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Fiona O'Carroll April 13, 2014

“The Instinct of Every Real Woman”: The Ideas of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the U.S., 1868-1920

by

Fiona O’Carroll

Dr. Patrick Allitt
Adviser

History Department

Dr. Patrick Allitt

Adviser

Dr. Michael Elliott

Committee Member

Dr. Elissa Marder

Committee Member

Dr. Mary Odem

Committee Member

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Abstract

"The Instinct of Every Real Woman": The Ideas of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the U.S., 1868-1920

By Fiona O'Carroll

Between 1868 and 1920, the most active, organized opposition to the American woman suffrage movement came from women, who became known as anti-suffragists or "antis." This thesis explores the ideas, beliefs, values, concerns, and ideals of the women who organized to oppose the woman suffrage movement. It examines the arguments they put forward in journals, pamphlets and other publications, and concludes that anti-suffragists are best understood as representatives of the mainstream response to the question of votes for women. Anti-suffragists invoked widely accepted beliefs to support their defense of the status quo, drawing on religion, science, the legal tradition, social custom, and cultural ideals. This thesis explores the ideas of the anti-suffrage movement roughly chronologically, showing how anti-suffragists responded to the priorities, beliefs, and anxieties of particular historical moments and settings. From nineteenth-century beliefs about women's divinely ordained sphere to twentieth-century arguments about women's special nonpartisan role in progressive reform, anti-suffragists maintained that woman suffrage would mean more loss than gain for American women and for the United States as a whole. Approaching the anti-suffragists' views as mainstream and respectable – to use their word, "normal" – within their context can help us understand why the demand for votes for women was perceived as a radical idea and why the suffragists' struggle was such a long and arduous one.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mother, who would have been a magnificent suffragist if she had lived a hundred years ago.

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Anti-suffragists, ca. 1915.

Introduction

On a cold, rainy afternoon in late November of 1911, women from across the United States gathered at the Park Avenue residence of Josephine Jewell Dodge with a curious purpose.[1] They came from eight states and the District of Columbia, driven by a common goal: to defeat woman suffrage. Over the course of their meeting in Mrs. Dodge's parlor, they established the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) and elected ten of the women present to its Board of Directors.[2] Their host, a veteran of the New York anti-suffrage movement, would serve as their president. Evoking the symbolic color of the suffrage movement in her first presidential speech, Mrs. Dodge declared that the mission of the NAOWS would be to "follow the yellow flag and endeavor to stamp out the pestilence. Where the contagion is rampant the association will endeavor to check it. Where the malady is only threatened we will inoculate against it."[3] To conclude their meeting, the women chose a slogan that would make headlines the next day: "Down with the Yellow Peril, Women's Votes!"[4]

What drove these women to travel hundreds – in a few cases, thousands – of miles to make their way, in a downpour, to such a meeting? This thesis will explore the ideas, beliefs, values, concerns, and ideals of the women who organized to oppose the woman suffrage movement. It will examine the arguments they put forward in the journals, pamphlets, and other publications with which they endeavored to "stamp out the pestilence" of votes for women.

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[1] Anne M. Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920: Women Against Equality* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 108. For evidence that it was cold and rainy, see "Hunt in the Mud," *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1911, and "Six Boys Lost Together," *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1911.
[2] *The Woman's Protest* 1 no. 1 (May 1912), 2.
[3] "Anti-Suffragists in a National Union," *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1911.
[4] Ibid.

From women's rights leaders' attempts to secure "universal suffrage" in the years following the Civil War to the final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, suffragists consistently encountered resistance from other women, who became known as anti-suffragists or "antis." By the end of the nineteenth century, the most active, organized opposition to woman suffrage came from women.[5] The presence of anti-suffragists baffled and troubled the suffragists, who responded by mentioning it as infrequently as possible. In 1878, president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, Clemence Lozier, asserted before the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections: "To-day all thinking women of this republic feel keenly their degradation in consequence of the deprivation of the ballot."[6] Can the presence of anti-suffrage women be explained merely by concluding that they were not "thinking women"? Certainly, their position was a puzzling one, especially when viewed in hindsight. William O'Neill, one of the first historians to include anti-suffragists in an account of the struggle for woman suffrage, hypothesized that "perhaps they suffered from deep personality disorders or status conflicts."[7]

I will argue, to the contrary, that anti-suffragists are better understood as representatives of the mainstream response to the question of woman suffrage. They invoked widely accepted beliefs to support their defense of the status quo, drawing on religion, science, the legal tradition, social custom, and cultural ideals. Their position was rooted in a powerful patriarchal tradition and in a conventional understanding of gender and gender

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[5] Jane J. Camhi. *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism, 1880-1920* (New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1994); Thomas J. Jablonsky, *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States, 1868-1920* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1994).

[6] Clemence S. Lozier, M.D., "Arguments before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate, in behalf of a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, prohibiting the several states from disfranchising United States citizens on account of sex, January 11 and 12, 1878" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1878).

[7] William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (New York: Quadrangle / The New York Times Book Co., 1971) 64.

roles. It seemed self-evident to anti-suffragists and many of their contemporaries that because men and women were essentially different, they should perform different functions in society. While some of the anti-suffragists' ideas seem strange today, they seemed reasonable and reassuringly familiar to many Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Anti-suffragists did not see themselves as atypical or marginal. To the contrary, anti-suffragists identified themselves as representatives of the "normal woman."[8] This put them in the paradoxical position of having to depart from what they perceived to be normal womanly behavior in order to defend it. They spoke on behalf of "the silent women" and engaged in political activities in order to protect women's right not to engage in political activities. When anti-suffragists formed the NAOWS, they introduced themselves in its journal, *The Woman's Protest*, as women who "wish simply to do woman's work and not to be mixed up in politics or anything that looks like it. We who are the active workers share that feeling, but realize that we must go into politics temporarily to some extent to keep out of politics definitely."[9] The NAOWS boasted over 100,000 members within a year of its founding and twenty-six state affiliates by 1919.[10] Antis' insistence that "normal" women did not want the vote was both a clever rhetorical strategy – it cast the suffragists as abnormal, deviant, dissatisfied agitators – and an earnest conviction. Anti-suffragists supported this assertion by pointing out that only a minority of American women supported woman suffrage. It was true that suffragists struggled to build widespread support among

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[8] See for example "Ten Reasons Why The Great Majority of Women Do Not Want the Ballot," Nebraska Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, Omaha, Nebraska [1914?], reproduced in Laura McKee Hickman, "Thou Shalt Not Vote: Anti-Suffrage in Nebraska, 1914-1920," *Nebraska History* 80 (1999): 63.

[9] *The Woman's Protest* 1 no. 1 (May 1912), 3.

[10] Jablonsky 85; Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 104.

women until the 1910s – on which grounds anti-suffragists protested vigorously against suffragists' claim to speak on behalf of all American women.[11]

Approaching the anti-suffragists' views as mainstream and respectable – to use their word, "normal" – within their context can help us understand why the struggle for woman suffrage was such a long and arduous one. After Elizabeth Cady Stanton proposed to work for women's right to vote at the Seneca Fall Convention in 1848, it took several generations of women and the better part of a century to achieve this goal. When women won the right to vote, Carrie Chapman Catt took stock of the suffrage movement's efforts since the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868:

> "To get that word 'male' out of the Constitution cost the women of the country fifty-two years of pauseless campaign. Fifty-six campaigns of state referenda; 480 campaigns to get legislatures to submit suffrage amendments; forty-seven campaigns to get constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into state constitutions; 277 campaigns to get state party conventions and thirty campaigns to get presidential party conventions to include woman suffrage in party platforms; nineteen campaigns with nineteen successive Congresses and the final work of ratification."[12]

Exploring anti-suffragists' ideas and arguments is a way of exploring what suffragists had to overcome. As Ellen DuBois and other historians have noted, woman suffrage was a radical idea.[13] It proposed to redefine the nature of women's citizenship and to alter women's relationship to the state and to society. Beyond its practical implications for women's civic standing, the demand for woman suffrage became a symbol of larger changes to women's role in American society. Anti-suffragists' arguments provide a lens through which to

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[11] Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[12] Quoted in NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940), 53.
[13] Ellen DuBois, "The Radicalism of the Woman Suffrage Movement: Notes Toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. ½ (Autumn 1975): 63-71.

understand why the idea of votes for women seemed radical and met with such sustained resistance.

In terms of biographical characteristics, leading anti-suffragists were remarkably similar to their suffragist counterparts: white, native-born, middle and upper class, well-educated (often educated at the same institutions), on average aged 45 to 55, mostly Protestant, single or married in roughly the same proportions, actively involved in women's clubs.[14] The leadership of the anti-suffrage movement was based in the industrialized, urbanized, populous Eastern states, spreading to Midwestern and Southern states as these states experienced suffrage campaigns. Anti-suffragists included in their ranks women who featured prominently in public life and who were in many respects "as modern as their suffragist counterparts."[15] This was especially true of the twentieth-century anti-suffragist leadership, which included social reformers, child labor commissioners, deans of women's colleges (notably Annie Nathan Meyer, founder of Barnard College), journalists, and one of the first women bicycle owners in New York.[16]

"The essence of anti statements of opposition," wrote sociologist Jeanne Howard in 1982, "was largely the same from Catharine Beecher's remarks in 1870 to the last issue of *The Remonstrance* in 1920," but her interpretation requires revision.[17] Like Howard, historians of the anti-suffrage movement have tended to treat its reasoning as a static set of ideas. Some historians have painted a picture of the anti-suffrage ideology as essentially Victorian, while others have relied almost exclusively on sources published after 1910 to

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[14] "Biographical Appendix" in Camhi, 235-245; Green 62-63.
[15] Thomas J. Jablonsky, "Female Opposition: The Anti-Suffrage Campaign," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited,* ed. Jean H. Baker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126-127.
[16] Ibid.; Linda K. Kerber, "Meyer, Annie Nathan, Feb. 19, 1867-Sept. 23, 1951," *Notable American Women: The Modern Period,* ed. Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 473-474.
[17] Jeanne Howard, "Our Own Worst Enemies: Women Opposed to Woman Suffrage," *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* 9 (1982): 467, accessed September 3, 2013, http://heinonline.org.

construct an account of the anti-suffragists' arguments.[18] Both interpretations have their drawbacks: the former excludes the antis' Progressive Era reasoning, while the latter pays little attention to the origins of anti-suffragism and thus overlooks, for example, the important role played in the earlier period by religion. Neither approach accounts for the degree to which the anti-suffrage rationale evolved over time, an evolution that can be traced in the titles of anti-suffrage periodicals: *The True Woman* (1871-1873), *The Remonstrance* (1890-1920), *The Anti-Suffragist* (1908-1912), *The Woman's Protest* (1912-1918), *The Woman Patriot* (1918-1932). An approach that is sensitive to change as well as to continuity helps to show how anti-suffragists responded to the priorities, beliefs, and anxieties of particular historical moments and settings. Anti-suffragists shifted their emphases over time and attempted to reconcile new realities and theories with core beliefs and values. What it meant to be a "normal woman" changed significantly between 1868 and 1920. These changes shaped anti-suffragists' arguments as well as their lives.

This thesis will explore the ideas of the anti-suffrage movement roughly chronologically. Chapter 1 will discuss the response to suffragists' initial attempts to secure a national amendment in the late 1860s and 1870s. Established in 1870, the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society presented petitions to Congress that invoked Biblical prescriptions for women's behavior, the Victorian ideal of "true womanhood," and the ideology of separate spheres for men and women. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, anti-suffragists turned increasingly to science, rather than to the Bible, as the source of authority on gender and gender relations. Chapter 2 will explore the ways in which scientific and medical orthodoxy reinforced anti-suffragists' conviction that men and women were more different

[18] Jane Camhi presented the former interpretation; Thomas Jablonsky, Manuela Thurner, and Susan Marshall took the latter approach, relying heavily on *The Woman's Protest* (1911-1916).

than similar and that "specialization of function" according to sex was the ideal way to organize society. The nation required its male and female citizens to perform distinctly masculine and feminine duties, anti-suffragists believed, and women's mission was motherhood. Chapter 3 will consider the theme of democracy within the context of a period historians have termed the "suffrage doldrums," which lasted from 1896 to 1910. Susan B. Anthony explained the setbacks for the suffrage movement during this period by pointing to "the inertia in the growth of democracy" that resulted from the enfranchisement of African-Americans and immigrants.[19] Both suffragists and anti-suffragists wrestled with the practical implications of the principle of democracy, and during this period anti-suffragists tapped into widespread hostility to further "experiments" in widening the franchise. Chapter 4 will explain anti-suffragists' argument that the ballot would actually be a "handicap" in women's social reform work. In the 1910s, a time of widespread zeal for progressive reform and social activism, anti-suffragists challenged the suffragists' portrayal of the ballot as a "panacea" for social ills and defended women's special nonpartisan role in public life, arguing that the nation needed a moral force untainted by political corruption and political ambition. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the impact of the First World War on the debate about woman suffrage. During the war, as public opinion shifted to favor the suffragists, the anti-suffrage movement migrated further to the right and diverged increasingly widely from the mainstream attitude toward the question of woman suffrage. Between 1917 and 1920, anti-suffragists' arguments centered around the belief that suffragism, feminism, and socialism were intimately interconnected aspects of the same movement, which aimed to subvert American values and effect a social revolution.

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[19] Susan B. Anthony, National American Convention, 1901, quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 5 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1922), 6.

On August 18, 1920, Congress ratified the Nineteenth Amendment and guaranteed American women the right to vote. In some ways, the anti-suffragists had already lost the battle when they gathered in Mrs. Dodge's parlor on that rainy November afternoon in 1911. Irreversible changes to women's role in American society had been underway for decades. The founders of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage themselves embodied the transformation of women's lives: well-educated, well-traveled, independent, active in social reform, they were political activists even if they envisioned themselves entering politics only "temporarily."

On the other hand, the defeat of the anti-suffragists in 1920 was not as absolute or as final as the suffragists hoped it would be. Anti-suffragists are today an extinct species, but the impulses and values that they embodied did not die out in 1920. Their conservative understanding of the role of women in America would continue to evolve over the course of the twentieth century. Feminists would continue to face staunch opposition from other women, and the Woman Question would remain up for debate.

1. "In Vindication of Woman's True Rights": Early Anti-Suffrage Arguments

The idea of women's right to vote was controversial from the earliest days of the women's rights movement in America. In her list of resolutions to propose at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton included the goal of securing women's "sacred right to the elective franchise." But when she informed other women's rights leaders of her intention, she met with surprise and skepticism. "Why Lizzie," Lucretia Mott replied, "Thee will make us ridiculous!"[20] In suffragists' subsequent histories of their movement, they recorded how the delegates at Seneca Falls "hemmed and hawed" over Stanton's ninth resolution but passed it by a small majority after Frederick Douglass spoke in support of it.[21] It was the only resolution not passed unanimously.

What was "ridiculous" about the idea that American women might vote? To many of the men and women gathered at Seneca Falls, the franchise evidently stood apart from the other rights and forms of equality that women were seeking. Traditionally, politics lay entirely outside women's "sphere." Stanton's proposal rested on the assumption that women were, or at least ought to be, independent citizens with a public role. It violated the conventional understanding of women's sphere – home and family life – and of women themselves.

Gaining the right to vote became the primary focus of the American women's movement after the Civil War. The United States was in the process of redefining the rights of American citizenship and extending them to a previously disenfranchised group, African-Americans. The moment seemed ripe for social and legal change, and women's rights leaders channeled their efforts into the cause of suffrage. In 1866, while Congress debated

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[20] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences,* vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922). 146.
[21] NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940), 28.

the Fourteenth Amendment, the first women's rights convention since the start of the war elected to form the American Equal Rights Association, which would work for the enfranchisement of African-Americans and women. The AERA's hope for universal suffrage proved short-lived, however, and the women's movement split over whether to support a constitutional amendment that would enfranchise former slaves but not women. Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in early 1869, and a few months later, angered by the insistence of Frederick Douglass and others that this was "the Negro's hour," Stanton and Anthony established the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). They made the case for woman suffrage in a journal Anthony had begun publishing the previous year entitled *The Revolution*.

Some women, however, did not welcome the idea of a revolution. In the autumn of 1868, two hundred women from Lancaster, Massachusetts signed a remonstrance urging their state legislature to reject petitions for woman suffrage. "The exercise of the elective franchise," they cautioned, "would diminish the purity, the dignity, and the moral influence of woman, and bring into the family circle a dangerous element of discord." [22] This remonstrance, submitted to counter a petition from the recently formed New England Woman Suffrage Association, represented the first manifestation of organized anti-suffrage sentiment in America. In casting woman suffrage as a threat to women's elevated position and to family unity, it set the tone for arguments that anti-suffragists would make over the course of the next decade.

Between 1868 and 1870, the enfranchisement of women in several Western territories and petitions for suffrage in Eastern and Midwestern state legislatures provoked

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[22] Harriet J. H. Robinson, *Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement: A General, Political, Legal, and Legislative History from 1774 to 1881* (Boston: Roberts Brother, 1883), 101.

further backlash among conservative women, notably in Massachusetts, Vermont, Ohio, and Washington, D.C.[23] In Washington, D.C., when the National Woman Suffrage Association appealed to Congress for a Sixteenth Amendment that would prohibit disfranchising U.S. citizens on account of sex, the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society mounted a defense of their "right not to vote."[24] The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society's concise and often-quoted statements provide a window into the predominant concerns and arguments of anti-suffrage women in the early years of the suffrage debate. In this chapter, we will look closely at the ideas its members articulated in petitions to Congress, in a monthly journal entitled *The True Woman*, and in other publications. Rooting its vision in a patriarchal Christian tradition and in the Victorian ideal of true womanhood, the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society affirmed the value of women's domestic role, the desirability of keeping women's sphere separate from politics, and the danger of adopting a doctrine of individualism.

With the support of like-minded women of Washington, D.C., Mrs. Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren and Mrs. Almira Lincoln Phelps established the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society – later called the Ladies' National Anti-Woman Suffrage Committee – in 1870.[25] It represented a highly educated group of women whose active support of women's education is striking. Vice-President of the Washington Literary Society, Mrs. Dahlgren wrote novels and short stories, translated various foreign-language works, and published a guide to the "Etiquette of Social Life in Washington," which went into five

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[23] Thomas J. Jablonsky, *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States, 1868–1920* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1994), 2.

