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Karla J. Howe

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*Karla J. Howe, President of the Great Lakes Varnish Works, Chicago, Illinois, was the featured speaker at the Public Relations Dinner of the Chicago Chapter of ASWA. Her talk entitled "Woman—Her Opportunity—Has She Met It?" was exceptionally well received. Many thought-provoking ideas are raised in this article. We are happy to present this paper at this time.*

*Miss Howe is a member of the Credit Women's Club of Chicago, Soroptimist Club, Alliance of Business and Professional Women, Institute of Industrial Engineers and Executives, serving as Treasurer of this last-mentioned organization.*

## **WOMAN—HER OPPORTUNITY HAS SHE MET IT?**

By **KARLA J. HOWE**

The history of woman from the day of the cave dweller has been one of growth until now she has achieved a place in the world of economics, business, the professions, and to some extent, in politics, and at the same time continuing in the role of homemaker.

According to a survey made in 1950 women are permitted to vote in all elections on an equal basis with men in only 56 countries out of 80 countries throughout the world; 3 countries admit women to all elections, but under different and generally higher qualifications than those applied to men; 5 countries allow women to vote only in local elections; 16 countries deny women any political rights—3 of these have no electoral rights for men either.

That, politically, is the status of women today and now we shall go back into history to see how we arrived at this point. I am going to try to bring to mind a picture of women on the march. Earliest mention of woman was as the mate of the cave man and we hear how he dragged her to his cave by the hair of her head. In that direction things are a bit changed today. Then came the names of the Courtizans, and great queens.

However, probably due to the nature of things, for generations the average woman's

activities were restricted to her home. As a homemaker, mother and helpmate her time was fully occupied, generally speaking. This is easy to understand when one considers that most of today's conveniences, which we take for granted, are the result of inventions made in relatively recent years. Then, too, men wanted to keep their women shielded from the outside world. Any breaking away from this tradition was looked upon with suspicion. And we shall see that as woman stepped out of her home into what she thought other fields, it was actually a projection into public of some of the talents which she practiced daily within the home. For it was in the arts, nursing and the theater particularly that we find woman first making a name for herself and striking out on her own quite fearlessly—or perhaps if we but knew not so fearlessly as courageously.

We could go back to the days of Cleopatra who used her beauty to captivate Anthony and there realize that in ruling as a great queen she needed more than that beauty—she needed, and had brains plus courage. Other great queens were Mary Queen of Scots, and Victoria, under whom the British Empire certainly prospered.

It is of women of later days that I want to talk, women whose names are well known

to most of us and to whom the women of today owe much! I shall not speak of them in chronological order but rather as I think of them.

One who made a tremendous impression upon me even as a child was Florence Nightingale. Many have reason to bless her. She was born of English parents in 1820 in Italy. At the age of 22 she entered a training school for nurses and later studied methods of nursing and hospital management. Looking back into history it seems there always were wars being fought—but what made them especially hideous was the lack of care for the wounded, who were only attended by male nurses. In 1854 Florence Nightingale volunteered to organize a staff of nurses for service in the Crimean War. It was largely through her efforts that women were employed in military hospitals and today nursing is among the most honored of professions.

It took two world wars to firmly entrench women as military nurses. On many fronts these women served under fire and won the admiration and respect of the fighters.

And into the tapestry of women's achievements is woven the memory of the superlative courage of Joan of Arc and more recently Edith Cavel, the Red Cross nurse, who admittedly facilitated the escape of Belgian and British men of military age during the first world war. As you know, she was shot as a spy.

We could go on and on picking out women, those pathfinders whose courage has been an inspiration to all others. Perhaps all of those I talk about had that as an outstanding virtue.

In the field of music, among others, we find Jenny Lind who was known as the Swedish Nightingale. She was very successful and became the toast of both Europe and our Eastern seaboard. Nevertheless, she traveled to many points far beyond the comforts to which she was accustomed. Some years ago I visited Tombstone, Arizona, and while there was shown the Opera House which was known as the Birdcage, because Jenny Lind once sang there. The dressing rooms were under the stage and an ordinary coal bin would be superior. However, I like to think that not money but a desire to give the joy of her beautiful voice to those pioneers of the West prompted her visit. And we must not be unmindful of the women pioneers who accompanied their men into tractless lands to settle in the West. Theirs were the real hardships, for not only did they give up accustomed comforts, but in many cases left some of the family behind, never to see them again.

