

The following excerpt is from a speech by **Franklin S. Richards** at the Utah State Constitutional Convention in 1895. Richards was an attorney for the LDS Church, a member of the Council of the Utah Territorial Legislature (similar to a State Senate), and husband to Emily Richards, one of the founders of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association.



“There are thousands of women taxpayers in Utah; more in proportion to population than in any other State; so long as they acquiesce [agree] in being represented by the other half of society, we may conclude that no open violence is done them in respect to their civil and political rights. But whenever such women disclaim such representation, whenever they claim their right to be governed only as they yield their ‘consent,’ according to the Declaration [of Independence], we are guilty of usurpation [taking something in a forceful way] and tyranny whenever we resolve to make them amenable [agreeable] to our government, without first providing for obtaining their consent through the ordinary channels of representation.”

“To say that women would be swayed by their ‘impulses and religious instincts,’ is to insinuate that they are either lacking in intelligence or wanting in integrity...The inference that danger would ensue to the government if women were permitted to take part in its affairs... is not creditable to the men who have hitherto controlled the government...The franchise was not taken away from them because they were deemed unworthy or unfit...but for other reasons which have long ceased to exist. The least we can do is to restore it [their voting rights] in the Constitution.”

“So I say that if the price of Statehood is the disfranchisement of one-half of the people; if our wives and mothers, our sisters and daughters, are to be accounted either unworthy or incapacitated to exercise the rights and privileges of citizenship, then...it is not worth the price demanded...”

“Equal Suffrage should be provided in the Constitution, because it is just and right, and because it is in the highest and best sense expedient [easy or quick way to solve a problem]. I know that a majority of the members of this Convention concur [agree] with me in this belief. I have no doubt that a majority of the people of Utah entertain the same view, and so I feel assured that it will be incorporated in the organic law. The Constitution will be adopted by the people; our State will be admitted into the Union; Equal Suffrage will prove the brightest and purest ray of Utah’s glorious star; it will shine forever in the immortal galaxy, as a beacon light on the tops of the mountains beckoning our sister States and Territories upward and onward to the higher plane of civilization, and the fuller measure of civil and religious liberty.”

Excerpt from Utah State Constitutional Convention, 1895.