[24] *The True Woman* (Jan. 1872): 84. For more on the founding of the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society, see Amy Easton-Flake, "Harriet Beecher Stowe's Multifaceted Response to the Nineteenth-Century Woman Question," *The New England Quarterly* 86, no.1 (March 2013), 32.

[25] *The True Woman* (Oct. 1871): 64.

editions.[26] Mrs. Phelps was a teacher, the author of ten textbooks on subjects including botany and young women's education, and the second woman to be elected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society also boasted the membership of Miss Catharine E. Beecher, a member of the illustrious Beecher family and an influential advocate of women's education and women's careers in teaching. The involvement of Mrs. William T. Sherman, wife of the famous Civil War general and Union hero, further contributed to the society's prestige. In 1870, the society forwarded to the U.S. Senate a petition against woman suffrage with five reasons to oppose it and five thousand signatures.[27] "Although we shrink from the notoriety of the public eye," the petition modestly (if perhaps inaccurately) began, "yet we are too deeply and painfully impressed by the grave perils which threaten our peace and happiness in these proposed changes in our civil and political rights, longer to remain silent."[28]

The petition's first reason to oppose extending the franchise to women was "because, Holy Scripture inculcates a different, and for us higher, sphere apart from public life." Before delving into the ideology of separate spheres, it is important to note that the petition begins by invoking Holy Scripture. "In the early days of woman-suffrage agitation," Elizabeth Cady Stanton later recalled, "the greatest obstacle we had to overcome was the Bible. It was hurled at us on every side."[29] The ladies of the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society hurled it often and with feeling. Mrs. Dahlgren and Mrs. Sherman were devout Catholics, while some other members belonged to Protestant denominations ("Here we find

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[26] "Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren Papers: Introduction," Georgetown University Library Special Collections, accessed December 8, 2013, http://www.library.georgetown.edu/dept/speccoll/cl122.htm.
[27] "Woman Suffrage: Report of the Minority of the Committee of the House of Representatives," *The New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1871.
[28] Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren and Mrs. General Sherman, "Petition to the U.S. Senate Against Woman Suffrage." In Spencer, Sara J., *Problems on the Woman Question: Social, Political and Scriptural* (Washington, D.C.: Langran, Ogilvie, & Co., 1871), 2.
[29] Interview with the Chicago *Record*, June 29, 1897.

allied the Protestant and the Catholic," noted Mrs. Dahlgren, "joining sisterly hands to meet the threatening danger"[30]). The society's Catholic members and Protestant members alike embraced Paul's emphasis on obedience and hierarchy, such as the injunction to women not "to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."[31] In *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (1872), a work dedicated to the nation's ministers of religion, Catharine Beecher cited a verse from Ephesians: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church."[32] If granted the right to vote, a woman would either vote as her husband or male relatives told her (in which case, what was the point of enfranchising her?), or she would cast her ballot without regard to their views (a worse possibility). A citizen's ability to vote responsibly was predicated on his independence; therefore, a "true" Christian woman – dependent, submissive, reluctant to assert her will – could not also be a good voter.

The anti-suffragists did not, of course, have a monopoly on Christian piety. Catharine Beecher's brother, Henry Ward Beecher, for example, was a Congregationalist clergyman as well as the first president of the American Woman Suffrage Association. (Catharine also faced opposition on the suffrage question from her younger half-sister, Isabella Beecher Hooker, a founding member of the NWSA.) In the 1870s as in the present, religious convictions could lead to different conclusions and the Bible could supply evidence for both sides of an issue. In a religious climate heavily influenced by evangelical Christianity, women's rights advocates could point to the equality of men and women before

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[30] Mrs. Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, *Thoughts on Female Suffrage and in Vindication of Woman's True Rights* (Washington, D.C.: Blanchard & Mohun, 1871).
[31] 1 Timothy 2:12.
[32] Ephesians 5: 22-23. Quoted in Catherine E. Beecher, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (New York: Maclean, Gibson & Co., 1872), 183.

God, women's special piety, and women's increasingly prominent role in the life of the church.

But many people on both sides of the suffrage question viewed women's independent participation in politics as fundamentally incompatible with orthodox Christian teachings. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was skeptical about Christianity from an early age and refused to accept "the subjection and degradation of women" she found in its sacred texts.[33] Chair of the NWSA Executive Committee Matilda Joslyn Gage likewise believed that the Christian Church was "the chief means of enslaving woman's conscience and reason, and, therefore, as the first and most necessary step toward her emancipation, we must free her from the bondage of the Church."[34] Early advocates of woman suffrage chafed against the limits imposed on them by Christian doctrine and custom, and the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society turned this tension to their advantage.

The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society sought to gain the moral high ground by positioning its view as the Christian one. Its members framed their efforts and those of their opponents in Christian terms. Mrs. Dahlgren favored biblical analogies to explain woman suffrage agitation: "Mother Eve – she asks for suffrage, would lead the way, would control man, declines to serve the purposes of the great Creator."[35] But despite the occasional metaphor suggesting that the enactment of woman suffrage would be equivalent to the Fall of Man, early anti-suffragists tended to invoke biblical prescriptions for womanly behavior in a softer way, one that insisted less explicitly on women's subordination. *The True Woman*

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[33] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More (1815-1897): Reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: European Publishing Company: 1898), 396.
[34] *Freethinker*, April 27, 1890, reprinted in *Freethinker*, vol. 10, edited by George W. Foote, Edward B. Aveling, J. M. Wheeler, and Chapman Cohen (London: G.W. Foote and Co., 1890), 200.
[35] Mrs. Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, *Thoughts on Female Suffrage and in Vindication of Woman's True Rights* (Washington, D.C.: Blanchard & Mohun, 1871).

advocated "preserving the Christian household, framed according to Divine law" and left it at that.[36] Warmed by the sentimental glow of Victorian Christianity, the journal nestled short poems between anti-suffrage essays, poems with titles like "An Angel in the House" that celebrated women's special role in domestic life.[37]

For the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society, the essential point about Christianity was this: men and women were created different. In her 1870 essay "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America," Susan Fenimore Cooper (daughter of the novelist) insisted: "Women are not abortive men; they are a distinct creation."[38] Protestant religious leaders reinforced the belief that inherent in women's nature were special capacities – notably modesty, purity, and concern for others – that gave them a unique ability to promote Christian values within their family circles. Anti-suffrage women believed that women should accept the fact of their difference from men and embrace the special role God intended for them rather than seek to gain for themselves the rights and responsibilities of men. About women's rights activists, Almira Lincoln Phelps observed: "If they do not actually impeach the Almighty for making a distinction between the sexes in their creation, they do so virtually."[39] A Christian society, for the anti-suffragists, was a highly gendered one.

The belief that men and women should move in separate spheres of life – in other words, occupy themselves with different concerns, activities, and responsibilities – was at the heart of nineteenth-century anti-suffragists' opposition to woman suffrage. In seeking to preserve "a different, and for us higher, sphere apart from public life," the Anti-Sixteenth

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[36] *The True Woman* (Dec. 1872).
[37] "An Angel in the House," *The True Woman* (Nov. 1871): 65.
[38] Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America, Part I," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 41, no. 243 (August 1870): 438-39.
[39] *The True Woman* (March 1871): 2.

Amendment Society situated themselves within a tradition that had deep roots in American society. In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville had observed: "In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the sexes and to make them keep pace with one another, but in two pathways that are always different," adding that American women "never…take a part in political life."[40] Over the course of the nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization further reinforced the distinctness of middle-class men's and women's spheres.[41] In towns and cities, men generally worked outside the home, venturing daily into the competitive, materialistic public sphere. No longer directly involved in economic production, women were supposed to preside over the nurturing private sphere, making the home a refuge from the harsh realities of modern urban life. The ideology of separate spheres was prescriptive as much as descriptive: notably, its proponents left little ideological room for working-class families in which women worked for wages. Though the notion of separate spheres did not always reflect the reality of nineteenth-century men's and women's lives, it nevertheless remained a powerful cultural ideal. "[A]ffectional" rather than "intellectual" by nature, women were best suited to the sphere of home and family, affirmed *The True Woman*.[42] The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society adhered to the belief that men's and women's spheres complimented each other and that the division between them was both natural and beneficial.

The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society represented, according to Mrs. Dahlgren, "the advance-guard of that mighty host, not of Amazons, but of true women."[43] The sacred

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[40] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: J. and H.G. Langley, 1840): 212.
[41] Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 2.
[42] *The True Woman* (Sept. 1871).
[43] Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, "Thoughts on Female Suffrage and in Vindication of Woman's True Rights" (Washington, D.C.: Blanchard & Mohun, 1871).

mission and the deepest joy of every "true woman," anti-suffragists affirmed, was motherhood: bearing, caring for, and educating children. In their nurseries and around their hearths, anti-suffragists believed, women shaped America's future through the power of personal influence. "Our husbands are our choice," wrote Mrs. Dahlgren, "Our sons are what we make them."[44] As Susan Fenimore Cooper put it, "the home is the cradle of the nation."[45] They revered the tradition that Linda Kerber and other historians have termed "republican motherhood": the idea that women's highest civic duty was to raise virtuous, patriotic sons who would implement the nation's ideals. The glory of women, explained Albert Taylor Bledsoe in "The Mission of Woman" (1871), was "not that you can vote, or beat a negro for Congress, but that you can point to your sons as your jewels, and as the ornaments of the human race…you can rear, and train, and educate, and mold the future Washingtons."[46] The culture in which Mrs. Dahlgren and her friends lived was saturated with celebrations of the benevolent power of motherhood.

Women's indirect influence on the world through male family members was a form of power that anti-suffragists prized. "If woman would be wise, and take the station with patient acquiescence and self-respect, not self-glorification, she might rule the world," advised *The True Woman*, "But she can never rule by political or muscular power; the rule must be by moral influence."[47] Nineteenth-century anti-suffragists felt that women – physically weaker and perhaps intellectually inferior to men – could not hope to wield power equal to men's except within the special sphere that had been carved out for them by Christian civilization: the Home.

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America, Part II," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 41, no. 244 (September 1870): 598.
[46] Albert Taylor Bledsoe, "The Mission of Woman," *The Southern Review* 10 (Oct. 1871): 941-942.
[47] *The True Woman* (June 1871): 30.

Suffragists shared anti-suffragists' belief in women's unique moral influence, but disagreed about how best to harness it. Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared in 1869, "The need of the hour is…a new evangel of womanhood, to exalt purity, virtue, morality, true religion, to lift men into the higher realm of thought and action."[48] The Women's Crusade of the early 1870s exemplified such an "evangel of womanhood." In 1874, temperance crusaders formed the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which became the leading women's organization in America and, as Ruth Bordin observes, "the major vehicle through which women developed a changing role for themselves in American society."[49] From shaming saloon-goers in Midwestern towns to building a national organization, temperance workers sought to protect the home and the family from the evils of alcohol. They defended Christian virtues and "home values" in a public, if not political, way, navigating ambiguous new territory between the private and the public realm.

Most suffragists supported the temperance cause (and argued that votes for women would aid it), but not all temperance workers were suffragists. The WCTU's first president, Annie Turner Wittenmyer, for example, staunchly opposed woman suffrage. Because the temperance movement situated its goals within the domestic framework of "Home Protection," it attracted conservative women as well as women's rights activists. Thus, temperance leaders were able to build a mass movement among women in a way nineteenth-century suffragists were unable to do. Temperance and woman suffrage came to be associated together in the 1880s after Frances Willard, an advocate of woman suffrage, became president of the WCTU in 1879. The liquor lobby perceived both reforms as

[48] Quoted in *Women and the American Experience*, ed. Nancy Woloch (United States: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 341.
[49] Ruth Birgitta Anderson Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: A Quest for Power and Liberty*, *1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), xviii.

contrary to its interests, assuming that women's votes would restrict alcohol consumption, and the Brewers' Convention of 1881 adopted an anti-suffrage resolution.[50] It remained the case, however, that support for suffrage and for temperance did not correlate neatly: most outspoken anti-suffrage women were wholly supportive of the temperance cause (and deeply offended by allegations of friendliness with liquor men). In the twentieth century, anti-suffragists would critique woman suffrage on the basis of its failure to effect prohibition in suffrage states, a tactic that will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

While suffragists argued that women's moral superiority should be expanded to purify American politics as well as private morals, anti-suffragists were skeptical that women's domestic virtues could be translated into the public sphere of politics without being corrupted. They believed that embroiling women in politics would diminish the qualities that made women worthy of veneration and formed the basis of their special influence. *The True Woman* featured a statement by the editors of the Washington *Patriot,* in which they declared themselves to be appalled at the idea of "throwing our wives, mothers, and sisters into the dirty pool of politics, with all its corrupting and degrading influences."[51] The strife, ambition, self-promotion, and competitive jostling for power that characterized the political sphere were anathema to the ideal character of women and women's sphere.

As the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society saw it, woman suffragists failed to realize the true value and significance of women's traditional role. The comparison that suffragists frequently made between women and slaves deeply offended women such as Mrs. Dahlgren, who embraced her domestic role willingly and took this comparison as an "insult."[52] In her

[50] "The Invisible Enemy," in Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York: *Charles Scribner's Sons,* 1923).
[51] *The True Woman* (Dec. 1872).
[52] *The True Woman* (Feb. 1872): 90.

1878 "Protest Against Woman Suffrage," Mrs. Dahlgren insisted that women's domestic and maternal duties, which only they could perform, were "of the *very highest* and *most sacred nature*" – essential to the moral and spiritual health of the nation.[53] "Is there so little of true elevation and dignity in this position that American women should be in such hot haste to abandon it?" wondered Susan Fenimore Cooper.[54] At Henry Ward Beecher's 1870 woman suffrage convention, Catharine Beecher dwelled on this theme. She explained that many anti-suffrage women "believe that the greatest cause of the evils suffered by our sex is that the true profession of woman, in many of its most important departments, is not respected; that women are not trained either to the science or the practice of domestic duties as they need to be."[55] Beecher had devoted much of her career to remedying this problem. The previous year, she had co-authored a book with her younger sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, entitled *The American Woman's Home; or, Principles of Domestic Science: Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes*.[56]

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[53] Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, "Protest Against Woman Suffrage," in "Arguments before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate, in behalf of a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, prohibiting the several states from disfranchising United States citizens on account of sex, January 11 and 12, 1878" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1878).

[54] Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America, Part II," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 41, no. 244 (September 1870): 596.

[55] "Woman Suffrage: Mr. Beecher's Convention at Steinway Hall," *The New York Times*, May 13, 1870.

[56] Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home; or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York: J. B. Ford and Co., and Boston: H. A. Brown and Co.,1869).

The title page image from *The American Woman's Home; or, Principles of Domestic Science* (1869).

A woman's domestic role, insisted the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society, occupied all of her time and energy. *The True Woman* reinforced this idea both explicitly and implicitly. It provided a regular Book Notices column to bring "interesting and instructive" works to its readers' attention, works typified by the following series: *Whose Fault Is It? or, How to Make a Happy Home; The Mischief of Bad Air; Value of Good Food*; and *Sowing the Seed*.[57] As well as articles about woman suffrage, sermons, biographical sketches of True Women from various countries, and serialized works of fiction such as *My Aunt Catherine*, *The True Woman* features advertisements for hair dressers, sewing machines, ribbons, flowers, silk and lace goods, piano fortes, and Wiseman's Pulmonic Drops. Short

[57] *The True Woman* (Oct. 1871): 64.

articles discussed questions such as whether or not new fashions among young girls were a positive development (and generally concluded that they were not). Such topics, the journal assumed and implied, constituted "true" women's primary interests.

The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society's 1870 petition argued that extending political duties to women would be wrong "because, as women, we find a full measure of duties, cares, and responsibilities devolving upon us, and we are therefore unwilling to bear other and heavier burdens." Mrs. Dahlgren elaborated on this idea in her 1878 "Protest": if women were allotted the civic and political responsibilities that belonged to men in addition to their domestic responsibilities, they would be made "victims of an oppression not intended by a kind and wise Providence." Catharine Beecher also objected that enacting woman suffrage would be "an act of oppression, forcing [women] to assume responsibilities belonging to a man, for which they are not and cannot be qualified."[58] Women could not be qualified to vote, she believed, but nor could men be qualified to perform women's domestic duties. The argument that political rights would constitute an "oppression" is a paradoxical one. It seems more reasonable, perhaps, in light of the fact that few women's rights advocates ever raised the question of men's sharing women's domestic responsibilities. Such a violation of the traditional masculine role was unthinkable. Given that men would not take on women's duties, expecting women to take on men's duties seemed to anti-suffragists not only unnatural but also unjust and unreasonable.

Thanks to "the refining influences of Christian civilization," women had gained ever greater protection and status, which Mrs. Dahlgren feared would be eroded by some women's agitation for "so-called equal rights." Because men and women were inherently

[58] Catharine E. Beecher, "Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage" (New York: Maclean, Gibson & Co., 1872), 7.

different, it would be misguided – indeed, savage (she cited the condition of "our Indian sister") – to treat women as the equals of men. Physically, legally, and socially, women needed and deserved special protection. Mrs. Dahlgren could not "without prayer and protest see our cherished privileges endangered."[59] One feature of women's "privileged position" was exemption from the responsibility of learning about and deciding on pressing national issues – a responsibility inherent in the exercise of the franchise. Mrs. Dahlgren did not specify which issues she sought to continue to be shielded from (perhaps she was too shielded to know about them), but later anti-suffragists would point to industrial labor unrest and international military conflict. Men who opposed woman suffrage, explained one chivalrous senator, did so because they wished to shield women from "the sterner duties of life."[60] Not only did suffragists fail to value women's traditional role, argued anti-suffragists, they also failed to appreciate the privileged position of American women.