Probably it was the women of the stage who advanced most rapidly with less opposition than those in other fields. Such women as Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Mojeski, Sarah Siddons, Mrs. Fiske, Nazimova and Ethel Barrymore, who each in their day and way contributed to woman's advancement in the field of the theatre.

We might also think upon the influence the women writers had upon the thinking of people all over the world. Many of you no doubt read *Little Women* and other juvenile books by Louisa Alcott. Her books were wholesome books and certainly never gave a child nightmares!

Among the women whose names are household words is that of Harriet Beecher Stowe. She is best remembered for her *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and who can say how largely this book influenced the thinking of her readers and contributed to the North's espousal of the cause of emancipation for the Negro. She had a flair for touching peoples hearts and this book caused a great deal of discussion, and certainly drew many into the anti-slavery ranks.

And to mention a few of the many other writers—Florence Bailey, who wrote of birds; Pearl Buck of our own day. Then in music, Carrie Jacobs Bond, who wrote many songs and whose *A Perfect Day* has become almost a classic.

In sociology Chicago's Jane Addams became world famous. She was a social reformer who in 1889 established Hull House. Hull House gave to the children of the slums new opportunities for betterment. You are all familiar with her work which aided so many. Some went on to fame in the professions and others became business leaders. Hull House, under Jane Addams, was a shining example of what could be done long before we heard of the forgotten man. It was the forerunner of many similar settlements and is ever a monument to the self-sacrificing women who together with Miss Addams staffed it.

The accomplishments of these women were generally acknowledged as feminine. But what was the lot of women in business, the professions, medicine, law, the sciences? Over a hundred years ago Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman medical student and then the first woman doctor. And over what obstacles! Hers was a cultured family and her education good. Yet school after school turned down her application for admittance because she was a woman, till finally she thought it would be necessary to go to Paris to study, and Paris was not a city families wanted their young daughters to live in unchaperoned. So she made one

more effort. A friend, Dr. Warrington, wrote to Dr. Lee, dean of Geneva College, a small school, which later became part of Syracuse University. The faculty evaded the issue and Dr. Lee went before the medical student body and read Elizabeth Blackwell's letter to them and put the question of her admittance to the class. He revealed that the faculty was unanimously opposed to the admission of a woman, but did not want the responsibility of turning her down. However, the class fooled him and they sent her an invitation to join them. She was earnest and persevering and graduated with high honors. Many were her early trials and tribulations. Village women at first scoffed and drew their skirts away when she passed. But when she graduated they tried to make up for their previous attitude. Perhaps the fact that highly placed personages paid her homage changed their attitude. This experience with women was an unhappy one she never forgot.

Others answered the call to medicine, among them Bertha van Hoosen, whose *Petticoat Surgeon* offers humorous reading

There also was Bertha Baker whose work in child hygiene in New York City was a contributing factor in establishing a lower baby death rate than found in any other large city. Of course, Madame Marie Curie, who with her husband discovered radium, tops the list. She won the Nobel prize twice and you all know of her contribution to science.

None can deny the tremendous influence of Mary Baker Eddy who founded Christian Science. Her followers are thousands in number.

In flying Amelia Erhardt gave her life in the pursuit of her profession.

There are many others but space does not permit naming them. We do know that today we have women doctors, women lawyers, auditors, accountants, credit managers, personnel managers and last but not least women teachers; and of them much could be written. Their responsibility and the part they have played in forming the character of today's citizens. And in each field women has succeeded because she applied herself to mastering her chosen profession. And in each field there are associations, business clubs, courses in universities, etc., at which she can and does improve and keep up to date her knowledge. But it has been an upward battle.

Some of you were perhaps something of pioneers in your field. I remember back in 1920 when my company was established, there were no credit women. But credit analysis was work that had to be done and

it fell to my lot. Our company became a member of the Chicago Association of Credit Men. In this Association there are special trade groups which meet to discuss their problems monthly and which are of great importance to the credit manager. We found that there was no trade group for paints, varnish, etc. So one was formed, and we met for the first time one very hot May evening. There were 34 of us, 33 men and I. To my dying day I shall remember the expression on the faces of some of these men when they saw a female coming in to sit with them. Right then and there I made up my mind that never in business would I ask for favors or breaks because of being a woman, but would try to earn their respect on an equal basis.

