A Women's School for Citizenship  

By ELLIS MEREDITH

People who think the enfranchisement of women is simply going to double the present vote may be interested in the New Hampshire way of extending the right hand of fellowship to the new voter.

The fact that New Hampshire, which has not yet given even presidential suffrage to her womenkind, should be the first state to hold what was really a political institute is remarkable, but there is a reason why, and that reason is Mrs. Mary I. Wood, corresponding secretary of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

Now New England is regarded as a thoroughly conservative section. Every one has had New Hampshire granite cited as an emblem of unservable fixity, but New England has never had any hesitation on the subject of education. It has been strong for schools and study and lectures and forums. It has always been willing to take the awful risk of learning some new things that might not be in complete harmony with a lot of old things—that might even overturn some of the established ideas in the course of time, so when somebody reminded Mrs. Wood that women might even vote for the presidential electors next year, a duty for which they were not prepared, she said: "Let's have a school for citizenship!"

The president of New Hampshire College, R. D. Hetzel, is an Oregon man, used to the fearsome sight of women going to the polls, and he welcomed the idea, and invited the women to come to school in their own college. They got together a faculty to deal with "Citizenship" in general and "Political Policies" and "Reconstruction Problems" in particular. Then the Committee on Management, instead of making a program as long as the moral law, left some time for discussions and they left one free afternoon.

"We decided that we would try to get Mrs. Nancy Schoonmaker of Connecticut, to give her course of citizenship lectures," says Mrs. Wood, "and around that course, which gave the machinery of citizenship, we built up a schedule which emphasized the fact that the are doubling of the male vote was not worth the effort which we have put into it." Also, that party politics, simply as such, would fail to attract thinking women unless there was some program in the party which meant progress. My thought was that we would look a little at the exact spot where we are now standing, and then read the guideposts to see whither we are tending and which road we wish to take. We opened the meetings with a short parliamentary drill simply to tide over the awkward moment when people are strolling in. I intended to get a good parliamentary drill.

Mrs. Schoonmaker, who has written a book and conducts a correspondence course in citizenship for Connecticut women under the auspices of the Connecticut Suffrage association was "lent" by that association for the week, with the result that most of the rest of the New England states were not wanted to "borrow" her to conduct classes for them also, and similar schools are proposed for the near future in a number of other states. Requests for plan and program have come from Indiana, Maine, Vermont and Toronto, and the Dominion of Canada is planning for a series of schools, reaching from ocean to ocean.

Everybody was pleased, interested and inspired to go home and have a "district school" of her own. Everybody, that is, except the professional politicians who can't see why women can't be content to "let well enough alone and vote the ticket," this being the universal view of the male politician whether he has his habitat in Florida or Vermont.