In 1776, Abigail Adams had famously enjoined her husband John to "remember the ladies."[61] A century later, the ladies of the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society felt that they had been adequately remembered. They expressed confidence in male lawmakers' protection of women's interests. Almira Lincoln Phelps acknowledged: "There were certainly evils to be remedied in the condition of women – Legislatures have studied how to do this in regard to the rights of property, the guardianship of children, &c."[62] She referred here to the series of laws that had been passed in the mid-nineteenth century, including the New York Married Women's Property Acts of 1848 and 1860. These acts entitled women to retain "sole and separate" ownership of their property after marriage and granted them joint

[59] This quote and the three preceding it are from Dahlgren, "Protest Against Woman Suffrage."
[60] Senator Joseph Brown of Georgia speaking before the Senate in 1887. Quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4 (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), 93.
[61] Quoted in NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940), 3.
[62] *The True Woman* (March 1871): 2.

guardianship of their children "with equal powers, rights, and duties in regard to them."[63] These legal changes indicated the gradual erosion of the common law principle of coverture, in which a woman's legal identity was subsumed under her husband's identity upon her marriage. In the eyes of the law, according to this principle, husband and wife were a single entity; when the wife gained the status of a "feme covert" ("covered woman"), her legal rights and obligations became her husband's. Married Women's Property Acts and other forms of improvement to women's legal rights had been achieved, anti-suffragists argued, not because women exercised the power of the ballot, but purely by virtue of American men's chivalrous attention to women. (Historians have since offered other explanations, including pressure from the women's rights movement and fathers' disinclination to pass wealth to reprobate sons-in-law.) To anti-suffragists, these laws proved woman suffrage to be unnecessary; if woman suffrage became necessary, that would represent a failure on the part of men to perform their duty towards women. When suffragists expressed dissatisfaction with current laws, they displayed, in the words of Mrs. Dahlgren, the "monstrous ingratitude" of the "clamorous discontented."[64]

While nineteenth-century anti-suffragists celebrated acts of legislation that accorded married women rights as individuals, they held fast to the idea that husband and wife constituted a single unit in American society. The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society defended the traditional patriarchal understanding of the family's role in the political organization of the nation: the family "is the foundation of the state. Each family is represented by its head."[65] Because the family constituted the basic unit of the state, "proper

[63] "Married Women's Property Acts, New York State, 1848, 1860." In *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 210.
[64] Dahlgren, "Thoughts on Female Suffrage and in Vindication of Woman's True Rights."
[65] Dahlgren, "Protest Against Woman Suffrage."

representation" thus meant the equal representation of every family by its male head. Suffragists challenged this idea and proposed an alternative that seemed radically individualistic to anti-suffragists. As suffrage historian Ellen Carol DuBois explains, "Citizenship represented a relationship to the larger society that was entirely and explicitly outside the boundaries of women's familial relations. As citizens and voters, women would participate directly in society as individuals, not indirectly through their subordinate positions as wives and mothers."[66] Such individualism, according to *The True Woman*, was a "radical evil" that ran contrary to "the key-note of Christianity – the abnegation of selfish, of individual interest."[67]

Moreover, argued the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society, "these changes must introduce a fruitful element of discord in the existing marriage relation," which would "increase the already alarming prevalence of divorce throughout the land."[68] Anti-suffragists' concern with the potential for division within marriage reflected widespread anxiety about rising divorce rates. The nation's rising divorce rate had become, according to marriage historian Kristen Celello, "a rallying point for social critics who saw the rate as irrefutable evidence of a creeping moral decay in American life. In the 1870s and 1880s, many state legislatures made their divorce laws more stringent."[69] By 1890, the divorce rate was three per 1,000 marriages – a figure that seems unimaginably low today, but that nonetheless was double the divorce rate of 1870.[70]

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[66] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 34.
[67] *The True Woman* (Jan. 1872): 83.
[68] Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren and Mrs. General Sherman, "Petition to the U.S. Senate Against Woman Suffrage."
[69] Kristin Celello, *Making Marriage Work: A History of Marriage and Divorce in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009). 19.
[70] Paul H. Jacobson, *American Marriage and Divorce* (New York: Rinehart, 1959).

While some women's rights advocates, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were in favor of easier divorce, many more women, including Mrs. Dahlgren, were deeply concerned about spiraling divorce rates. Mrs. Dahlgren's 1887 novel, *Divorced*, was "intended as a plea for the sacredness of the marriage tie, and also to exhibit some of the manifold dangers connected with our present system of divorce laws."[71] In the novel, Neale Voland divorces his wife and remarries, but suffers the consequences of permissive divorce laws when his new wife, Paulina, seeks a divorce from him. Paulina enlists the aid of the avaricious divorce lawyer Mr. Sly, who, after agreeing to take the case, muses to himself: "Satan was but a dullard in the garden of Eden. He never finished his perfect work, until he invented – Divorce." The novel concludes with the death (by apoplexy) of Neale Voland and the remarriage of a chastened Paulina. Anti-suffragists feared that enfranchising women would only exacerbate the moral and social problem of divorce by undermining marital unity. Conceding that some woman suffragists supported the marriage tie, anti-suffragists maintained that "they prove themselves to be miserably deficient in logic when they do so, for the status they claim for women will, if obtained, most surely destroy the headship and the unity of the family state."[72]

The Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society's 1870 petition offered as its final reason to oppose woman suffrage: "Because, no general law, affecting the condition of all women, should be framed to meet exceptional discontent." "Exceptional discontent" evidently referred to women's rights activists. But it also applied to single women, whose presence was an awkward one for anti-suffragists. Single women did not fit in the anti-suffragists' patriarchal, family-centered vision, and their position was explained either as a temporary

[71] "Preface," Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, *Divorced* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke, and Co., 1887), 5.
[72] *The True Woman* (Jan. 1872): 83.

one, as in the case of factory girls who would soon marry, or as an abnormal one that deserved pity but not political representation. Mrs. Dahlgren insisted that her own situation ("With Father, Brother, Husbands, Son, taken away by Death, I stand utterly alone") was "exceptional."[73] She would deem it "*unpatriotic*" to ask for the enfranchisement of women merely to ensure the representation of her own interests, because it would not be "the greatest good for the greatest number." In its tone of self-sacrifice and concern for the common good, this statement performed the ideal characteristics of true womanhood.

In the 1870s, many Americans did view the suffragists' "discontent" as exceptional. *The True Woman* expressed the respectable, normal view of the woman suffrage question. "It [*The True Woman*] appears to be issued," commented the New York *Standard*, "for the purpose of counteracting the injury that the extremists of the women's rights movement are doing to their own sex."[74] Those who found woman suffrage agitation jarring often expressed their discomfort in descriptions of suffragists' noisiness. Woman suffragists were "dissonant," "clamorous" – a "shrieking sisterhood that invaded Washington."[75] In some papers, it became a kind of running joke: they were "the clamorous reformers, who would aim at victory by the Chinese method of making more noise than their opponents."[76] Such descriptions made the suffragists appear strange, inappropriate, ridiculous. Woman suffragists were violating social norms, and they knew it: "We solemnly vowed," recalled Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "that there should never be another season of silence until woman had the same rights everywhere on this green earth, as man."[77] Anti-suffragists distinguished themselves by their silence, or at least, by their professions of silence. "How utterly the

[73] Dahlgren, "Protest Against Woman Suffrage."
[74] Quoted in *The True Woman* (July 1871): 35.
[75] The Washington *Patriot*, quoted in *The True Woman* (Dec. 1872).
[76] *The New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1871.
[77] Quoted in DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 18.

womanly disappears in all this insubordinate clamor," they lamented, introducing their own statements by claiming to speak "in the interests of the masses of *silent* women."[78] In 1872, in its second year of publication, *The True Woman* boasted a list of subscribers from thirty-one different States and Territories. In a time of uncertainty and change, its widespread readership likely found its tone and its traditional ideas reassuring.

It was in the late 1860s, recorded Susan Fenimore Cooper, that women's demand for social and political equality began to "challenge our attention at every turn."[79] The behavior of women's rights activists, such as organizing conventions and speaking publicly, challenged social conventions, while petitions, books, and journals articulated new ideas about women's abilities, aspirations, and rights. In 1869, the same year that the Beecher sisters published their handbook of domestic advice, *The American Woman's Home*, John Stuart Mill published *The Subjection of Women*.

Women were at a crossroads, and the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society consciously and proudly took the "old-fashioned" road. For instance, Mrs. Dahlgren acknowledged in the conclusion of her 1878 "Protest" that the idea of women's indirect influence on the world through their male family members was becoming an antiquated one: "In this, I am doubtless as *old-fashioned* as were our grandmothers." A self-deprecating nod to suffragists' derisive portrayal of anti-suffragists, this statement was also an artful piece of rhetoric. It immediately proceeds to assert the value of "our grandmothers, who assisted to mold this vast republic." Being "old-fashioned" in this sense was patriotic and admirable. It cast the anti-suffragists' position in the warm light of tradition, stability, and continuity.

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[78] *The True Woman* (June 1872): 27; Dahlgren, "A Protest Against Woman Suffrage."
[79] Quoted in *Susan Fenimore Cooper: New Essays On Rural Hours* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press: 2001), 261.

In the anti-suffragists' most basic beliefs – that men and women were more different than similar, and that they should thus move in separate spheres of life – the weight of history was on their side. These powerful and abiding ideas would continue to present an obstacle to woman suffragists into the twentieth century. And yet, the times changed – sometimes gradually, sometimes abruptly – and anti-suffragists changed with them. Anti-suffragists would reformulate the significance of women's difference from men in scientific rather than religious terms and would show increasing support for women's participation in the public (just not the political) life of cities, states, and the nation. The leaders of the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society would pass away decades before the enactment of national woman suffrage seemed likely, and other women would step up to defend their right not to vote.

2. "Suffrage Unnatural"[80]: In Defense of Sex Difference, Motherhood, and Masculine Government

In *Victory: How Women Won It*, the National American Woman Suffrage Association records: "Between 1869 and 1890 lay twenty years of constant effort and constant defeat."[81] For anti-suffragists, these were twenty years of scattered, intermittent effort and constant victory. The 1890s would challenge anti-suffragists' sense of security, pushing them to expand their opposition to suffrage both organizationally and ideologically.

In 1890, disappointed in its hope of securing woman suffrage through a federal constitutional amendment, Stanton and Anthony's National Woman Suffrage Association merged with Lucy Stone's rival woman suffrage organization to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). NAWSA resolved to adopt a state-by-state strategy, with the hope that Congress would be forced to approve a federal amendment if enough states granted the suffrage to women. Though in 1890 the woman suffragists could not boast many concrete successes, their persistent activism – or perhaps merely their persistent presence – had effected a gradual change in Americans' attitude to woman suffrage. By the 1890s, as one historian observed, "woman suffrage had become so respectable that a counteroffensive was essential."[82]

Women in Massachusetts and New York became the chief strategists and soldiers in the counteroffensive against woman suffrage. In Massachusetts, the Boston Committee of Remonstrants had quietly maintained a "systematic resistance" to the appeals of woman

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[80] "Suffrage Unnatural: Woman Cannot Overstep Her Limitations – Her Function in Life is Fixed and Stationary," *New York Times*, February 21, 1915.
[81] NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940), 72.
[82] William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (New York: Quadrangle / The New York Times Book Co., 1971), 57.

suffrage since the early 1880s.[83] In 1890, the year Wyoming entered the Union as the first state with full woman suffrage, the Boston committee began publishing the annual (later quarterly) *Remonstrance*. The *Remonstrance* took a sober, patrician approach to presenting anti-suffrage arguments (unaccompanied by poems, stories, illustrations, or advertisements) and reported on the progress of other state-level anti-suffrage organizations as they sprang up in the wake of suffrage agitation. New York State was the home of the most vocal and politically savvy anti-suffragists, who surpassed their Massachusetts allies in "aggressiveness and temerity."[84] Alarmed by Susan B. Anthony's dynamic campaign for a suffrage amendment at the 1894 New York State constitutional convention, anti-suffragists from across the state realized that "this was a time when they must, of necessity, make themselves heard."[85] The following year, the Albany, Brooklyn, and New York City anti-suffrage associations united as the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NYSAOWS). Sensing the escalating tension between pro- and anti-suffrage women, the *New York Times* editorialized: "masculine observers, to whom it is all very incomprehensible, though very amusing, will watch the struggle from such safe points of view as they may be able to secure."[86] In its bemused condescension, the paper suggested the novelty of the public debate that was unfolding between women. Unsure how to react, journalists and other "masculine observers" sometimes regarded the burgeoning debate as a spectacle, even a joke.

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[83] "Preamble to be Used at Meetings," Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women. Quoted in Anne M. Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920: Women Against Equality* (United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 3.

[84] Thomas J. Jablonsky, "Duty, Nature, and Stability: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States, 1894-1920" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1978), 68, quoted in Susan Goodier, *No Votes for Women: The New York State Anti-Suffrage Movement* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 22.

[85] "Introduction," *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

[86] "Now that organized opposition," *New York Times*, June 19, 1895.

To the suffragists and the anti-suffragists, however, the question of woman suffrage had never been more serious. In pamphlets, speeches, *Remonstrance* articles, and books, anti-suffragists from Massachusetts and New York fortified the anti-suffrage defense with new ideas and with reformulations of arguments that the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society had made two decades earlier. In the 1880s and 1890s, anti-suffragists increasingly turned to science, rather than to the Bible, as the source of authority on gender and gender relations. This chapter will explore the way antis' scientific understanding of sex and gender shaped their views on the woman suffrage question. Physiological and psychological differences between men and women had far-reaching implications for the anti-suffragists. From the late nineteenth century into the 1910s, scientific and medical thought reinforced anti-suffragists' conviction that men and women were suited to different kinds of duties – maternal for women, martial for men – and that gender equality was a grievously misguided objective.

To a modern reader, anti-suffragists' "scientific reasons" to oppose woman suffrage – women's susceptibility to nervous disorders, the threat of racial "degeneration," and others – are some of the least compelling arguments they made. These arguments seem strange to us – sometimes even silly – because they depended on scientific and social scientific theories that today are long discredited. Nevertheless, these theories shaped the context of the woman suffrage debate and informed the way anti-suffragists (and most of their contemporaries) viewed gender. Therefore, if we want to understand anti-suffragists' curious dread of votes for women, we must take into account the scientific orthodoxy of their day and its social implications.

In 1897, the rising star of the new generation of suffragists, Carrie Chapman Catt, summarized the suffragists' position: if women were like men, then they were equally

entitled to the ballot, and if women were unlike men, then they needed the ballot even more, because they could not be represented by men.[87] The anti-suffragists took a less ambivalent view of the question and drew a different conclusion: women were decidedly unlike men, and the nature of women's difference precluded their participation in politics. In articles with titles such as "A Stubborn Fact," the editors of the *Remonstrance* insisted that sex difference was fundamental, unalterable, and unavoidable fact.[88] In her 1895 address before a committee of the New York Senate, Lucy Parkman Scott, one of Albany's leading ladies and the president of the NYSAOWS, concurred: "Do what we may, say what we can, we cannot break down the barrier of sex which indicates the parting of the ways."[89] Women's sphere may have expanded – in the 1890s, more American women were attending college and working outside the home than ever before – but it had expanded as far as women could expect it to, antis believed, given the "stubborn fact" of biological differences between the sexes. Though anti-suffragists assiduously avoided going too deeply into the biological details, they hinted that women had babies and men did not. They maintained, furthermore, that women and men were characterized by emotional and intellectual qualities inherent in their sex, which dictated their respective capacities, duties, and interests. Like Mrs. Dahlgren, later anti-suffragists believed that the optimal way to organize society, given that it was divided into two sexes, was to harness the best qualities of each and direct them toward specific activities. Though later anti-suffragists did not adhere to the tradition of

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[87] Robert E. DiClerico, *Voting in America: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 201.

[88] "A Stubborn Fact," *Remonstrance,* 1895.

[89] Mrs. Francis M. [Lucy Parkman] Scott, "First Legislative Address in Opposition to Woman Suffrage," Hearing before the Judiciary Committee of the New York State Senate, April 10, 1895, reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

separate spheres as rigidly as Mrs. Dahlgren had, they used science to rationalize and legitimize this basic principle.

Anti-suffragists applied Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to the question of gender roles. The central mistake of the suffragists was "forgetting the inexorable law which science has laid down," explained NYSAOWS president Lucy Parkman Scott, "the law we know as the Specialization of Function. Where there is specialization there comes to be greater and greater perfection…So, since the first development of sex, has specialization of the male and female types gone on; men have grown more manly, women more womanly."[90] To illustrate this point, anti-suffragists offered the example of the amoeba: representing the primitive extreme of the evolutionary spectrum, amoebas were genderless.[91]

Anti-suffragists argued that human history confirmed the pattern of evolution, pointing to social scientists' observation of less distinct gender roles in "primitive" societies than in "advanced" ones. What did gender equality look like in reality? Anti-suffragists painted a dark picture, which usually featured Indian women trudging wearily behind their feathered husbands while struggling to carry heavy packs – burdens which, in a more "advanced" society, would have been shouldered by men. The suffrage movement did not, therefore, represent progress. To the contrary, it was "a backward step," affirmed paleontologist Edward D. Cope in *Popular Science Monthly*.[92] In "Scientific Aspects of the Woman Suffrage Question," Mary Katrine Sedgwick, anthropologist and wife of the public health pioneer William T. Sedgwick, also observed that the suffrage movement seemed

[90] Ibid.
[91] See for example Emily Bissell, "A Talk to Every Woman" (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, n.d.).
[92] Quoted in "A Backward Step," *Remonstrance,* 1895.

"historically to be in a backward direction" in that it "would take the race back towards the condition in which no sex characteristics existed."[93]

This image appeared in Arthur Stringer's article, "The Renaissance of Woman," with the caption: "Woman's history begins with her as a beast of burden."

Until the 1910s, the fact that woman suffrage existed exclusively in the Western United States confirmed anti-suffragists' suspicion of its primitiveness. *American Woman's Journal* editor Helen Kendrick Johnson highlighted this correlation in her 1897 book *Woman and the Republic*, which was widely considered to be one of the best summaries of the arguments against woman suffrage. By 1897, woman suffrage had been enacted in four states, which formed the "suffrage column": Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho. This fact prompted Johnson to observe: "pre-civilized conditions…appear to be its natural allies."[94] For anti-suffragists, the conventional division of duties according to sex was not merely to

[93] Mrs. William Sedgwick, "Scientific Aspects of the Suffrage Question," *Remonstrance*, 1902.
[94] Helen Kendrick Johnson, *Woman and the Republic* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), 38.

be tolerated, but celebrated: it was a positive good, at once a result and a requirement of a "civilized" society.

Anti-suffragists seized opportunities to portray their opponents as the unscientific side of the woman suffrage debate. "The woman Suffragist has had to wage as bitter a warfare against the physical science as against religion," Johnson noted.[95] It is true that in the late nineteenth century, advocates of women's rights pushed back against the way evolutionists justified women's subordinate position. Eliza Burt Gamble, for example, advanced a critique of Darwin's theory in *The Evolution of Woman: An Inquiry into the Dogma of Her Inferiority to Man* (1894). Suffragists objected to Darwin's conclusion that women had a "manifestly inferior and irreversibly subordinate" status, and in particular to his belief in the inferior intellectual ability of women.[96] Anti-suffragists, however, like many of their contemporaries, accepted the narrative of evolution as an explanation of human social hierarchies, regarding women's dependence on men as natural.

