

Women Suffrage in Washington

In the King James Version of the Bible, Paul wrote: “Let your women keep silent in churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (1 Corinthians 14:34)” Women have always been silenced in history, but in the 19th century, it began to change. In the United States, women fought for their right to vote in 1848, in New York. Unfortunately, they have never voted for the Women’s Rights Convention. The National American Women Suffrage Association had to finish this battle in Washington, in the early 1900’s.

The Washington women’s suffrage movement actually began in England, when Alice Paul was arrested for her suffrage activities. Then she met Lucy Burns in a police station in London.



The two women decided to go to the United States and join the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to continue their fight for women’s right to vote. At this time, the great leaders Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw were part of the group. In 1913, the association was not very influential, so Paul organized a parade. On March 3, the Women Suffrage Parade took place in Washington, the day before Woodrow Wilson was going to be installed president. A lot of people gathered in front of the White House, but not to see the President. There were about half a million women dressed in white, in Pennsylvania Avenue walking for their rights. Some people

did not agree with this demonstration, so they insulted and attacked these women. For six hours, army troops tried to control the riot. This event provided a good publicity for women's suffrage and allowed the NAWSA to meet President on March 17. After they met the President Wilson, who was not interested in women's suffrage, the women tried other ways to get people's attention.

Paul and Burns separated from the NAWSA, because of a conflict with Catt and Shaw. Alice Paul created two new groups: the Congressional Union for Women Suffrage (CUWS) in 1914 and the Woman's Party in 1915. In 1916, these two groups merged into one: the National Woman Party (NWP). On January 1917, Paul and Burns started a nonviolent campaign: "The National Woman's party engaged in militant and flamboyant activities, utilizing publicity stunts, marches, open-air meetings, watch fires, strikes, picketing of both the Capitol and the White House, [...] (Zophy, p.417)" About one thousand suffragists members picketed with their banners in front of the White House. People around were violent with the women, but their attitude did not stop the suffragists.

They picketed there for 18 month. Some women were arrested and put in jail for a short time. In 1917, on October 20, Alice and Lucy went to jail, to the Occoquan Workhouse. They began a hunger strike. Alice was considered as mad, so she was locked up and tortured. She was forced to eat through a tube in her mouth to her stomach. When people heard about this terrible treatment in the news, Alice Paul was freed.

In 1918, Woodrow Wilson finally accorded women the right to vote. The amendment went to the Senate two times before the senators voted in favor of it. The first

time was in October 1918, the second in June 1919 and at that time they needed just one more vote to win. In 1920, women could vote for the first time in the United States.

In conclusion, women's suffrage totally changed women's situation in the United States. According to the Handbook of American Women's history, "Since 1920, the Democrats, like the Republicans, were not overly concerned with women's issues. (p. 150)"

Sources

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