But what has woman done with her franchise and how did she get it. Back in 1868 the suffrage movement was formed. In 1869 suffragets gained their first victory—in Wyoming. I am not going into the history of the movement, but I do want to mention a few of those women. Susan Anthony, teacher; Carrie Chapman Catt, lawyer, lecturer, teacher; and later Nancy Langborne, an American who became Lady Astor, and the first woman member of the British Parliament. These and other women worked actively for suffrage, they were ridiculed and sneered at but never gave up. After Wyoming granted full and equal suffrage in 1869, other states followed slowly—and it was not until 1920 that ratification by the necessary 36 states finally made votes for women a law. It was to be hoped for and expected that with women gaining the vote things political would improve.

In many fields women have accomplished much. But what kind of citizens are we? What have we done with our suffrage? Are things better politically since women have had the vote? I may seem to be asking a great number of questions, but it is only through questioning and self analysis that we can arrive at any solution of the problems besetting us in this, the year 1951. A great many of us can remember an economy under which the thrifty and efficient could achieve a competence for their old age. People preferred to earn and save and could do so. It is true we have fought two world wars since then—but I fail to see why that should make this a "give me" era. Various segments of our population feel entitled to special favoritism as to taxes, witness the co-ops and profit earning institutions, while the rest of us carry the tax burden. Others want the Government to do this or that for them, gratis of course. Thrift seems to be a forgotten word. We have lost sight of the

fact that if you continue to take out of the pot without putting anything back into it—it will soon be empty, a vacuum! As a result we have a 50c dollar and a lack of faith in government and insecurity. Back 20 or 25 years ago the head of a family, or anyone else for that matter, could plan for the future of their dependents, i.e., a man could buy insurance, set up a plan for his children's education and his wife's protection, and feel sure that the money set aside for this purpose would be ample. Today such plans then made will not do the job. Why? As I said, we have a 50c dollar. Everything is inflated.

Now everywhere people ask whose fault it is that we have come to our present condition. Is it the fault of the parents, teachers, men or perhaps, too, ours the women. Let's examine the picture. Let's see what we do or fail to do—come election time. First and foremost do we do our duty and vote? This should be felt to be a privilege! Do we vote like our fathers, brothers, husbands, or do we do our own thinking and choosing? Might it not be well to apply the precepts of business to the problem. Business men employ credit managers to pass on the desirability of an account creditwise. In ascertaining this the credit manager applies the three "C's" of credit—character, capacity and capital. They have learned that character alone does not guarantee success, so check into the other two phases before making a decision as to taking the account on or not. I'd like for you to think about this as we go on.

So in considering a candidate do we ask whether he or she is black, white, yellow or what have you? Do we ask whether he is a Catholic, Jew, Protestant, Mohammedan, etc., instead of considering his desirability as a candidate? Or do we apply the credit manager's test to him? We might well ask is this candidate of good character, what his affiliations are and who his friends are, for we are judged by the company we keep. And if we decide he is of good character, do we then check into his ability, his capacity to fill the job, knowing that as in debtors character alone would not make him a success. And if he passes these tests, what about capital, his financial position? If he has money, how did he get it? Inherit it, or make it, and how does he handle it? If he lacks money, even though of good character, is he strong enough to withstand temptations, which are the part of men in office? Don't take my word for it. Most of us here either saw on television or heard on the radio, or read of the Kefauver investigation which showed alliances between poli-

ticians and gangsters. Then we should know the last question is a most important one. Then let's say we finally have a candidate who meets all the tests, and let's also say we approve of his platform and then do everything possible to get him elected and succeed. So finally we have our candidate in office, either federal, state or local. Then do we, as citizens, inform ourselves as to proposed laws? Our various newspapers certainly keep the public informed and there are plenty of other sources from which to get information, such as chambers of commerce, trade associations, etc. Do we only write, phone or wire our representatives when we have a gripe? Or do we become vocal and tell these men and women who represent us just what we think about a given problem? Or do we leave it to the ever vocal lobbyists and pressure groups whose selfish motives care nothing for the welfare of this country. A lot of questions you say, but if we answer them honestly I believe that you will find that as women we have fallen short in our obligation to our country. We are all busy, terrifically busy, but it is my sincere belief that unless we do take more interest in affairs political we will find the freedoms, which we have enjoyed most of our lives and for which both men and women fought, then bequeathed to us, disappearing.