Anti-suffragists subscribed to a paradoxical understanding of gender. On the one hand, sex was an inherent, determinative, and immutable factor in an individual's identity. On the other, an individual could become "unsexed." Womanliness and manliness were natural, biologically determined sets of characteristics, but they also had to be carefully cultivated and guarded. Anti-suffragists warned that the vote and its concomitant responsibilities would "unsex" women. Suffragists had been labeled "unsexed" as early as 1853, when one newspaper described the national woman suffrage convention as a "gathering of unsexed women – unsexed in mind all of them, and many in habiliments."[97]

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[95] Ibid., 297.
[96] Elaine Morgan, *The Descent of Woman* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 16.
[97] *Herald*, Sept. 7, 1853, quoted in Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881).

For women to claim male rights and seek to perform male activities, such as voting, was, in the anti-suffragists' view, to reject part of what defined them as women. A woman possessed inherently female characteristics, but could transform herself into "an undersized kind of man" or into something that was neither female nor male.[98] Anti-suffragists associated the idea of sex equality with androgyny.

Anxiety about behaviors that transgressed the boundary between the masculine and the feminine manifested itself in some anti-suffragists' distaste for gender-neutral clothing fashions. Anti-suffragists such as Helen Kendrick Johnson tended to view the turn-of-the-century fashion among young women for "masculine" attire as a symptom of social regression. Strutting along in their vests, cravats, and men's hats – or worse, riding their bicycles in bloomers and knickerbockers – women could "ape men," wrote Johnson, but remained merely "distorted" women.[99] Not all turn-of-the-century anti-suffragists were as conservative in their tastes as Johnson, however. Annie Nathan Meyer, a founder of Barnard College, boasted that she was the first female bicycle owner in New York City, and Jeannette L. Gilder, a pioneering woman journalist, described herself as a "tomboy."[100] But in most cases, anti-suffragists felt that the more men were manly and women were womanly, the better.

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[98] Caroline F. Corbin, "Dignity of Womanhood" (Chicago, Illinois: Illinois Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1912).
[99] Johnson, *Woman and the Republic*, 294.
[100] Linda K. Kerber, "Meyer, Annie Nathan, Feb. 19, 1867-Sept. 23, 1951," in *Notable American Women: The Modern Period,* ed. Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 473-474; Jeannette L. Gilder, *The Autobiography of a Tomboy* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1901).

Jeannette L. Gilder. Image courtesy of the New York Public Library, New York.

The debate about woman suffrage unfolded in an era when, as Stephanie Coontz explains, "women were defined entirely by their biology…the very essence of woman's being was her uterus; yet the effect of the uterus on women's health and even her femininity was pathological."[101] Anti-suffragists viewed women's "physical disabilities" as highly relevant to the question of woman suffrage.[102] Anti-suffrage women had no doubt that women were physically and psychologically disqualified to vote (at least, they did not voice any doubt), but they preferred to let male experts speak for them on this subject as much as possible. Female anti-suffrage writers and editors presided approvingly over the parade of

[101] Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 280.
[102] "Home, Woman's Sphere," *New York Times*, April 11, 1895.

male scientists, physicians, professors, and psychologists that marched across the pages of the *Remonstrance* and of various pamphlets, proclaiming women's unfitness to vote. In historians' attempt to explain the puzzling fact that it was women who mounted an organized defense against the woman suffrage movement, they have tended to ignore the degree to which anti-suffrage women harnessed men's arguments and deferred to male experts. In Floyd Dell's account of his visit to the New York anti-suffrage headquarters in 1915, the people staffing the headquarters were all women, but the writers who featured in the pamphlets they sold him were all men; they included William T. Sedgwick, President of the American Public Health Association, and Charles L. Dana, author of the 1892 *Text-book of Nervous Diseases for the Use of Students and Practitioners of Medicine*.[103] Anti-suffragists cited such experts to show that woman suffrage threatened national stability, women's health, and women's potential future children.

Women had long been thought to be governed by emotions more than by reason. Women's tendency to be "carried away by the feelings of the moment" formed the basis of Herbert Spencer's disapproval of woman suffrage, the *Remonstrance* reported in 1892. In 1902, the *Remonstrance* turned to former president of the American Psychological Association Hugo Münsterburg to provide an account of the female mind. Dr. Münsterburg affirmed the conventional view that women were superior in aesthetic feeling, sympathy, and morality, but also characterized by a lack of clearness and logical consistency, a tendency to hasty generalization, and a readiness to react based on feelings and emotions. "Even these defects can beautify the private life," Dr. Münsterburg added, by softening "the

[103] Floyd Dell, "Adventures in Anti-Land," reprinted in William L. O'Neill, ed., *Echoes of Revolt: "The Masses", 1911-1917* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books 1966), 199-201.

strenuous, earnest and consistent public activity of the man."[104] That women lacked men's cold rationality and logic both ennobled and limited them. Otto Weininger, an Austrian philosopher whose spectacularly misogynistic work *Sex and Character* (1903) informed some anti-suffragists' views of gender, observed: "Woman resents any attempt to require from her that her thoughts should be logical."[105] A woman was "nothing but sexuality," explained the 23-year-old Weininger, "man is sexual and something else beyond."[106] In *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (1894), British sexologist Havelock Ellis referred to women's special sensitivity, intense sympathies, and emotional reactions as feminine "affectability." President of the Washington D.C. anti-suffrage association Grace Duffield Goodwin cited Ellis to support her argument that a woman's "affectability," while her great feature in her role as a wife and mother, would be a great weakness in political life.[107] Voting responsibly required careful thought, not emotional reactions, and critical judgments, not personal preferences.

In describing women's "great temperamental disabilities," Goodwin highlighted a key reason why a woman should not be allowed to vote: "She lacks nervous stability."[108] Anti-suffrage men and women feared that women would add an unstable element to the electorate. Since the mid-nineteenth century, greater rates of insanity had been associated with women than with men.[109] In a 1915 letter from which subsequent anti-suffrage pamphlets quoted generously, neurophysiologist Dr. Charles Dana wrote to the president of the NYSAOWS: "if women achieve the feministic ideal and live as men do, they would

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[104] "An Impracticable Solution," *Remonstrance*, 1902.
[105] Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles* (1903; reprint, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), 149.
[106] Ibid., 80.
[107] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913).
[108] Ibid., 91, 92.
[109] See for example Edward Jarvis's "Of the Comparative Liability of Males and Females to Insanity, and Their Comparative Curability and Mortality When Insane," *American Journal of Insanity* (1850) 7: 142-171.

incur the risk of 25 per cent more insanity than they have now. I am not saying that woman suffrage will make women crazy. I do say that woman suffrage would throw into the electorate a mass of voters of delicate nervous stability."[110] Anti-suffragists offered their opponents as prime examples of women's excessively emotional and unstable nature. In the twentieth century, suffragists' increasingly militant tactics only confirmed anti-suffragists' belief that the suffrage movement "in its fervor and its fury, represents the acme of hysterical feminine thoughtlessness and unrest."[111]

In the 1890s, it seemed clear to the anti-suffragists that the need of the hour was stability, not the political experiment of enfranchising women. In her speech before the Republican National Convention of 1896, Mrs. W. Winslow Crannell – described by the next day's edition of the St. Louis *Star* as "the bombshell of the New York anti-suffragist" – cautioned against making a large-scale unpredictable change given the unrest and uncertainty America was already facing.[112] "We are in the midst of hard times," she said, "Our farmers fail in the markets, and our merchants and bankers go into bankruptcy. There is an undercurrent of anarchy that roils the waters of our social and political life." Would it not therefore be unwise "to throw into the boiling mass of unrest and disquiet the uncertain element of woman suffrage"?[113] The period of economic depression following the panic of 1893 had brought long-simmering social and political tensions to the boiling point. Anti-suffragists' conservative tendencies intensified in proportion to the change and tumult they perceived around them. At the time of Mrs. Crannell's speech, this context included large-

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[110] "A Noisy and Selfish Propaganda," *The Woman's Protest*, 1915.
[111] Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons,* 10.
[112] "Bravo! Mrs. Crannell," *St. Louis Star*, June 17, 1896.
[113] Mrs. W. Winslow Crannell, Republican National Convention, St. Louis, June 16, 1896, reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

scale labor unrest (the 1894 Pullman Strike was fresh in recent memory), stirrings of radicalism (Eugene V. Debs had been released from prison in 1895, having passed the time reading Karl Marx), the populist movement in the rural Midwest, and the continued influx of immigrants. This was not the time to introduce feminine instability into American politics (nor to introduce political instability into the feminine sphere). Anti-suffragists, in whose view American politics were already changing too fast, longed for a return to the familiar.

Anti-suffragists hypothesized that women voters *might* destabilize American politics; they asserted with a greater degree of certainty that politics would destabilize American women. Historian Francis Parkman's "Some of the Reasons Against Woman Suffrage" – which served as pamphlet material for Massachusetts and New York anti-suffrage associations for several decades – explained that the "excitements" and "turmoil" associated with elections posed a hazard to women's health, which was already precarious. "The frequently low state of health among American women is a fact as undeniable as it is deplorable," Parkman wrote. Therefore, imposing the burden of suffrage on women, who were not possessed of men's "harder organism," was "as much as if a man in a state of nervous exhaustion were told by his physician to enter at once for a foot-race or a boxing match."[114]

Echoing the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society's concern that the vote would constitute an "oppression" for already overburdened women, later anti-suffragists warned that woman suffrage would mean more than simply casting ballots. "If the ballot were the end, that would be one thing, but it is only the beginning," wrote journalist and self-

[114] Francis Parkman, "Some of the Reasons Against Woman Suffrage," reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

described "tomboy" Jeannette Gilder in "Why I Am Opposed to Woman Suffrage."[115] Gilder and others viewed woman suffrage as a whole package of new civic duties and rights, including attending primaries, holding offices and – most disturbingly – sitting on juries. Jury duty had accompanied women's right to vote in Wyoming, for example, where women served on juries in 1870 and 1871, when their right to do so was revoked by a concerned judge. Wyoming women's jury service had produced few dramatic results and no recorded fainting – its main effect was to inhibit the gambling, drinking, smoking, and chewing that had formerly been habits of Wyoming jurors during waiting periods – but opposition to women's serving on juries remained widespread well into the twentieth century.[116] A broadside distributed by the Alabama Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1919 appealed to the men of Alabama to oppose the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in order to protect their wives and daughters from serving on juries, where "profanity, obscenity and the detailed narration of the immoral acts and doing of the lowest type of humanity are brought out in all their revolting nakedness."[117] Anti-suffragists believed that women would be physically and mentally unable to cope with the demands, stresses, and shocking realities of the kind of citizenship suffragists proposed for women, which would be altogether "too public, too wearing, and too unfitted to the nature of woman."[118] In 1907, the *Remonstrance* reminded its readers that physicians ascribed nervous disorders to "the prevailing

[115] Jeannette L. Gilder, "Why I Am Opposed to Woman's Suffrage," *Harper's Bazar* (May 19, 1894), 2.
[116] T. A. Larson, "Petticoats at the Polls: Woman Suffrage in Territorial Wyoming," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (April 1953): 74-49.
[117] "Woman Suffrage in Action! Would Southern Men Approve of This? Votes for Women Means Jury Duty for Women?" Alabama Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (Montgomery, Alabama: Brown Printing Co., 1919). Georgia Historical Society.
[118] Ibid., 3.

strenuousness of women's lives."[119] Politics, anti-suffragists concluded, would only add to women's problems.

Perhaps the most urgent reason to oppose woman suffrage was, as one Ohio anti-suffragist wrote, "the biological necessity of conserving woman's strength for her great function of motherhood."[120] In the first *History of Woman Suffrage*, suffragists had written: "Womanhood is the great fact in her [woman's] life; wifehood and motherhood are but incidental relations."[121] The phrase "incidental relations," which Stanton repeated in an 1892 congressional hearing, provoked a strong reaction among anti-suffragists, who objected to the suffragists' perceived dismissiveness toward what antis held most sacred ("They are incidental! Incidental not only to the continuance of the race in civilization, but to all that is best and holiest…"[122]). Anti-suffragists believed with Francis Parkman that women's highest mission – indeed, women's entire being – revolved around the "functions of containing and rearing the human race." [123] They warned that political life would jeopardize women's procreative powers. Motherhood, wrote a prominent Chicago anti-suffragist in 1901, was "a task that will tax her [woman's] utmost strength."[124] Women needed "the quiet of home," not the rowdy excitements of primaries and polling stations, which would invite "wrecked nerves for themselves and their children."[125] Too many women were already failing to fulfill their maternal duty, and the possibility of participating in politics would only "distract" or "tempt" women further from family life. Some physicians cautioned that

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[119] "Against the Tide," *Remonstrance*, 1907.
[120] "A Plea for Real Progress," Julia D. Henry, *The Woman's Protest*, June 1913.
[121] Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881), 22.
[122] Johnson, *Woman and the Republic*, 311.
[123] Francis Parkman, "Some of the Reasons Against Woman Suffrage," reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).
[124] Caroline Fairfield Corbin, "The Position of Women in the Socialistic Utopia" (Chicago: Illinois Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1901).
[125] Metta Folger Townsend, "Good Reasons for Opposition," *The Woman's Protest* (June 1913).

women who delayed marriage and motherhood – as increasing numbers of women were doing in order to pursue educational and professional opportunities – risked atrophy of the reproductive organs as a result of disuse.[126] But when it came to reproduction, there was more at stake than individual women's health.

The decades around the turn of the century witnessed acute anxiety about the declining birthrate of Anglo-Americans. Mrs. Scott's 1895 speech before the New York State legislative committee reflected this preoccupation: "Who does not realize the present disinclination for motherhood which possesses so many of our younger generation, and who can see it without alarm?"[127] Mrs. Scott and subsequent anti-suffrage leaders shared Mrs. Dahlgren's reverence for motherhood but imbued it with a greater sense of urgency. Their emphasis on "American motherhood" appealed to the pervasive nativism and racism of their era, which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3. At the turn of the century, despite an ongoing campaign to restrict immigration, Eastern European immigrants continued to swell America's urban populations and reproduced at a rate that was, according to anti-suffragists, rivaled only by that of America's black population. The fertility of Anglo-American women was failing to keep pace with the birthrate of ethnic and racial minorities – an alarming trend if, as national leaders frequently suggested, the fate of the nation depended on the fate of the Anglo-Saxon race within its borders. President Roosevelt's 1905 speech before the National Congress of Mothers, in which he declared that America faced

[126] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in 19th-Century America," *The Journal of American History* 60, no. 2 (1973): 332-356.
[127] Mrs. Francis M. Scott, "First Legislative Address in Opposition to Woman Suffrage," 1895.

the threat of "race suicide," strengthened anti-suffragists' conviction that Anglo-American women's energy should be channeled into motherhood.[128]

Reflecting on men and women's different functions, President Roosevelt concluded: "on the whole, I think the duty of the woman the more important, the more difficult, and the more honorable of the two."[129] Such sentiments met with enthusiastic approval from anti-suffragists, who believed that it was more critical than ever before to convey to well-educated Anglo-American women the message that a life devoted to motherhood was admirable, important, and fulfilling. "In view of the fact that America's birth-rate is falling steadily and rapidly, we older women will fail in patriotism if we throw in our daughters' way the temptations that must come with political life," stated the prize-winning essay of an anti-suffrage essay contest, "All our wisdom and energy should be turned on the home, to show its importance and to dignify the task of mothering men."[130] Anti-suffragists saw the woman suffrage movement as an assault on the status of women's traditional role as mothers, which anti-suffragists therefore sought to "dignify." In the anti-suffragists' view, women's participation in politics would be detrimental to – or at best, a distraction from – women's primary mission of motherhood. Women's fertility became a form of patriotism.

The language anti-suffragists used to convey the significance of motherhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflected "the ubiquity and even the 'normality' of eugenic themes and practices" in America during this period.[131] The theory of eugenics (a term coined in 1883) sought to apply scientific knowledge of heredity to the goal of "better

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[128] Theodore Roosevelt, "On American Motherhood," speech before the National Congress of Mothers, Washington, D.C., Mar. 13, 1905, http://www.nationalcenter.org/TRooseveltMotherhood.html (accessed Nov. 2013).
[129] Ibid.
[130] Metta Folger Townsend, "Good Reasons for Opposition," *The Woman's Protest* (June 1913).
[131] Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 5.

breeding."[132] It promised a way to counteract "the menace of the biologically inadequate."[133] The "biologically inadequate" could include a broad range of people, from individuals of less than average intelligence to entire groups and races (Eastern European immigrants and African-Americans were generally considered to be biologically inferior). Anti-suffragists worried that America's biologically superior women were the very ones turning away from a focus on childbearing, and that the result would be a process of "degeneration" in the American population. This was not the time to encourage these women to get involved in politics. Alice Hill Chittenden, an exceptionally politically engaged anti-suffragist from Brooklyn, insisted that when it came to women's childbearing ability, "diffusion here means loss and deterioration. Remember we are working not for ourselves but for the race that is to come."[134] (This was a rhetorical "we": Chittenden was unmarried and childless.) When a suffragist made the argument that women would arrange better marriages if they were enfranchised, one NYSAOWS member retorted: "Perhaps she did not know that the two States where they had laws in regard to eugenics were not suffrage States."[135] Historians have characterized eugenists as "conservative members of the progressive crusade," part of a wider movement to effect social reforms in a systematic, scientific way, and respected by suffragists and anti-suffragists alike.[136]

Women differed from men in their emotional and mental tendencies, in their reproductive role, and in one more important respect: women were physically weaker than men. In *The Ladies' Battle* (1911), popular fiction writer and outspoken anti-suffragist

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[132] Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 3.
[133] Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 3.
[134] Goodier 75; Chittenden, "The Anti-Suffrage Definition of Duty," *The Woman's Protest* (June 1915): 9.
[135] Mrs. Barclay Hazard, "No Pantaloons or Politics," *The New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1912.
[136] Pickens 3.

