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APERTURA DE LA SESION

Se abre la sesion a las 10:35 a.m. ocupando el estrado el Presidente, Hon. Claro M. Recto.

EL PRESIDENTE: Se declara abierta la sesion.

DISPENSACION DE LA LECTURA DE LA LISTA DE DELEGADOS Y DEL ACTA

SR. GRAFILO: Señor Presidente.

EL PRESIDENTE: Señor Delegado.

SR. GRAFILO: Pido que se dispense la lectura de la lista de Delegados y del Acta, y que esta se de por aprobada.

EL PRESIDENTE: ¿Hay alguna objecion a la mocion? **(Silencio.)** La Mesa no oye ninguna. Queda aprobada.

CONSIDERACION DEL PROYECTO DE RESOLUCION,
CONCEDIENDO EL SUFRAGIO A LOS VARONES
SOLAMENTE.
(Continuacion)

EL PRESIDENTE: Esta en orden la continuacion de la discusion del Proyecto de Resolucion concediendo el sufragio a los varones solamente.

MR. ABELLA. Mr. President, before presenting the first speaker this morning, I would like to present the constitutional precept sponsored by the Chairman of the Committee on Suffrage, Delegate Jose Altavas from Capiz. It must be remembered by this Assembly that the Delegate from Capiz spoke against woman suffrage and further said that he had changed his mind a long time ago. So I would like the Secretary to read the precept for the information of the Assembly.

EL PRESIDENTE: La insercion que se pide es contraria a los procedimientos parlamentarios, y, por tanto, no puede la Mesa ordenar dicha insercion. Eso se puede hacer, haciendolo parte del discurso que se pronuncie.

MR. ABELLA. The orator this morning is the Delegate from La Union, Mr. Osias.

EL PRESIDENTE: Tiene la palabra el Delegado por La Union.

DISCURSO DEL SR. OSIAS A FAVOR DEL SUFFRAGIO FEMENINO

MR. OSIAS. Mr. president, I rise in opposition to the resolution presented. About the only thing commendatory about this resolution is that it is clear and free from ambiguity. It reads: "RESOLVED THAT THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE UNDER THE

CONSTITUTION BE GRANTED TO MALE CITIZENS ONLY." In the present form, Mr. President, this resolution is inexcusably iniquitous and superlatively selfish. I am glad, however, that it recognizes that suffrage is a right because it speaks of the right of suffrage. If it is a right to vote, then to withhold it is a wrong. I said, Mr. President, that it is iniquitous because it withholds not only a right but what has become an acquired right granted to a considerable proportion of the Philippine population. To withdraw a right which, by law, has been granted is iniquitous, inequity itself. Note as it is worded, that the right of suffrage shall be granted to male citizens only, is superlative selfishness. I have seen no resolution presented in any deliberative body equalling this. It is well that some of us, Mr. President, should rise and speak for that inarticulate group of our population constituting practically fifty per cent who, if this resolution is approved, will be forever relegated to oblivion insofar as partisanship is concerned. There can be no political affairs is debate with respect to the right to vote not only as a right but as a privilege. It is furthermore a political responsibility which entails a weighty civic duty. For us to deny to what we at times gallantly refer to as the better half, this elemental right to vote and be voted, without even experimenting or giving a fair trial to the law granting women this right, which has been dreamed of for years and years by the women of the Philippines, is, again I say, inexcusably iniquitous and superlatively selfish. No self-respecting man ought to lend himself to a scheming proposition like this.

SR. KAPUNAN. Señor Presidente, pido que se descarte lo que acaba de decir el orador.

MR. OSIAS. This refers to no man; it is an impersonal statement; it refers to no Delegate. I am speaking of impersonal matters, Mr. President. The rules permit that.

It is time that we called a spade a spade and characterized the step that we are about to take, the only proper way that it should be characterized. Many who are opposed to the granting of suffrage to our women admit their capacity. They cannot deny that they have demonstrated their ability in various lines of human activity. All will, I think, unanimously pay tribute to women, and I am engaging in no panegyric when I refer to their heroism, their ability, their patriotism which at least equal those possessed by men.

(El Presidente cede el estrado al Delegado Sr. Kapunan.)