There are many things all voters should familiarize themselves with. Our present economic condition and what factors effect it. One of the foremost is, of course, the continued demands of labor for wage increases which, whether justified or not, must be considered, as to the effect they have on our economy in general and especially on the white collar and professional workers who are not organized, whose pay is frozen, and yet have to pay higher prices for commodities, many of which are occasioned by pay raises passed on to the consumer.

Secondly—the farm support merits our attention. For under the parity clause you have seen costs of farm products go up and up. And they will continue to advance until they reach the government support price. All this while prices of other segments of our population are frozen and wages stabilized.

Planning for defense means taxes. This we realize—but what about some economy in government? What has been done about the Hoover recommendations which would save the administration so much money in running the Government? Why have not these recommendations been put into practice?

Instead of a reduction in government workers you read almost daily of more and more people being added to the payroll!

How can a change be brought about? By votes, yours and mine, and others who are willing to keep themselves informed and to work men of integrity in office. Naturally the bureaucrats, feeding at the political trough, and their families, are reluctant to vote themselves out of these jobs.

And now we have another problem to think about. The firing of General McArthur and what effect this will have on the Korean situation! Is appeasement going to be the answer? Maybe—but it certainly is not American. There are many issues at stake, but what women especially should

remember is that nothing is corrected by evading issues and leaving the solution to someone else. As citizens it is up to us to get all possible facts and then forget everything but the ultimate welfare of our country. I believe a strong independent America, tied to no one's apron-strings, can act best for the ultimate, eventual, good of all the world's people. It is necessary that we gain a position where all the world will hesitate to step on Uncle Sam's toes. This will take much doing by sincere, patriotic citizens, and by men and women of good character in office. That is where we come in—by doing our duty and using our franchise to put such people in office—thus justifying the sacrifices of the many women who came before us.

## COAST-TO-COAST

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**HAZEL BROOKS SCOTT, Los Angeles, California**

### ATLANTA

Atlanta members, being interested in the new Georgia Sales and Use Tax Act and its effect on them, called on Mr. P. W. Christian to explain the act at the April meeting. Mr. Christian, who is head of The Institute of Business and Accounting, clarified some of the elusive features and pointed out the pitfalls into which businesses can fall and become subject to high penalties.

The May public relations meeting was addressed by Mr. Malcom H. Bryan, President of the Federal Reserve Bank. His topic was "The Crisis in the American Economy." Members invited their employers as guests.

### CHICAGO

"Woman—Her Opportunity. Has She Met It?" was discussed by Karla J. Howe, President of Great Lakes Varnish Works, Inc., at the public relations meeting in April. Honored guests included deans of schools of commerce and other educators of schools in which students are studying higher accountancy.

Chapter members were invited as guests of NACA in April to hear Mr. W. H. Franklin of the Caterpillar Tractor Co. speak on "Up-to-Date Accounting Reports for Management." ASWA members were introduced by Zosia Stege, chapter president, who explained the purpose and organization of ASWA.

Chicago's study group has been devoting its time and efforts to a worthwhile series on public speaking.

### CINCINNATI

Women in Mexico, when educated, have a very prominent place in industry and in business, chapter members were told by Mr. Bernard E. Alvarez, associated with Price & Cia, Inc., importers, at the April meeting. Women accountants, both certified and uncertified, are in practice there.

"Looking Ahead in Accounting" was the interesting topic presented by Mr. Norwood Geis, C.P.A. and professor of accounting at the University of Cincinnati, at the chapter's first anniversary meeting in June.

### CLEVELAND

In April "Capital Gain and Loss Problems" were cleared up by a panel of chapter members consisting of Ednah H. Jurey, C.P.A., Caroline Elkins, Frances M. Bogovich, and Eleanor M. Clark, C.P.A.

### COLUMBUS

Members were both enlightened and entertained at their April meeting by Mr. Hugh Huntington, prominent Columbus attorney, speaking on "Wills and Inheritance Taxes." He told of the wills of Calvin Coolidge, Brigham Young, the prosperous bachelor, and the shrewd attorney who married the widow after he had settled her estate.

### DENVER

The Denver Chapter received its charter in the early part of 1950 and thus far has devoted its efforts mainly to organization and to obtaining new members. The membership has grown from 15 charter mem-