Molly Elliot Seawell summarized the two major implications of this fact. It disqualified women from voting, firstly, because a voter "must, except in occasional individual instances, be physically able to make his way to the polls, against opposition if necessary."[137] In 1911, this was not a new argument: anti-suffragists had long maintained that women might not be physically able to make their way to the polls or that they would risk their physical safety in trying to do so. The possibility that women would be expected to participate at the polls on Election Day horrified anti-suffragists. To understand what lay behind anti-suffragists' dread of "the polls," let us pause for a moment to imagine the late nineteenth-century experience of Election Day.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Election Day was a rowdy affair. This was "the golden age of parties," when partisanship and party loyalty ran high.[138] On Election Day, citizens celebrated democracy with generous quantities of alcohol, which created an atmosphere of raucous fun that could quickly spill over into violence. In northern cities especially, the rivalry between Republicans and Democrats frequently caused fistfights, and tensions between black and white voters occasionally erupted into riots. Often residents of Boston and New York City, anti-suffragists would have been as familiar as respectable women could be with the ritual disorder of Election Day.

American participants and foreign visitors celebrated Election Day as an egalitarian moment when rich capitalists and working men rubbed shoulders as they waited in voting lines, exercising the right of their common citizenship and asserting their common manhood. According to Mark Brewin, Election Day festivities represented "a performance of

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[137] Molly Elliot Seawell, *The Ladies' Battle* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 27.
[138] Robert J. Dinkin, *Election Day: A Documentary History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 81-120.

masculine identity in nineteenth century America."[139] He notes that voting sites were not uncommonly located in male-only establishments, such as saloons and barbershops. On Election Night, political clubs lit up the skies with fireworks, gangs of boys built bonfires, and the cities echoed with the music of marching bands, to which was added the chaotic accompaniment of freely distributed tin horns and toy drums. That night and the following day witnessed the results of election day bets. The tradition of "freak bets" flourished in the 1880s and 1890s,when partisans of the losing party could be seen wheeling winners through the streets in push-carts. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* reported during the 1892 election season: "those who have no money, or whose love of the unusual is strong, have wagered their whiskers or their dignity in various guises."[140] This was decidedly not an environment conducive to the well-being of a woman's "delicate organism," nor tending to the preservation of womanly virtue, nor compatible with the ideal of womanly refinement and dignity.

The political carnival of Election Day represented everything women were not supposed to be, do, or know about. The raucous atmosphere of the polls was for the anti-suffragists a tangible symbol of the kind of noisy turmoil, irresponsible behavior, and social disorganization that they feared woman suffrage would bring into women's lives. But their dread of "the polls" was more than a stuffy objection to fun. The festive image of Election Day should not obscure the real violence that often accompanied it. The underlying threat of violence was particularly stark in the Southern context. Helen Kendrick Johnson's *Woman and the Republic* (1897) provides a revealing glimpse of how the violent disenfranchisement of black men in the late nineteenth-century South affected the way anti-suffragists imagined

[139] Mark W. Brewin, *Celebrating Democracy, The Mass-Mediated Ritual of Election Day* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 142.
[140] Quoted in Brewin 127.

women's attempt to go to the polls. Johnson observed that following Reconstruction-era protection of black men's right to vote, "no one pretends that he [the negro] has done so, to any practical extent, since that time. Unarmed, the negro finds that he cannot enforce his own vote against the will of white men armed to the teeth. The 'all-pervading influence of just and equal laws' cannot enforce it for him. Would the women be any better off, if the men chose that they should not exercise the vote? Who would enforce it?"[141] Women's attempt to go to the polls could threaten their status and dignity as well as their physical safety. Could the predicament of Southern black men befall women? Anti-suffragists drew from Southern politics the lesson that the ability to vote required more than the legal right to vote. Their sense of women's vulnerability underlay their insistence that men's physical toughness qualified men to vote and obliged men to protect women.

Suffragists were aware of women's reluctance to enter into the rough atmosphere of a traditional Election Day. To allay these fears, Elizabeth Cady Stanton told a story about Wyoming Territory's first election day in which women participated, which took place in 1870. In Laramie, Wyoming, she wrote, "I saw the rough mountaineers maintaining the most respectful decorum whenever the women approached the polls, and heard the timely warning of one of the leading managers as he silenced an incipient quarrel with uplifted finger, saying 'Hist! Be quiet! A woman is coming!'"[142] Anti-suffragists were not as confident as suffragists that this transformation would generally come to pass.

The second reason why women's physical weakness disqualified them from voting, according to Molly Elliot Seawell, was that a voter "must be able to carry out by force the effect of his ballot. Law consists of a series of Thou-shalt-nots, but government does not

[141] Johnson, *Woman and the Republic*, 68.
[142] Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 3 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1886), 738-39.

result until an armed man stands ready to execute the law."[143] In 1901, Susan B. Anthony acknowledged the prevalence and power of this reasoning when she identified "militarism" as the first of three great obstacles to the enfranchisement of women: "it still molds the opinions of millions of people and holds them to the old ideals of force in government and headship in the family."[144] For the anti-suffragists, the right to vote was tied to military service; voting was the prerogative of the "soldier-citizen." Anti-suffragists' coupling of "the ballot and the bullet" today seems strange and archaic. It seems less strange, perhaps, when considered in light of the influence that this association continued to exercise in twentieth-century American history. After World War II, for example, disenfranchised African-American men contended that their military service entitled them to vote, and many white Americans who had previously been indifferent to African-Americans' civil rights found this argument reasonable and compelling. Conversely, anti-suffragists believed that because women could not serve in the military (an unthinkable possibility given women's physical weakness and biological peculiarities), women were not entitled to vote. "Women can be seriously destructive," Helen Kendrick Johnson conceded, "but no one will claim that organized military duty is really practicable for them."[145]

More generally, the idea that half the electorate of a democratic nation would be unable to back up its votes with physical force – "the one indispensable element of sovereignty" – seemed absurd to anti-suffragists.[146] In 1898, the *Remonstrance* explained:

> "The world is governed in the last resort, and made habitable and kept free by the physical force of the men in it, and that condition of things will continue,

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[143] Seawell, *The Ladies' Battle*, 27.
[144] Susan B. Anthony, National American Convention, 1901, quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 5 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1922), 6.
[145] Johnson, *Woman and the Republic,* 79.
[146] "The Case Against Woman Suffrage" (Boston, Massachusetts: National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage), 1916.

> at all events until war is abolished and the three hundred millions of Chinese become civilized men. Representative government itself, that last discovery of the ages, has but one permanent security, the fact that the voter also wields the bayonet, and can, if a minority will not obey, coerce it into obedience."[147]

Anti-suffragists described scenarios in which woman suffrage, if enacted, might erode the authority of the law. What if women voted for a law or a tax that men refused to enforce? What if women opted to go to war, and men refused to fight? Underlying anti-suffragists' opposition to the "blank-cartridge ballot" was a tradition-bound theory of government that suffragists rejected.[148] The argument that physical force was necessary to maintain order suggested a barbaric worldview, suffragists argued, and moreover ran contrary to the republican principles on which America was founded. The suffragists undoubtedly had a point. But maybe there was something realistic about the anti-suffragists' view that arbitration had not yet entirely taken the place of physical force, if it ever would. In the late nineteenth century, Reconstruction Era tensions still loomed large in national memory and newspapers were full of reports of forcible suppression of labor unrest.

Though historians of the anti-suffrage movement have tended to focus on what anti-suffragists argued about women's role and womanliness, anti-suffragists also invoked powerful ideas about what men should be and do. Anti-suffragists' concern that the entrance of women into politics would weaken American government participated in the broader anxiety that America was not masculine enough. In 1899, Theodore Roosevelt, the leading figure in the crusade for masculinity, identified "over-sentimentality, over softness, in fact

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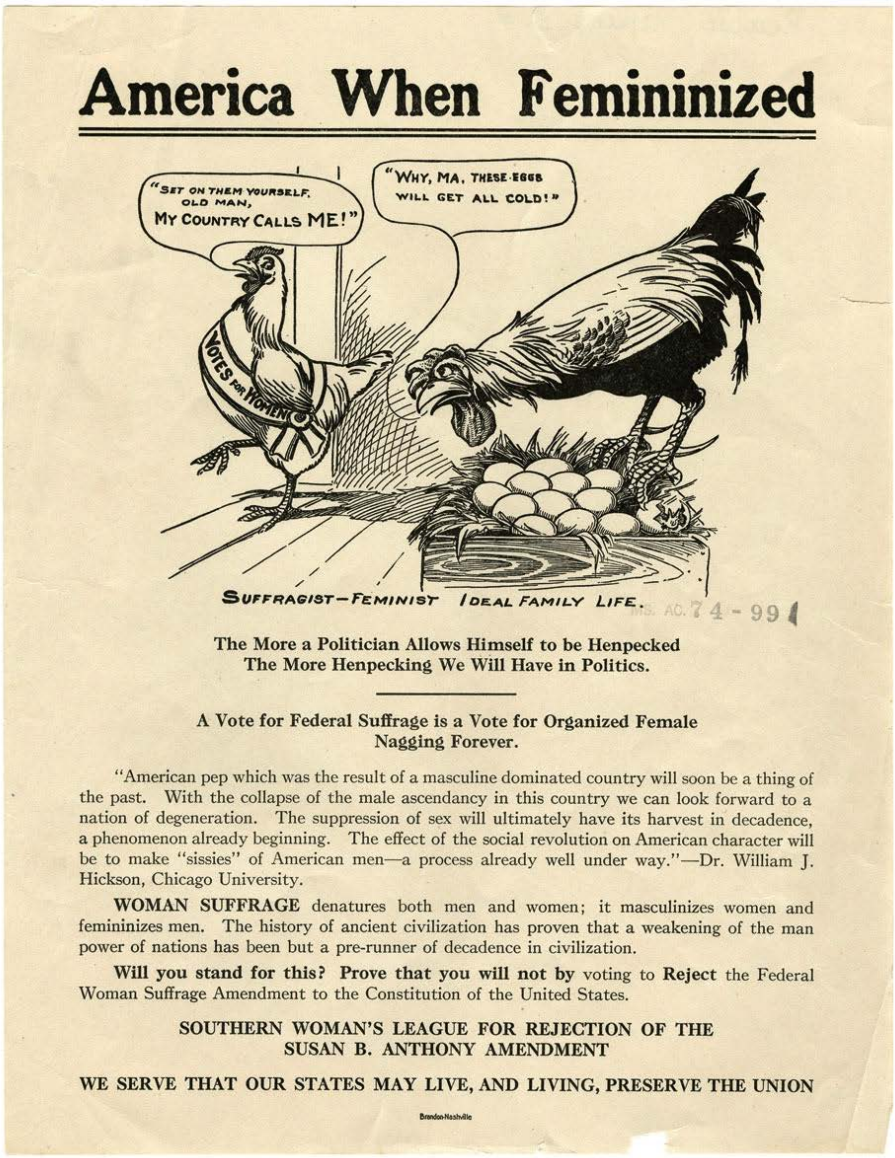
[147] *Remonstrance,* 1898.

[148] Rossiter Johnson, "The Blank-Cartridge Ballot," reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

washiness and mushiness" as "the great dangers of this age and of this people."[149] Anti-suffragists asserted that America needed a muscular, manly form of government and implied that American men needed an arena in which to be manly. In a 1902 *Remonstrance* article, Dr. Münsterburg cautioned: "If the whole national civilization should receive the feminine stamp, it would become powerless and without decisive influence on the world's progress."[150] Tapping into these anxieties, Alabama anti-suffragists circulated a broadside entitled "America When Feminized" that warned: "American pep which was the result of a masculine dominated country will soon be a thing of the past…Woman suffrage denatures both men and women; it masculinizes women and feminizes men."[151] Anti-suffragists suggested that women who "usurped" men's traditional functions unwittingly diminished men's vitality, gallantry, and sense of purpose. Politics represented one of the few remaining fields of activity in which men could be manly, where they could express the warrior impulses, struggles for dominance, tribal loyalties, flinty toughness, and competitive vigor that defined them as men. Voting was the special province of male citizens. Anti-suffrage men and women opposed women's encroachment on the male territory of politics.

[149] Quoted in Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 37.
[150] "An Impracticable Solution," *Remonstrance,* 1902.
[151] n.d. [1910s], quoted in Benjamin, 81.



America When Femininized

The More a Politician Allows Himself to be Henpecked
The More Henpecking We Will Have in Politics.

A Vote for Federal Suffrage is a Vote for Organized Female Nagging Forever.

"American pep which was the result of a masculine dominated country will soon be a thing of the past. With the collapse of the male ascendancy in this country we can look forward to a nation of degeneration. The suppression of sex will ultimately have its harvest in decadence, a phenomenon already beginning. The effect of the social revolution on American character will be to make "sissies" of American men—a process already well under way."—Dr. William J. Hickson, Chicago University.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE denatures both men and women; it masculinizes women and femininizes men. The history of ancient civilization has proven that a weakening of the man power of nations has been but a pre-runner of decadence in civilization.

Will you stand for this? Prove that you will not by voting to **Reject** the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

SOUTHERN WOMAN'S LEAGUE FOR REJECTION OF THE SUSAN B. ANTHONY AMENDMENT

WE SERVE THAT OUR STATES MAY LIVE, AND LIVING, PRESERVE THE UNION

Brandon-Nashville

Image courtesy of the Josephine A. Pearson Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Anti-suffragists regarded the fact that women were physically weaker than men through a Darwinian lens and concluded that the tradition of chivalry – not suffragists' vision of "equal rights" – offered the best protection for women. Men and women, they maintained, were intended to "supplement each other and not to compete."[152] The pervasiveness of Social Darwinism in political practice and sociological theory informed

[152] "The Case Against Woman Suffrage" (Boston, Massachusetts: National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).

anti-suffragists' opposition to suffragists' agenda of equality for men and women. If men and women "competed" on equal terms, then the strong (men) would surely trample the weak (women). William T. Sedgwick, the pioneering epidemiologist whose anti-suffrage wife we met in the beginning of this chapter, offered this vaguely threatening explanation: "let men meet women in the fierce struggle of political life…then will women indeed find that the knightliness and chivalry of gentlemen have vanished, and in their stead will arise a rough male power that will place women where it chooses."[153]

Anti-suffragists felt that it was imperative to preserve the "knightliness and chivalry" of American men. A social norm that served to curb men's instinctive brutality, the tradition of chivalry had been built up over centuries and should be carefully maintained. "Once he [man] understands that woman does not hold herself in need of his chivalry and tenderness," predicted Helen Kendrick Johnson, "the husbandhood and fatherhood that now bind him to one sacred vow of married love, and tame the savage within him, will not long prevent him from seeing his own advantage in the new order."[154] An especially powerful and enduring tradition in Southern culture, chivalry was central to Southern anti-suffragists' opposition to woman suffrage. The Atlanta *Constitution* quoted a prominent Birmingham anti-suffragist: "Shall we rashly demolish the pedestal upon which he [man] has placed us? Rest assured he will not continue to defend and protect us if women are encountered in every voting precinct and political pow-wow."[155] Anti-suffragists' understanding of the role of chivalry in American society shaped their belief that women's interests were best represented by male politicians and protected by male legislators.

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[153] William T. Sedgwick, "Feminist Revolutionary Principle is Biological Bosh," *New York Times,* Jan. 18, 1914.
[154] Johnson, *Woman and the Republic*, 311.
[155] Rosa-Leigh Towers, "Woman Suffrage: A Well-Known Birmingham Woman's Reasons for Not Wanting to Vote," Atlanta *Constitution*, February 4, 1895.

Anti-suffragists drew a contrast between themselves and the suffragists in their respective attitudes towards men: while anti-suffragists were respectful of male abilities and grateful for male chivalry, suffragists, by contrast, harbored "a degree of bitterness, of contempt, of positive enmity against men that is not dreamed of by the average person."[156] Anti-suffragists found that the suffrage movement was rife with "sex antagonism," a term they had adopted from psychology. In a 1898 speech, Susan B. Anthony confirmed the antis' suspicion of suffragists' tendency toward sex antagonism when she said: "The grievances women have against the common enemy, man, today are as many as the colonists had against King George."[157] To anti-suffragists, the implications of sex antagonism were many and menacing. For one thing, it constituted "a race danger" because it would lower the marriage rate and birth rate further.[158] For another, given women's inferior physical strength, if women were to wage a "sex war" against men, women would lose.[159]

The debate about woman suffrage was about more than whether or not women should vote. It provided a battleground on which to settle questions about femininity and masculinity and the duties of men and women to each other. In the late nineteenth century, American women split over whether women needed equal rights or special protection. In their reactions to the convention of male protection of women, suffragists and anti-suffragists revealed two fundamentally different conceptions of the capacities and rights of women. "I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand," said Susan B. Anthony.[160] Anti-

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[156] Annie Nathan Meyer, "Woman's Assumption of Sex Superiority," *North American Review*, Jan.1904, 6.
[157] Quoted in *The Eagle*, April 9, 1898.
[158] Bissell, "A Talk to Every Woman," 21.
[159] "Antis Call Fight for Votes Sex War," *New York Times*, April 16, 1914.
[160] Quoted in Miriam Gurko, *The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 194.

suffragists, by contrast, insisted that women had a right to special protection in a variety of forms: physical, social, and legal. One New Jersey anti-suffragist wrote:

> "The one indispensable right of women in relation to the state is exemption from political duties. A woman's right is her right to protection. The whole duty of man toward woman is to protect her, even against herself if need be. She has a right to be protected, because she can't live a normal life without protection."[161]

In 1901, Chicago anti-suffrage leader Caroline F. Corbin suggested the incompatibility of the suffrage and anti-suffrage worldviews: "The two ideals of the new woman and the old stand squarely face to face appealing to mankind for approval. In the great coming social struggle which is to prevail?"[162]

As anti-suffragists saw it, science and common sense were on their side. They believed with Arthur Stringer that "woman, new as she may call herself, and new as her ideas may seem, cannot rise above the cold logic of biology. In the sum of her highest aspiration must fall the recurring decimal of racial duty."[163] Science showed that men and women were fundamentally, unalterably different and that specialization of function according to sex was a feature of an advanced society. The nation required its male and female citizens to perform distinctly masculine and feminine duties. Physiologically and psychologically disqualified from voting, women most fully benefited themselves, their country, and their race by channeling their energies into motherhood. Governing and all its related functions, including the exercise of the franchise, should be conducted in a masculine way and were therefore best left in the hands of men.