It has been stated here that it is unnecessary to grant women the right of suffrage because they are already exercising their influence in that direction. My answer is that what they are doing indirectly we ought to be willing to allow them to perform directly. It has been alleged that to permit women to vote and be voted would be the ruin of our homes. For those men who think thusly, I have nothing but respect. I would remind them, however, that they seem to show little faith in the stability of our homes if they entertain the fear that the mere grant of this right of suffrage would mean the ruination of Filipino homes. What if there should be a duplication of the vote of the husband when the wife votes? I say, what if there should be a duplication of the vote of the wife compared with the vote of the husband? Why not present the reverse of the picture? How about the husbands that merely reflect the views of the women now? There are two sides, and if they should differ, what of it? There is a difference in religion now which is more vital to the homes than a mere difference of political faith.

Mr. President, when this country and this Government embarked upon the policy of extending education not only to boys but to girls, the people here must have known that education of that nature necessarily had to result in women claiming greater participation in public affairs. To deny them the right of suffrage, to curtail their legitimate duty to render service to the country in the way that they covet, is to show lack of faith in the education of the women of the Philippines. Mr. President, if we recognize the peculiar genius of the Filipino women for household management, may I say that municipal government is nothing more than housekeeping on a large scale? To manage a municipality is nothing more than to manage a home, perhaps extended in its scope, and may I say to my fellow Delegates from the so-called Christian provinces, that we should take a lesson from the experience of our brethren in the South, wrongly referred to as Moroland, because with or without laws, they already have women who are Presidents in fact? We, who at times tend to look upon our brethren in the so-called special provinces as inferior in political experience, may well learn from the example that they have set. What is being done now, therefore, without sanction of law ought to be done with sanction of law, not only in Cotabato, not only in the South, but all over the Philippine Islands. In the resolution you seek to deny women the right of suffrage, and yet you trust a woman, your wife, in the selection of your food, in the training of your children, in the safekeeping of your family bank. It has been shown to be the experience, at least by common consent, because it is sanctioned by our own practice, that we recognize the superiority of the Filipino wife in the management of our household finances. Who knows but the entrance of Filipino women in politics may curtail this Saturnalia of extravagance that has entered the Government of the Philippine Islands?

Mr. President, I am against the resolution because it is against every tenet, every element, of modern democracy. We talk of democracy being a government of the people and yet deny fifty per cent of that self same people the right to vote. Why, we might just as well re-define democracy if we do this and say democracy is a government of less than half of the people for all the people. That would have to be our definition. Then it would be a funny definition at that, and yet would be truer to facts. There is an opposition that has cropped up against granting women the right of suffrage because of the supposed additional expense, and yet those same opponents of woman suffrage who talk in that manner have proposed the holding of a plebiscite which is also expensive. I do not see the logic of one who alleges that the right of suffrage should not be granted women because of additional expenses and at the same time proposes the holding of a plebiscite before granting the suffrage to women. Mr. President, when America granted the right of suffrage to men in the Philippine Islands, we were not required to have a plebiscite; we were granted it outright because it was right that it should be done. The requirement that we go into a plebiscite before we grant women the right of suffrage shows that the male citizens of this country lack control of our governmental affairs, and are not even just, fair, and generous to the flesh of their own flesh, to the blood of their own blood, as the Americans were when they granted the right of suffrage to men in the Philippine Islands. I cannot place myself in that position, and hence I am speaking against the resolution.

Opponents of woman suffrage depict of gloomy fate; they paint a dark picture as to the possible outcome of this grant of the right of suffrage. I do not despair, and the women of the Philippines ought not to despair either, because all social reforms have always been accomplished to the accompaniment of the tune of the prophets of

failure. Dire consequences were prophesied when higher education was granted to women of the Philippines. That has been true throughout the history of education, and yet we all know now that it was a proper thing to do and that it was to the advantage not only of every nation but of humanity at large that the women should be given equal opportunities in matters of education. Following the same line of reasoning, we ought to give them the opportunity to exercise suffrage. I cannot subscribe, Mr. President, to the philosophy of fear. to the philosophy of defratism, which is animating the opponents of woman suffrage who are making all sorts of dire prophesies with respect to the outcome of the grant of the right of suffrage. Instead of approving the resolution and incorporating in our Constitution a provision denying women the right of suffrage, worse than withholding a right that has already been granted by law, some such provision as this should be incorporated: "All persons who are not citizens or subjects of a foreign power, 18 years of age or over, except the insane and feeble-minded and those convicted in a court of competent jurisdiction of an infamous offense, who have been residents of the Philippine Islands for one year..."

