exchange of full suffrage for primary suffrage were seen as really being opposed to suffrage. Lawther wrote a stinging letter to the bill's sponsor, Senator A.L. Rule, declaring that, "I shall always declare publicly [*sic*] and privately that you are only a 'supposed' friend of woman suffrage." Rule's reply was even more caustic,

Your very insulting letter of March 15th has been received and I am very sorry indeed to see that the President of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association is continuously of the opinion that I am trying to placate the Association of which she is the head. I am glad indeed to inform you that I do not care one iota for what you think or some of your associates think. . . . for I am not the only one who considers that you and a few of your friends are the worst enemies suffrage has in this state, and any time I can do something that is going to thwart and bring to naught your misguided purposes, I have done a great service for Suffrage.

A presidential suffrage bill, which would allow women to vote for presidential electors, did pass the legislature. It met with little resistance, and was aided perhaps by the suc-

cess of similar bills in other states.

In June 1919 the United States Senate finally passed the constitutional amendment allowing woman suffrage, and in a special session on July 2, 1919 — a session lasting only one hour and forty minutes—Iowa legislators made Iowa the tenth state to ratify the amendment. It was an easy victory, with a Senate vote of 47-0, and a House vote of 96-5.

The struggle for suffrage in Iowa was difficult, and for the most part unsuccessful. Several factors made passage of any suffrage legislation in Iowa difficult, but perhaps the most serious obstacle was the lack of an effective two-party system in the state. With Republicans in almost absolute control of the state, they felt no need to give the women of Iowa the vote.

But strangely the greatest opposition to suffrage in Iowa came from the women, through outright disapproval or unwillingness to fight for it. For the most part, Iowa women fully expected that it was only a matter of time before a federal woman suffrage amendment would receive congressional approval and they felt quite ready to wait for it. Lawther and other Iowa suffragists could not achieve the victory alone, but their efforts did create the foundation of support which insured the legislature's speedy ratification of the federal amendment in July 1919. □

Note on Sources

Much of the information in this article came from the Anna B. Lawther Collection located at the State Historical Society. Several newspapers were useful reference tools. The *Des Moines Register and Leader* and the *Dubuque Times-Journal* were especially valuable.