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[161] "Anti-Suffrage Notes," *Trenton Evening Times*, May 27, 1915.
[162] Caroline Fairfield Corbin, "The Position of Women in the Socialistic Utopia" (Chicago: Illinois Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1901).
[163] Arthur Stringer, "The Renaissance of Woman," in *Opposition to the Women's Movement in the United States, 1848-1929,* ed. Angela H. and Sasha R. A. Tarrant (New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 306.

3. The Suffrage Doldrums and the Problem of Democracy

"Political suffrage for women is a slowly dying cause," observed the Portland *Oregonian* in 1898. By 1898, equal suffrage had been enacted in four Western states: Wyoming (1869), Utah (1870), Colorado (1893), and Idaho (1896). But the suffrage movement continued to encounter staunch resistance in the East and in the South. Following the suffragists' victory in Idaho in 1896, no other state enfranchised women until 1910. Historians have termed this sluggish, uneventful phase of the woman suffrage movement the "suffrage doldrums." For many turn-of-the-century Americans, including anti-suffragists and suffragists, democracy was sacred in principle but problematic in practice, given the growing presence of immigrants, African Americans, and others who constituted "the ignorant vote." In a climate hostile to further "experiments" in widening the franchise, suffragists wrestled with the practical implications of their commitment to democracy and anti-suffragists argued against enfranchising large populations of women whom they perceived to be unfit to vote.

The suffrage movement's early victories in the West present a puzzling anomaly. Historians have proposed various theories to explain the West's receptivity to woman suffrage, finding that Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho each enfranchised women for idiosyncratic reasons. In general, the suffrage movement owed the success of the "suffrage column" of Western states to the practical politics rather than the advanced ideology of the region. Some historians argue that woman suffrage provoked less opposition in the West because of the relative dearth of women: letting a handful of women vote did not seem likely to cause revolutionary change. As Beverly Beeton explains, "Men were not afraid that western women would use the ballot to reform society or seize political power; after all,

with the exception of Utah, there were not many women."[164] If the sheer number of women in the East and South caused Easterners and Southerners to hesitate longer than Westerners when it came to woman suffrage, it was the large number of certain types of women that provoked the most outspoken opposition.

In 1901, Susan B. Anthony attributed the suffrage movement's difficulties in part to "the inertia in the growth of democracy which has come as a reaction following the aggressive movements that with possibly ill-advised haste enfranchised the foreigner, the negro, and the Indian."[165] Southern and eastern European immigrants were entering the U.S. in record numbers, joining Irish, German, and other northern European immigrants in the category of "the foreigner." Between 1880 and 1890, over five million immigrants entered the U.S., and by 1890, fifteen percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born.[166] City infrastructure and housing could not keep pace, and foreign-born populations became associated with urban slums. Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) vividly documented the degrading poverty, overcrowding, and ignorance in which urban immigrants lived. New York, an anti-suffrage stronghold, witnessed the largest growth in the foreign-born population. Waves of immigration and the growth of urban political machines provoked widespread nativism, which manifested itself in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other attempts to restrict immigration. Many Americans felt that American institutions were threatened by large numbers of voters who could not speak English or read American newspapers and who knew little about American history and government. In

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[164] Beverly Beeton, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 115.

[165] Susan B. Anthony, National American Convention, 1901, quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 5 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1922), 6.

[166] Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 89.

1902, a former suffragist who had converted to anti-suffragism explained her reasoning: "The United States is to-day in grave peril from too wide an extension of the franchise. The corruption of our great cities is chiefly the result of a mass of ignorant voters."[167] Her sentiments were of a piece with the prevailing attitude of middle and upper class Americans during this period, which Alexander Keyssar characterizes as "disenchantment with democracy."[168]

In the South, this was a period of political turmoil and violent racial oppression. Lynching peaked in the 1890s, and Jim Crow laws established racial segregation in nearly every aspect of Southern life. Between 1890 and 1910, Southern states passed laws instituting voting requirements such as poll taxes and literacy tests, requirements that effectively disfranchised most black men and many poor white men.[169]

Racism was not confined to the South, however. Anti-suffragists on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line subscribed to a system of beliefs about race and ethnicity that historians have since termed "scientific racism," which held that certain races, including eastern European and African races, were inherently inferior. [170] Just as anti-suffragists applied Darwin's theory of evolution to the question of gender roles, they understood economic realities and social hierarchies of race and class in Darwinian terms. Gilded Age thinkers such as sociologist William Graham Sumner justified existing social inequalities as the result of "natural selection," "survival of the fittest," and other Darwinian ideas.[171] This ideology, since termed Social Darwinism, served to legitimate the subordination of

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[167] "An Opinion Changed, and Why," *Remonstrance,* 1902.
[168] Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 159.
[169] Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
[170] Rutledge M. Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race," *The Journal of Negro Education* 64, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 243-252.
[171] Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

"inferior" races to Anglo-Saxon supremacy. The growing presence of populations that were perceived to be inferior was problematic for a democratic nation. In 1913, New York anti-suffragist Grace Duffield Goodwin characterized America as "a nation of unsolved problems…Our negro and our alien problem are ours alone."[172]

The antidemocratic mood of middle and upper class Americans at the turn of the century favored the anti-suffrage side of the woman suffrage debate. Anti-suffrage organizations' memberships increased dramatically during the "suffrage doldrums." The Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, for example, experienced an increase from 1,560 members in 1896 to 12,500 members in 1907.[173] The woman suffrage debate cannot be understood, however, as a simple dichotomy between elitist, xenophobic anti-suffragists and egalitarian, inclusive suffragists. Antidemocratic sentiments played a role on both sides of the suffrage debate. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists saw the "ignorant" vote as a problem, but they proposed different solutions.

Some suffragists argued for votes for women on the basis that women's votes promised a way to counterbalance the votes of ignorant and other undesirable voters. At the National Woman Suffrage Convention of 1889, Olympia Brown, a Universalist minister and a tireless speaker on behalf of woman suffrage, declared: "the votes of women will eventually be the only means of overcoming this foreign influence and maintaining our free institutions. There is no possible safety for…our republican government, unless women are

[172] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913), 43.
[173] James J. Kenneally, "The Opposition to Woman Suffrage in Massachusetts, 1868-1920," Ph.D. diss., Boston College (1963), 337.

given the suffrage and that right speedily."[174] Foreign-born men already voted in large numbers. Suffragists argued that to prohibit "native" American women from voting was not only unjust and insulting, but also unwise from a practical standpoint. Likewise, some Southern suffragists, including Belle Kearney, Kate Gordon, and Laura Clay, made the argument that the surest way to maintain white supremacy in Southern politics was to double the white vote by extending it to women.[175] After the 1880s, the debate about whether or not woman suffrage would uplift politics often came down to a statistical question. Suffragists and anti-suffragists disagreed about what proportion of American women were desirable voters. Olympia Brown pointed out that according to the 1890 census, there were three times as many native-born women as foreign-born women in the United States. Anti-suffragists remained skeptical, however, convinced that foreign-born, black, and "wicked" women would cast their ballots in greater numbers than the women who might have an uplifting effect on American politics.

Some suffragists proposed enfranchising only those women qualified to vote. Support for restricted suffrage became mainstream among women's rights advocates in the 1880s and 1890s. In an 1894 article entitled "Educated Suffrage Justified," Elizabeth Cady Stanton observed that the "greatest block in the way of woman's enfranchisement" was "the fear of the 'ignorant vote' being doubled."[176] In response to this objection, Stanton and other suffragists advocated incorporating an educational restriction into the demand for woman suffrage, which would involve a literacy test and proof of English language proficiency. "The imperative need of the time," according to Stanton, was the influence of educated

[174] Olympia Brown, "Foreign Rule," National Woman Suffrage Convention, 1889, quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4 (Indianapolis: The Hollenbeck Press, 1902), 148.
[175] Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[176] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Educated Suffrage Justified," *Woman's Journal*, Nov. 3, 1894, 348.

women in public life.[177] The economic and social instability of the 1890s contributed to a conservative attitude even among "radical" women's rights activists such as Stanton. Newspapers and journalists bombarded middle-class Americans with stories of poverty, crime, greed, labor strikes, corruption scandals, and a struggling agricultural sector. Stanton compared the United States to "a vessel…in danger on a stormy sea," concluding that "we need skill and intelligence on the bridge and at the wheel, to protect those who are ignorant of the science of navigation."[178]

Restricted suffrage became a problematic and divisive idea within the suffrage movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other suffragists who advocated "educated suffrage" struggled to reconcile their position with the principle that voting was an inherent right of men and women. The proposal of restricted suffrage tended to divide the suffrage movement along generational lines. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch, published a letter of dissent in response to her mother's "Educated Suffrage Justified." Blatch, who lived in England and worked closely with working-class men and women as a member of the socialist Fabian Society, defended working people's ability to judge and protect their own interests.[179] The women who led the suffrage movement in the late-nineteenth century, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and other members of what came to be known as the "old guard" of suffragists, represented a more elite movement than the younger generation of suffragists envisioned.

Anti-suffragists attacked the inconsistency of the suffragists' proposal of restricted suffrage. They argued that it was undemocratic and unrealistic. "The limited vote idea again

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ellen Carol Dubois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 183-184.

– the most foolish and un-Democratic thing in the world. Democracy is here to stay," wrote Delaware social worker and anti-suffragist Emily Bissell, adding, "This is not England."[180] Dorothea Blount Lamar, a Macon anti-suffrage leader and president of the Georgia division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, observed: "If the woman begs for the vote for herself as a matter of justice, she cannot then say that universal suffrage does not mean every woman but means only the 'white ladies' without appearing extremely hypocritical."[181] The most practical, consistent, and morally defensible solution for Americans, as anti-suffragists saw it, was equal disenfranchisement for all women.

Was suffrage, as Henry Ward Beecher put it, "the inherent right of mankind"?[182] In contrast to the suffragists, anti-suffragists maintained from the beginning that voting was not a natural right. Disagreement about whether the vote was a right or a matter of expediency constituted a crucial difference in suffragists' and anti-suffragists' fundamental assumptions. In a pro-suffrage speech at Utah's 1895 constitutional convention, Mormon journalist and academic Orson F. Whitney defined the elective franchise as "a right, an inherent, God-given right. It existed before governments were formed, before constitutions were heard of."[183] Anti-suffragists, on the other hand, defined voting as a privilege, a duty, a burden, a tool of government, "a man-devised instrument for the peaceful expression of the popular will in government."[184] In short, the vote was "purely an administrative issue."[185] Anti-suffragists were quick to point out the logical inconsistencies of the belief that voting was a

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[180] Emily Bissell, "A Talk to Every Woman" (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, n.d.).
[181] Mrs. Walter D. Lamar, "The Vulnerability of the White Primary" (Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, Macon, Georgia, 1916).
[182] Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 2 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1882), 218.
[183] Orson F. Whitney, *Speeches of Hon. O. F. Whitney in Support of Woman Suffrage: Delivered in the Constitutional Convention of Utah, March 30th, April 2nd, and April 5th, 1895* (Salt Lake City: Utah Woman Suffrage Association, 1895), 11.
[184] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913), 18.
[185] Miss M. Emmeline Pitt, "Anti-Suffrage True Doctrine of Democracy," *The Woman's Protest* (Oct. 1914): 6.

"natural right." No one claimed that it was unjust to prohibit minors, lunatics, and other groups from voting, anti-suffragists reasoned. They cited the Cyclopedia of American Government: "That the suffrage cannot be a natural right is obvious from the fact that no community can ever enfranchise all its citizens."[186] The anti-suffragists situated their understanding of the nature of voting in the American legal tradition. They frequently cited Chief Justice Marshall's opinion that "the granting of the franchise has always been regarded in the practice of nations as a matter of expediency and not as an inherent right."[187] In the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s, defining the vote as an expedient – a means to an end rather than an inborn right – was a key premise on which anti-suffragists' arguments depended.

At the 1848 Seneca Falls convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had argued for women's "inalienable right to the elective franchise."[188] Likewise, in the 1870s, when NWSA presented a Sixteenth Amendment to Congress and provoked opposition from Mrs. Dahlgren and her Society, suffragists argued for the vote primarily on the basis that it was American women's inherent right. But as the nineteenth century wore on and these arguments proved to be insufficient to convince Congress and the American public to grant women the right to vote, suffragists gradually shifted their emphasis from abstract justice arguments to arguments about the "expediency" of woman suffrage. Accordingly, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, anti-suffragists increasingly emphasized the inexpediency of woman suffrage. Anti-suffragists' position that the vote was not a natural

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[186] "The Case Against Woman Suffrage" (Boston, Massachusetts: National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).
[187] Mrs. Henry Hollister Dawson, ed., *Tenth Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs: Official Report* (Newark, New Jersey: The General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1910), 244.
[188] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," reprinted in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman (New York: Random House LLC, 2007), 58-62.

right shifted the burden of proof to the suffragists: could suffragists show that upending the political status quo by giving women the vote would produce an improvement in conditions?

One of the main reasons that extending the vote to women would be inexpedient, according to anti-suffragists, was because the majority of women were too "ignorant" or "indifferent" to vote wisely. It was true that not all voting men were fit to vote, antis conceded, but as one anti explained, "it is surely evident that existing evils should not be added to simply because they exist."[189] Furthermore, anti-suffragists argued that within America's ignorant population, the women were even more ignorant than the men: in "the lower ranks of society, the average political intelligence of women is far below that of men," lamented the *Remonstrance* in 1902.[190] In the 1880s and 1890s, anti-suffragists shifted their emphasis away from Mrs. Dahlgren's sweeping claims about the universal nature of "woman" to focus more on distinguishing between different types of women: native and foreign-born women, white and black women, good and "wicked" women. They maintained that while all women shared certain biological characteristics, women varied widely in terms of morality, intellect, and education. Anti-suffragists were deeply apprehensive about the wrong kind of woman gaining power.

Antis maintained that because Eastern cities' hordes of foreign-born women were "ignorant" and "indifferent," their votes would be easily bought and manipulated by bosses and political machines. In 1909, Mary Dean Adams, Investigator for the New York State Commission of Immigration, appeared before the Joint Judiciary Committee of the New York state legislature to speak in opposition to woman suffrage. Her first observation about

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[189] Mary A. J. M'Intire, "Of No Benefit to Woman: She is a Far Greater Power Without the Vote" (Boston: Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1894), 4.
[190] "An Opinion Changed, and Why," *Remonstrance*, 1902.

the immigrant woman was that "she is so very numerous."[191] Adams testified that the immigrant woman, while affectionate and unselfish, was "a fickle, impulsive creature, irresponsible, very superstitious, ruled absolutely by emotion and intensely personal in her point of view. In many things much resembling a sheep." For Adams, the immigrant woman embodied the extremes of the inherently feminine traits that disqualified women from voting: she was emotional rather than rational and lacked an independent mind. Adams went on to describe her experience with the immigrant women of New York City's lower East Side tenements ("angry females ready to scratch each other's eyes out over some trifle") and reported on an interview she had conducted with a male immigrant about the effect suffrage would have on his countrywomen. "Ha! Ha!" the man had replied, according to Adams, "Why she would sell her vote for a pound of macaroni!" Adams, like many anti-suffragists, viewed poor and immigrant women with a mixture of contempt, pity, and dread. Prominent public figures joined anti-suffragists in their concerns. In an article that appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1905, ex-President Grover Cleveland cautioned women that "the votes of the thoughtful and conscientious would almost certainly be largely outweighed by those of the disreputable, the ignorant, the thoughtless, the purchased, and the coerced."[192]

Some anti-suffragists portrayed poor urban women not only as an indifferent and politically unprincipled group, but also as an actively threatening one. Kate Gannett Wells, for example, a member of the Boston anti-suffrage association and a three-term appointee to the Massachusetts State Board of Education, presented "An Argument Against Woman Suffrage" that exploited the fear that the lower classes were antagonistic and dangerous. She

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[191] Mary Dean Adams, "In Opposition to Woman Suffrage: Two Papers Read at Albany, February 24, 1909, Before the Joint Senate and Assembly Judiciary Committee" (New York: The New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1909).

[192] Grover Cleveland, "Would Woman Suffrage Be Unwise?", *The Ladies' Home Journal* 22, no. 11 (Oct. 1905): 7.

described her charitable work with poor women in the North End of town. "Many a one," she wrote, "spoke of the time when she could vote as the only vengeance left her to exercise upon the wealthy classes."[193] Anti-suffragists were reluctant to empower poor and immigrant women with the ballot. Antis perceived the interests of such women as contrary to their own and to the nation's best interests.

Equally menacing was "the negro woman," whose "weaknesses of moral fibre and of mental grasp" made anti-suffragists on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line shudder to think what she might do with the vote.[194] Northern and Southern anti-suffragists found common ground in their prejudice against African-Americans. New York anti-suffragist Grace Duffield Goodwin included "the negro" in her list of "classes that constitute a menace."[195] Southern men and women, who associated the women's rights movement with the movement to abolish slavery, manifested an enduring hostility to the woman suffrage movement. It was Northern women who were, as Albert Taylor Bledsoe had written, the "mischief makers" – a generalization that remained largely accurate until the 1910s, when the struggle for woman suffrage finally came to the South.[196] In 1914, Georgia became the first southern state to form an anti-suffrage association affiliated with the NAOWS. As Southern women became active in the suffrage and anti-suffrage movements, Northern anti-suffrage publications expressed increasingly vocal support for white supremacy and states' rights.