There are three features of that proposed constitutional provision that need elucidation. Clearly, the provision seeks to grant the right of suffrage to both men and women. It grants that right to those who have attained the age of eighteen years or over. It seeks, furthermore, to emphasize the educational qualifications, which is as it should be. Why, it is a sorry sight, just a painful sight, to allow men illiterates corrupt at times, to be kept in the quarters of candidates, then taken to the polls to see somebody else do the voting for them because they do not know how to read and write. And yet, because of my respect for age, I will not deny even the illiterate voters the right to vote, once they have qualified to vote, because it is wrong, iniquitous, to withhold or deny what is already conferred them by law.

Just a word, Mr. President, with regard to age. I see no reason why we should follow the age limit prescribed by countries in the temperate climates. It is known that tropical peoples mature earlier, die earlier and, therefore, I am for granting the right of suffrage to men and women with educational qualification eighteen years or over. I wish to announce my intention to propose that as an amendment at the proper time, when we shall consider the draft of the Constitution.

Let us be fair to the women by giving them the right to vote. There are people who criticize women when they come to this hall in great numbers. They say such women are compaigning. When women are not numerous, they are also criticized. It is not just, not courteous, to criticize them that way. Where is our bounteous spirit of gallantly and courtesy and respect to the women before whom, when we need them, we appear on bended knees? A supposed attack has been made on the capabilities of our women through some publication by a certain leader or two, doubting the advisability of granting women the right to vote. Mr. President, one sparrow does not make a summer. Besides, all of us are practical politicians; we know that there are things said in the heat of a political fight that are subject to revision in our calmer moments. And so we ought to think that anything said or published in the heat of the moment can be taken with a grain of salt.

I am reliably informed that the person quoted here as having doubted the wisdom of granting the right of suffrage to women, because of certain supposed irregularities committed in a club's election, is still in favor of woman suffrage. Today, even granting that what that person said is true, this does not prove that women are not

capable of exercising the right of suffrage. It rather proves that they are ready because they even can go through the process that we ourselves have set as an example for them to follow.

Mr. President, I need not relate here the achievements of women in countries where the right of suffrage has been granted them. Literature on the subject is extensive; anyone of sufficient industry may consult it and there find that women have been instrumental in ameliorating the conditions of laboring classes, improving conditions in the factories where women and children work, providing playgrounds for growing citizens, and in other ways fostering cultural, social and spiritual movements that are essential to the development of a sound body politic. I doubt not that what has been achieved in other countries through the grant of the right of suffrage to women may likewise be enjoyed by this country of ours if we but forget our selfishness, if we but be fair to the women and let them exercise that right which by law is now theirs. We have various precedents to follow if we should consider granting the right of suffrage, without distinction of sex. We have Mexico, which, by Article 34 of her Constitution, grants the right of suffrage to women and men alike; Germany, Article 17 of its Constitution; Czechoslovakia, Article 9; Poland, Article 12; Ireland, Article 14; Spain, Article 36; and the United States, 19th Amendment. I am not going to repeat the history of the achievement and the service of women in other lands. That has been done by the previous speakers in support of the right of suffrage for women.

Before closing, Mr. President, may I avail myself of this occasion to say that I am indebted to women of the United States? As Resident Commissioner in the United States, laboring as best as I could, with the light that God gave me, I naturally sought their cooperation and enlisted the support of as many elements and organizations and individuals as possible in the United States in our gigantic fight for national emancipation. While the independence bill was pending in the Congress of the United States, there were women organizations interested in including as a provision of the independence law one which would confer the right of suffrage to the women of the Philippines. Mrs. Osias and I contacted those organizations and the leaders, and we begged them to desist from their intention for two reasons. First, I feared, and my colleagues likewise entertained the same view, that the introduction of another controversial point in the Independence Law might give rise to further dilatory tactics in the Congress of the United States and delay, if not frustrate, the passage of the Independence Act. Second, we believed that a social reform of such far-reaching significance had better come from the people themselves and that it was certainly much better for us to effect our own social reforms than have them forced upon us. Partly because of this, Mr. President, in addition to the fact, of course, that I am convinced of the proper step to take, I am standing today, speaking in favor of granting the right of suffrage not only to male citizens but to female citizens as well, 18 years of age or over. But the question of age can be discussed at some other time.

Mr. President, in closing, may I say that I favor women's participation in politics, because I entertain the hope that their entry will give weightier influence upon our body politic and induce the men in high places to give more thought to remedying the squalor that is now the lot of the poor and the lowly, instead of merely being dazzled by the splendor of the rich and the mighty?

Mr. President, I have a word of counsel to the women of the Philippines. I say that