Southern anti-suffragists' arguments revealed a preoccupation with race. President of the Georgia Daughters of the Confederacy Dolly Blount Lamar and other Southern anti-

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[193] Kate Gannett Wells, "An Argument Against Suffrage," reprinted in *Why Women Do Not Want the Ballot* (Boston: Massachusetts Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1885).
[194] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913), 44.
[195] Ibid., 43.
[196] Albert Taylor Bledsoe, "The Mission of Woman," *The Southern Review* 10 (Oct. 1871): 941-942.

suffragists dwelled ominously on the South's large population of African-Americans, who, they noted, outnumbered whites in sixty-six counties in Georgia alone. "The white primary is no permanent bulwark!" warned Lamar, "Would that it were!"[197] Southern anti-suffragists suggested that any attempt to revisit voting rights amendments jeopardized the tenuous political control of Southern whites. Southerners feared that the methods used to keep black men from the polls would prove more problematic if used against black women. One Mississippi Senator explained: "We are not afraid to maul a black man over the head if he dares to vote, but we can't treat women, even black women, that way. No, we'll allow no woman suffrage."[198] Furthermore, as the Richmond *Evening Journal* showed, confidence in the literacy test as a method of restricting the electorate was waning: "It is to be remembered that the literacy test would not work in choking off the colored woman vote. The colored people are decreasing their percentage of illiteracy very fast, especially among their women."[199] Southern anti-suffragism, as Elna Green and other historians have noted, was primarily an expression of a dread of returning to Reconstruction-era conditions.[200] "To ratify the Anthony amendment is to endorse the fifteenth which for all these years has been execrated by Southern men," wrote James Callaway, editor of the *Macon Telegraph* and friend of the Georgia anti-suffragists.[201]

The tactics used by Southern anti-suffrage organizations exploited white Southerners' fear of the African-American vote. One particularly efficient strategy was simply to publicize the pro-suffrage sentiments of African-American organizations. The

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[197] Mrs. Walter D. Lamar, "The Vulnerability of the White Primary" (Macon, Georgia: Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).
[198] Quoted in David Morgan, *Suffragists and Democrats: The Politics of Woman Suffrage in America* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1972), 84.
[199] *Richmond Evening Journal*, May 4, 1915, reprinted in *The Woman Patriot*, June 8, 1918.
[200] Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[201] *The Woman Patriot*, Dec. 13, 1919.

Men's Anti-Ratification League of Montgomery, Alabama, for example, reprinted in broadside form extracts from a pamphlet entitled "The Negro and the New Social Order." This pamphlet had been included as a supplement in a March 1919 edition of Chandler Owen's and A. Philip Randolph's magazine, *The Messenger*. It expressed support for the Susan B. Anthony Amendment granting suffrage to women – "both white and colored" – and for "intermarriage between the whites and Negroes."[202] For Southern anti-suffragists, this was compelling evidence that the enactment of woman suffrage would serve a larger plan for racial equality. The South was almost monolithic in its hostility to woman suffrage, and provided the most entrenched opposition to the national amendment into the final days of the ratification process.

Anti-suffragists suspected that even among native-born white women, many were too ignorant or too morally deficient to vote wisely. Anti-suffragists believed that the "best" women would be the ones least likely to vote. Bishop Warren Candler, an ally of the Georgia anti-suffragists, reaffirmed their view that "good" women's faithfulness to their maternal responsibilities would keep them from competing successfully with all manner of "bad" women at the polls: "the negro women, and the bad women not cumbered with the cares of maternity, would have every advantage and the good women would be at the greatest disadvantage."[203] "Good" women would stay away from the polls almost by definition of "good." They would be too immersed in their domestic and maternal duties to involve themselves in the political sphere. Dorothea Blount Lamar argued furthermore that "good women" would shy away from politics because they would be too appalled by the corruption of political dealings: equal suffrage would actually "keep from the polls many a

[202] "The Negro and the New Social Order: Extracts from the *Messenger*," The Men's Anti-Ratification League of Montgomery, Alabama (Montgomery: Brown Printing Co., 1919). Georgia Historical Society.
[203] *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 22, 1894.

woman who might be a power for good in politics had she not discovered that the alleged slime of politics is really there."[204] Representative William Maybury of Michigan concurred: "The great mass of the intelligent, refined and judicious, with the becoming modesty of their sex, would shrink from the rude contact of the crowd and, with the exceptions mentioned, leave the ignorant and vile the exclusive right to speak for the gentler sex in public affairs."[205] Anti-suffragists saw themselves as examples of what "good" women were like, and they did not want to be represented at the polls by the kind of women who wanted to vote.

Anti-suffrage speakers and writers often left the category of "wicked" women open-ended, letting their audiences supply their own images of female wickedness. Sometimes, anti-suffragists referred to "wicked" or "bad" women specifically as a euphemism for prostitutes, as when Mary M'Intire referred to "out and out bad women (60,000 in New York City alone)."[206] Often, "wicked" or "bad" connoted lower class status. The biblical language of "good" and "wicked" women was especially prevalent in the South. "Wicked woman is good woman's worst enemy," warned Eugene Anderson, president of the Georgia-Alabama Business College for young ladies, when he was invited to speak to the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1916, "The minute you say to womankind that petticoats entitle one to the voting privilege, you bring back those women into vigorous competition with you on an equal footing."[207]

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[204] Mrs. Walter D. Lamar, "The Vulnerability of the White Primary" (Macon, Georgia: Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916), 2.
[205] Ida Husted Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 4 (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), 50.
[206] Mary A. J. M'Intire. "Of No Benefit to Woman: She is a Far Greater Power Without the Vote" (Boston: Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1894), 4.
[207] Eugene Anderson, "Unchaining the Demons of the Lower World; or A Petition of Ninety-Nine Per Cent Against Suffrage" (Macon, Georgia: Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).

According to the ideology of separate spheres, women's moral purity was enhanced by their remaining within the domestic sphere. In the late nineteenth century, more women stepped outside the boundaries of home and family with each passing year, gradually making a place for themselves in higher education, the professions, office work, and social work as well as industrial wage labor. On the whole, anti-suffragists embraced women's changing role, but they did so more gradually and with a greater degree of ambivalence than suffragists. On the one hand, anti-suffragists celebrated Kate Gannett Wells's charitable excursions into the North End of Boston and other examples of courageous female benevolence. On the other hand, as Chicago anti-suffrage leader Caroline Corbin wrote, when women were "emancipated from these restraints [of home and family], the intensity of their nature often betrays them into surpassing depths of depravity."[208] Anti-suffragists believed that women's involvement in politics would increase the prevalence of female depravity. In 1913, by which time nine states had adopted woman suffrage, Grace Goodwin lamented: "a woman to gain political ends has been known to offer what is euphemistically, but quite clearly described as the 'new bribery' – an abyss of horror into which only the lowest will fall, but into which the lowest *will* fall."[209] Women's moral purity, as anti-suffragists saw it, was both powerful and fragile; it needed careful guarding and cultivation.

Anti-suffragists were confident that women such as themselves – white, native-born, Anglo-Saxon, middle and upper class, well-educated – were the most qualified to wield power and influence in American society. Works of entertainment with an anti-suffrage bent served as allegories to illustrate this point. In Lilian Clisby Bridgham's 1912 parlor play *A Suffragette Town Meeting*, an American town's leading suffragists have gained the vote and

[208] Caroline F. Corbin, Letter to the Honorable Henry W. Blair, 1887, *Why Women Do Not Want the Ballot* (Boston: Massachusetts Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1896[?]).
[209] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913), 23.

are gathering to discuss their municipal affairs. In attendance are Mrs. Plain, the Chairman of the Board of Health, and Mrs. Gray, the Chief Constable. To the dismay of these well-meaning ladies, their efforts are soon impeded by the participation of their uneducated maids – an unforeseen consequence of having achieved suffrage for all women. Their Irish maids comment on every item of the agenda – "Shure the Oirish contingent is lift out intirely," complains Mag – preventing any progress and producing exasperation all round. *A Suffragette Town Meeting* was intended as a comedic but nonetheless cautionary tale.[210]

Prominent anti-suffragists were in many cases wives of influential men: wealthy businessmen, philanthropists, and politicians. They knew legislators personally. They were leaders in social reform and philanthropic circles. And they believed that their disproportionate influence was in society's best interest. A one-woman-one-vote system would impede the reform efforts and check the benevolent influence of middle and upper class women. Antis considered it prudent to maintain the status quo because a system where no woman had official political power allowed a "natural" hierarchy with the "best" women rising to the top; the women who had power and influence were the ones who ought to have power and influence. Sociologist Susan Marshall argues that anti-suffrage women's primary motivation to oppose votes for women was a desire to protect their "gendered class interests."[211] A conservative urban elite of women, anti-suffragists mobilized to protect the political influence which they exercised through informal channels under the guise of defending an ideal of "true womanhood," argues Marshall.

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[210] Lilian Clisby Bridgham, *A Suffragette Town Meeting: An Entertainment in One Act* (Boston, Massachusetts: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1912), 22.

[211] Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

Certainly, a strain of elitism was an unmistakable characteristic of the anti-suffrage movement. Anti-suffragists struggled against accusations of elitism in their own time. "In spite of the fact that we are accused of being a millionaire corporation, 90 per cent. of our members are wage earners," attested Mrs. Oliphant of the New Jersey Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, adding, "by wage earners I mean women engaged in gainful pursuits; business women, factory girls, trained nurses, doctors, lawyers, musicians, school teachers, stenographers, and so forth."[212] In an attempt to counter their aristocratic image and demonstrate their position's wide appeal, anti-suffragists featured testimony from anti-suffrage working women in *The Woman's Protest.* "We wage-earners think we have not lost our feminine distinctiveness," wrote Alice Edith Abell of the Wage-Earners's Anti-Suffrage League, "We can the better appreciate what woman's true sphere in life is, having been kept out of it daily."[213] It is true that the leaders of the anti-suffrage movement represented an elite group who had little incentive to empower women of lower class status. But the presence of non-elite and rural anti-suffragists complicates the picture.

It would be a mistake to conclude that opposition to woman suffrage was a purely elite phenomenon. Ironically, some of the groups that anti-suffrage organizers most feared and disparaged, whose presence constituted a reason to oppose extending the franchise, were allies of the anti-suffrage movement. Many immigrants, especially Catholics, adhered to a traditional, patriarchal culture and showed little inclination to join the feminists' cause. Suffragists found German-Americans particularly intractable on the suffrage question. Exasperated woman suffrage campaigners reported that Germans were inordinately fond of beer and therefore suspicious of the suffrage movement because of its close association with

[212] Mrs. O. D. Oliphant, "Socialism in the Wake of Woman Suffrage," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914).
[213] Miss Alice Edith Abell, "What the Majority of Wage-Earning Women Want," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914), 15.

temperance. Axes of opposition and support for woman suffrage, according to political scientists McDonagh and Price, took the following dimensions: "opposition derives from those who are southern European, Catholic, immigrant, less educated, urban, and do not favor prohibition, whereas support for suffrage is associated with those who are northern European, Protestant, well educated, rural, and favor prohibition."[214] Opposition and support for woman suffrage and for prohibition did not correlate quite so neatly as this analysis suggests, however, as evidenced by anti-suffragists' support for temperance and prohibition. There is little evidence to suggest that anti-suffragists ever considered the possibility of cooperation with immigrant communities. Nonetheless, resistance to woman suffrage within immigrant communities contributed to anti-suffrage victories in municipal and state campaigns.

While suffragists charged that anti-suffragists' position was by definition undemocratic, anti-suffragists did not see their own position as inconsistent with the principle of democracy. Rooting their conception of democracy in a patriarchal tradition, they insisted that the basic unit of society was the family and defined proper representation in a democratic society to be the representation of each family by its male head. For the anti-suffragists, the main requirement of democracy was to represent all classes, not all individuals. Anti-suffragists insisted that women were not a distinct class: "The men and women of a given stratum of society form *one class* together, for men and women living together, whether in tenements or palaces, are not antagonistic nor even indifferent to each other's welfare."[215] In this regard, the demand for woman suffrage differed from the

[214] Eileen L. McDonagh and H. Douglas Price, "Woman Suffrage in the Progressive Era: Patterns of Opposition and Support in Referenda Voting, 1910-1918," *The American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2 (Jun., 1985): 415-435. JSTOR. Accessed Feb. 24, 2014. 418.
[215] Mrs. William Sedgwick, "Scientific Aspects of the Suffrage Question," *Remonstrance*, 1902.

movement to enfranchise African-American men. As Alexander Keyssar explains, "women were not a socially segregated group; they were black and white, rich and poor, foreign-born and native."[216] The suffragists' demand for woman suffrage on the basis that the principle of democracy required it seems self-evident today, but as anti-suffragists indicated, suffragists' demand challenged the conventional understanding of what democracy meant. Since the beginning of American history, democracy had been implicitly understood to be the equal representation of men. In this context, anti-suffragists' claim of compatibility with the ideal of democracy did not seem unreasonable.

Furthermore, anti-suffragists did not hesitate to use democratic principles to their advantage. They argued that it would in fact be "undemocratic" to enact woman suffrage because the vast majority of women did not want the vote.[217] In 1913, anti-suffragists estimated that only eight percent of American women "either publicly advocated or privately supported" woman suffrage.[218] During most of the seventy-year campaign for woman suffrage, suffragists represented only a minority of American women, a fact that greatly troubled suffragists. In 1902, suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Ida H. Harper ruefully noted: "In the indifference, the inertia, the apathy of women, lies the greatest obstacle to their enfranchisement."[219] That the earliest states to enfranchise women (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho) had majority male populations further supported anti-suffragists' assertion that most American women did not want the vote.

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[216] Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 140.
[217] "The Case Against Woman Suffrage" (Boston, Massachusetts: National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).
[218] "Women Gain More Without Suffrage: Miss Minnie Bronson Tells What Women Have Done in the West," *The New York Times,* February 14, 1913.
[219] Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 4 (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), xxiv.

Confident that they represented the majority view, anti-suffragists repeatedly challenged suffragists to put forward more referendums instead of initiatives.[220] Suffragists had been reluctant to do so since an 1895 referendum on municipal woman suffrage in Massachusetts, in which both men and women had been eligible to vote. Prior to the referendum, the suffrage organ *The Woman's Journal* had predicted hopefully: "After next November, therefore, Massachusetts suffragists will probably have a right to claim that they speak for a majority of the women."[221] But the referendum proved to be a victory for the anti-suffragists, one which they continued to point to in subsequent decades as evidence that suffragists represented a small minority. A 1902 *Remonstrance* article reported: "Out of 608,500 potential women legal voters in the state, who might have declared their desire for the municipal ballot, at the invitation of the legislature, only 22,204 did so."[222] Less than four percent of eligible women had voted. The non-participation of the other ninety-six percent of women, according to anti-suffragists, signified their tacit support for the anti-suffrage cause. The 1895 referendum gained additional significance when two national political leaders, Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt, used its results to justify their positions on woman suffrage. Roosevelt explained that his position on the woman suffrage question would be guided by the prevailing opinion among women themselves: "I believe in woman's suffrage wherever the women want it. Where they do not want it, the suffrage should not be forced upon them."[223] (In 1912, Roosevelt noted that women's position had changed since 1895, a shift that accounted for his endorsement of woman suffrage in the

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[220] Emily P. Bissell, "A Talk to Every Woman" (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage, 1911[?]).

[221] Quoted in Frank Foxcroft, "The Check to Woman Suffrage in the United States," reprinted in *Pamphlets Printed and Distributed by the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y.: Women's Anti-Suffrage Association, 1905).

[222] "Rights of the Majority," *Remonstrance* 1902.

[223] Theodore Roosevelt, "Women's Rights and the Duties of Both Men and Women," *Outlook*, Feb. 3, 1912.

Progressive Party platform that year.) Other politicians also adopted this easy-going position, which had the advantage of being both chivalrous and politically shrewd. Women's opposition to the vote remained problematic and awkward for the suffragists into the 1910s. The Nebraska Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage made a frustratingly compelling point: "Every reason supporting the claim of women to vote supports also the right of women to be consulted as to whether they shall or shall not be given the ballot."[224]

Would woman suffrage infringe on the rights of the majority of women who were either opposed or indifferent to voting? "To force the vote upon the great majority of women to satisfy a small minority would be undemocratic and unjust," argued anti-suffragists, because it would violate "the real rights of those who wish to remain free from political strife."[225] Anti-suffragists explained that woman suffrage would "force" them to vote, firstly, because they considered the franchise "so sacred and so binding an obligation" that it would violate their sense of patriotism and their reverence for democracy if they neglected to vote once able to do so. Furthermore, they would see it as irresponsible to leave the ballot in the hands of less qualified and less worthy women. Acting on these principles, anti-suffrage organizations encouraged their members and sympathizers to register to vote in states where equal suffrage had been enacted.[226] These anti-suffragists found themselves in a highly paradoxical position. When New York State granted women the right to vote in 1917, New York anti-suffragists responded by transforming their organization into the Women Voters' Anti-Suffrage Party.[227] The Women Voters' Anti-Suffrage Party adopted a two-

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[224] "Ten Reasons Why The Great Majority of Women Do Not Want the Ballot." Nebraska Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, Omaha, Nebraska [1914?], reproduced in Laura McKee Hickman, "Thou Shalt Not Vote: Anti-Suffrage in Nebraska, 1914-1920," *Nebraska History* 80 (1999): 63.
[225] "The Case Against Woman Suffrage" (Boston, Massachusetts: National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916).
[226] Jablonsky, *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party,* 115-116.
[227] Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920,* 269.

pronged approach. It worked to get out the vote among reluctant anti-suffrage women, in order to counteract the influence of the "ignorant" and "wicked" female vote, and simultaneously campaigned to block the national amendment and prevent woman suffrage from spreading to other states.

Underscoring the need for increased "quality, not quantity" in the American electorate, anti-suffragists warned that enfranchising women would only exacerbate problems that already threatened to overwhelm American institutions.[228] They painted a picture of "a vast mob of excitable women, the unthinking, the uncaring, women who to-day have never even heard of a vote, rushing madly to the polls…a political Frankenstein whom its creators were powerless to either check or control."[229] In the late nineteenth century, many of the middle-class women who were active in the American woman suffrage movement shared anti-suffragists concerns about "the ignorant vote."

In the early twentieth century, the elitism of the "old guard" of suffragists gave way to the more egalitarian approach of the new generation of suffragists. Susan B. Anthony, the last living member of the "old guard" and an icon of the woman suffrage movement, passed away in 1906. Her death occasioned a flood of reverential tributes and widespread sympathy for the suffrage cause. Slowly, quietly, the suffrage movement was building momentum. In 1907, Harriet Stanton Blatch founded the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women to bring working women into the American woman suffrage movement. The suffragists' process of democratization was only partial: class tensions, xenophobia, and, most notably, racism persisted within the suffrage movement. Viewing the association between women's

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[228] See for example "Reasons Why the Women of New Jersey Oppose Equal Suffrage," New Jersey Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, n.d. [after 1900].

[229] Mary Dean Adams, "In Opposition to Woman Suffrage: Two Papers Read at Albany, February 24, 1909, Before the Joint Senate and Assembly Judiciary Committee" (New York: The New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1909).

rights and the rights of African-Americans as a distinct liability, white suffragists continued to embrace racist rhetoric and exclude black women from membership in suffrage organizations.[230] But working-class women gave the suffrage movement a broader base of support and reinvigorated it with new styles and strategies of campaigning. Furthermore, women who suffered from exploitative working conditions lent the cause a greater sense of urgency and a tangible reason why women needed a voice in politics and legislation. The twenty thousand New York garment workers who went on strike in 1909 were among New York's most vocal supporters of woman suffrage. Working women strengthened suffragists' argument that women needed to the vote to protect themselves. At the encouragement of Florence Kelley and other reform-minded women, NAWSA formally reversed its support of educational qualifications for voting in 1909.[231]

Washington State enfranchised women in 1910, breaking a fourteen-year gridlock and opening the way for other Western and, eventually, Eastern states, to follow. Within Washington, support for woman suffrage had been quietly mounting for two decades. The Washington Territorial Legislature had granted women the vote in 1883, but had overturned this decision five years later. In 1909, suffragists capitalized on the publicity of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition in Seattle by sending its leading figures – women and men "of international reputation," enthused the *Seattle Times* – as speakers. [232] Anna Howard Shaw, Henry Blackwell, and other suffrage delegates arrived in Seattle on a Northern Pacific Railroad train dubbed the "Suffrage Special." The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition culminated in a "Woman Suffrage Day," which kicked off an energetic but self-consciously

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[230] Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 135-155.
[231] Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 164.
[232] "Suffragists Convene in Seattle," *The Seattle Times*, June 30, 1909.

womanly campaign in which Northwestern suffragists distributed leaflets, hung posters, and sold a suffrage cookbook door to door. Subtitled "Votes for Women, Good Things to Eat," the Washington Women's Cookbook interspersed quotes from Susan B. Anthony and others with tips for canning, pickling, and making the perfect cup of coffee. Washington's male electorate ratified a constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote in 1910.

The following year, woman suffrage passed by a small margin in California. The support of socialist women, whom suffragists in other states had tended to shun and push to the sidelines of the suffrage movement, proved instrumental in the California campaign. They pioneered new tactics, including outdoor rallies, aggressive door-to-door canvassing, plays and pageants, billboard ads, and electric signs.[233] California suffragists' class-bridging coalition benefited from the support of male and female trade union organizations. The suffragists' victory in California alarmed anti-suffragists and led to the formation of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in New York the following month.

With the addition of Washington (1910) and California (1911) to the less populous equal suffrage states of the "suffrage column," the electoral college vote that women could affect more than doubled. The fact that over one million Western women could now vote accelerated the progress of the woman suffrage movement. The presidential election of 1912 marked a turning point in the history of women's involvement in politics. For the first time, male politicians competed seriously for women's votes and woman suffrage was endorsed by a major national political party, Roosevelt's Progressive Party. Women threw themselves into the national campaign "with a suddenness and force that have left observers gasping,"

[233] Sherry J. Katz, "A Politics of Coalition: Socialist Women and the California Suffrage Movement, 1900-1911," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 115.

according to the *New York Herald*.[234] The *New York Literary Digest*, too, perceived the shifting political situation: "Woman's Day in national politics seems to many an editorial observer to be now dawning."[235]

In the 1910s, women's increased involvement in American public and political life, as well as the new roles they adopted during the First World War, would overcome antidemocratic concerns about enfranchising women who were unqualified to vote. These changes would convince the American public of the expediency and the justice of granting American women the right to vote.

[234] *New York Herald*, Aug. 11, 1912.
[235] *New York Literary Digest*, Aug. 31, 1912.

4. "Woman Suffrage a Menace to Social Reform": Anti-Suffragists as Progressives

Alarmed by suffragists' victories in Washington and California, anti-suffragists from across the nation gathered to form the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in the autumn of 1911. They began publishing *The Woman's Protest*, which introduced the national association in its first edition: "The women who are leading the movement against suffrage are well known for their work in municipal, civic, educational and philanthropic lines. Because of the knowledge of what can be done without the vote they regard the franchise as a non-essential for them, and consider that their efforts for the amelioration of the conditions of women and children can be better accomplished without suffrage."[236] The way in which *The Woman's Protest* presented the identity and motivation of the members of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1911 represented a clear departure from the way Mrs. Dahlgren had described the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society in 1871: "These five thousand who timidly advance from the cherished retirement of their invaded homes to express their condemnation in a womanly way – by petition."[237] What had changed, and what did this change mean for the debate about woman suffrage?

In 1903, Charlotte Perkins Gilman observed the transformation of women's roles that was underway in American society: "The socializing of this hitherto subsocial, wholly domestic class, is a marked and marvelous event, now taking place with astonishing rapidity." As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, increasing numbers women were moving beyond the private home into a more public sphere, taking an active part in women's clubs, charitable and civic organizations, and a wide array of reform efforts. In the twentieth century, suffragists argued that granting women the right to vote would advance

[236] "The National Association," *The Woman's Protest* 1, no. 1 (May 1912).
[237] Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, *Thoughts on Female Suffrage and in Vindication of Woman's True Rights* (Washington, D.C.: Blanchard & Mohun, 1871).

women's social reform work and usher in a new era of morality in American politics and government. Anti-suffragists challenged suffragists' portrayal of the ballot as a "panacea" for social ills and argued for the preservation of women's special nonpartisan role in public life.

The period between the 1890s and the 1920s, since termed the Progressive Era, was characterized by widespread zeal for political reform and social activism. During this period, the long tradition of female benevolence in American society took on new dimensions. Middle-class women engaged with social issues in a more systematic, organized, and public way than ever before. Despite the gradual opening of the professions to women, opportunities for women to exercise ability and influence in a professional capacity remained limited. Energetic, educated women thus tended to gravitate toward voluntary organizations. The late nineteenth century had witnessed a proliferation of such organizations, which formed to address pressing urban problems including overcrowded tenements, unsanitary conditions, infectious diseases, adulterated food, contaminated water, unsafe workplaces, and minor crime. Mary Ritter Beard's *Women's Work in the Municipalities* (1915) celebrated women's achievements in a variety of reform efforts and civic improvements, such as the creation of juvenile courts, "safe and sane" Fourth of July celebrations, studies of alley dwellings, laws to raise the age of consent, cemetery improvement and tree planting, fire prevention, kindergartens and physical education classes. Women's activism on behalf of such causes prompted a pro-suffrage speaker at the

1895 Constitutional Convention in Utah to extol the women's movement as "one of the great levers by which the Almighty is lifting up this fallen world."[238]

One of the Progressive Era's most influential women reformers was Jane Addams, who pioneered a new approach to social work and advocated woman suffrage as a means to increase women's effectiveness in the service of moral causes. In 1889, Addams co-founded Hull House in Chicago, an institution that became the model for hundreds of other "settlement houses" across America. At Hull House, middle-class women lived in an impoverished immigrant neighborhood with the goal of creating a community across class divisions. Hull House provided the neighborhood with a wide array of services including a daycare, a kindergarten, health care, classes, a library, meeting spaces, and a gymnasium.[239] The settlement movement exemplified the spirit of women's social reform activities in the Progressive Era. Hull House was at once a home and a community center, a place that blended the ideals of domesticity and public service. It conformed to WCTU leader Frances Willard's ideal for women's reform work: "to make the world more Home-like."[240]

At the NAWSA Convention of 1906, Jane Addams delivered a speech entitled "The Modern City and the Municipal Franchise for Women," in which she famously described women's role as "civic housekeeping." This was the idea that women's leadership in municipal reform was a natural and benign extension of women's domestic duties and interests: "to care for children, to clean houses, to prepare foods, to isolate the family from moral dangers." The language of "civic housekeeping" made something new seem normal,

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[238] Orson F. Whitney, *Speeches of Hon. O. F. Whitney in Support of Woman Suffrage: Delivered in the Constitutional Convention of Utah, March 30th, April 2nd, and April 5th, 1895* (Salt Lake City: Utah Woman Suffrage Association, 1895), 10.

[239] Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (New York: Macmillan, 1910).

[240] Quoted in Jennifer L. Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 291.

situating women's public activism within the traditional framework of women's domesticity and selfless care for family members. Bringing women's maternal morality into the public sphere promised a way to offset the effects of laissez-faire individualism and alleviate the hardships faced by America's most vulnerable citizens. Municipal governments had failed to address various urban problems, according to Addams, because "women, the traditional housekeepers, have not been consulted." Addams, like many twentieth-century suffragists, portrayed woman suffrage as a natural next step, arguing that women needed the vote in order to advance their social reform efforts and exercise their moral influence more fully.[241]

The women of Hull House engaged in legislative reform as well as charitable social work. They successfully lobbied at the state and national levels for legislation that protected women and children, including laws that restricted child labor, established compulsory education, and allocated public funds for mothers' pensions. Such efforts, as Kathryn Kish Sklar explains, "created new civic space in which women used their new knowledge and power to expand state responsibility for the welfare of women and children workers."[242] Hull House proved to be a training ground for some of the nation's leading women reformers. One of its residents, Julia Lathrop, became the director of the U.S. Children's Bureau in the 1910s. Florence Kelley went on to serve as the head of the National Consumers' League and became a powerful advocate for workers' rights legislation, leading campaigns for eight-hour laws and the abolition of sweatshops.[243] Florence Kelley and other suffragists argued that women needed the power of the ballot in order to address the urgent

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[241] Jane Addams, "The Modern City and the Municipal Franchise for Women," 1906, reprinted in Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, eds., *Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the Work of Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 371.

[242] Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Florence Kelley and Women's Activism in the Progressive Era," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past,* ed. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 319.

[243] Ibid.

problems of child labor and the exploitation of women laborers in industrial work. Behind the ballot was the demand for "equal pay for equal work" and other forms of protection for working women. At a 1912 meeting of the Wage Earner's Equal Suffrage League, Mollie Schepps, a shirtwaist maker, invoked the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, in which 146 garment workers (mostly women) had died the previous year: "The ballot used as we mean to use it will abolish the burning and crushing of our bodies for the profit of a very few." [244]

Furthermore, suffragists promised that women's votes would clean up the "dirty pool" of politics by promoting moral legislation and reducing corruption. Invoking the traditional belief in women's selflessness and purifying influence, they made the essentialist argument that women's entrance into politics would help to rid city governments of the kind of corruption muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens had denounced in *The Shame of the Cities* (1904). A collection of magazine articles that became a best-selling book, *The Shame of the Cities* exposed the corrupt practices of urban political machines and big business corporations. Steffens's readers were shocked at the evidence – often given in precise dollar amounts – that politicians across the country gained office through fraudulent elections, routinely took bribes from illegal houses of prostitution and saloons, and enriched themselves through illegal deals with the "big business man," for example in the process of awarding municipal construction contracts.[245] Alluding to these problems, a pro-suffrage cartoon from the 1911 woman suffrage campaign in California showed a respectably dressed woman using a shovel labeled "Ballot" to remove mud from dirty pool, to the dismay of its resident demons: food adulteration, bribery, white slavery, and graft.

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[244] Sue Heinemann, *Timelines of American Women's History* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 42.
[245] Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York: McClure, Phillips, & Co., 1904).

Image from the 1911 California woman suffrage campaign. Image courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

Suffragists' publicity strategies reinforced the idea that there was a close link between the woman suffrage movement and women's "civic housekeeping." In 1913, the Suffrage Pure Food Stores Company, Inc., opened a suffrage grocery store in New York City, announcing that "all goods, even the eggs, will go out stamped 'Votes for Women.'" Four women took turns running the store, hired two women "grocery boys" to deliver groceries in a wagon painted suffrage-yellow, and engaged a domestic science expert to demonstrate recipes from the *Washington Woman Suffrage Cookbook* (which could be purchased on the premises). The store offered customers good-quality dairy items at low prices and "Votes-for-Women" buttons for free. All profits went towards the suffrage cause, but the message was as important as the money: woman suffrage would benefit all American citizens and make for a healthier society. Mrs. Kramer, who ran the store, explained: "when

we give the women – and men, too – the best kind of pure food, they are going to take suffrage with it with good grace."[246]

According to the suffragists, the pure food movement and the suffrage movement represented different aspects of the same trend: progress. Suffragists insisted that woman suffrage, itself a progressive reform, would empower women social workers and reformers to accomplish their ends. Opposition to suffrage was opposition to progress, they asserted, and therefore doomed to fail eventually. "There is undeniable magic in the word 'progress,' " observed Brooklyn anti-suffragist Alice Hill Chittenden in 1910, "and the phrase 'when you oppose it [woman suffrage] you retard progress,' appeals to many as an argument in its favor."[247] Suffragists painted anti-suffragists as hopelessly old-fashioned women who could not keep up with the times, whose statements and publications were historical curiosities. Commenting on the seventh annual report of the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, Ida Husted Harper wrote: "we can readily believe that, if anybody takes the trouble to preserve it, it will some day be found and hung up in glory. To the future student of antiquities it will seem to be in perfect keeping with pewter spoons, two-tined forks, brass snuffers, warming pans and powder horns."[248]

Anti-suffragists emphatically refuted suffragists' derisive characterization of the anti-suffrage movement as a retrogressive one. As progressive reform became the order of the day, anti-suffragists fought to maintain the moral high ground by demonstrating that they were as attentive to social problems and active in reform efforts as suffragists. In 1913,

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[246] "Suffrage Women to Open a Grocery," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1913; "Suffragist Grocery Opens: Four Clerks, with the Latest in Clothes, Attend to the Rush," *New York Times*, Feb. 21, 1913.

[247] Alice Hill Chittenden, "The Inexpediency of Granting the Suffrage to American women," Address at the tenth biennial of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Cincinnati, May 14, 1910, quoted in Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920,* 68.

[248] Ida Husted Harper, "The Cause of Woman," *New York Sun*, Aug. 3, 1902, quoted in Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920,* 118.

delegates from the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage traveled to Washington, D.C., to protest against the proposed appointment of a House committee on woman suffrage. "Those of us who appear before you today are not women who sit by the fireside with our knitting or spinning in the twilight of a past generation," Alice Hill Chittenden declared, "We feel the great heart-throbs of the world around us. We are conscious of the great problems of this age and generation which press upon us from all sides. Most of us are serving upon boards of philanthropy or social welfare."[249]

While it was true that many prominent women social reformers such as Jane Addams and Florence Kelley were committed suffragists, it was also true, as Chittenden asserted, that many anti-suffragists were active in social work and civic reform. Josephine Jewell Dodge, president of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, was a pioneer in the day nursery movement. In the 1880s, she had founded a day nursery in New York City's East Side slums to provide day care and an education in "American" values for immigrant children. She had demonstrated a model day nursery at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, and had later become president of the National Federation of Day Nurseries.[250] Mrs. J. Eliot Cabot, president of the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, was chairman of Boston's Volunteer Aid Society and one of Massachusetts's first women overseers of the poor.[251] Margaret C. Robinson, who edited the *Remonstrance* and wrote a column for several other anti-suffrage journals, served as the president of the Massachusetts Public Interest League, the vice president of the Cambridge Hospital League, and an executive board member of the Cambridge Anti-

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[249] Alice Hill Chittenden, "Why New York State Opposes Federal Amendment," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914).
[250] "Josephine Marshall Jewell Dodge," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/167579/Josephine-Marshall-Jewell-Dodge
[251] *Remonstrance,* 1902.

Tuberculosis Society.[252] These were just a few examples to which anti-suffragists pointed as evidence that suffragists did not have a monopoly on social benevolence and progressive reform.

In the 1910s, some suffragists declared that they would suspend their involvement in charitable enterprises until women had gained the vote.[253] Anti-suffragists seized on this tactic as an opportunity to show that they represented the more selfless and charitable side of the suffrage debate. Anti-suffragists distinguished themselves as "unlike those women who say, 'We have no time to give but to the work of the suffrage cause.'"[254] When one anti-suffragist objected that women would have little time for charity and philanthropy once they had become voters, Anna Howard Shaw retorted: "Thank God, there will not be so much need of charity and philanthropy!"[255]

Anti-suffragists were skeptical of suffragists' grandiose claims about the uplifting power of the ballot in women's hands. They agreed with suffragists that women were a moral force in public life and that politics was a dirty pool, but drew a different conclusion. Anti-suffragists argued that politics would corrupt women more than women would purify politics, and that it was therefore vitally important not to immerse women in the muddy waters of political life. In an article entitled "Woman's Assumption of Sex Superiority," Annie Nathan Meyer, founder of Barnard College and co-editor of *Women's Work in America* (1891), challenged suffragists' claim that women were innately more virtuous than men. Criticizing suffragists' "smug self-satisfaction," Meyer argued that was it was middle

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[252] Margaret C. Robinson, "Woman Suffrage A Menace to Social Reform," in *Anti-Suffrage Essays by Massachusetts Women,* ed. Ernest Bernbaum (Boston: J. A. Haien, 1916); Nielsen 62-66.
[253] Maud Nathan, "Suffrage and Charity: Why Women Put Votes Before Philanthropical Work," *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1915.
[254] Alice Hill Chittenden, "The Anti-Suffrage Definition of Duty, *The Woman's Protest* (June 1915): 9.
[255] Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 1890-1920 (1965, repr. Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1971), 50.

and upper class women's environment – with its special protections and restrictions – which enabled them to maintain their purity and cultivate their moral influence. If women "had lived for centuries in the same freedom and under the same temptations as men," she wrote, "they would have shown far less self-control and power of resistance." [256] In contrast to the suffragists, anti-suffragists believed that women's distance from politics enhanced, rather than restricted, their moral influence on society. Unenfranchised women would continue to be a force for good in American life, anti-suffragists believed, as long as they remained untainted by political trickery and corruption, strangers to political ambition and self-interested attempts to gain political power or profit. Brigham Roberts, who spoke in opposition to Orson Whitney at Utah's Constitutional Convention of 1895, dwelled on this theme. Imagine two great rivers, he said: the Missouri and the Mississippi, where the one flows into the other, its clear and sparkling waters mingling with the muddy waters of the other. Suffragists might point out that the muddy stream was never so muddy afterwards, Roberts acknowledged, replying: "No, but neither was the clear and sparkling stream ever clear again." [257]

At the 1896 Democratic National Convention, anti-suffrage speaker Mrs. Winslow Crannell had predicted that "womanhood would suffer more than political morality would gain" if women were enfranchised. In the twentieth century, instances of corruption and fraud in Western states where equal suffrage had been enacted served to confirm this prediction. Colorado furnished the anti-suffragists with the strongest evidence of women voters' complicity in immoral politics. In the 1904 gubernatorial election, the Denver Chief

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[256] Annie Nathan Meyer, "Woman's Assumption of Sex Superiority," *North American Review* (Jan. 1904).
[257] Orson F. Whitney, *Speeches of Hon. O. F. Whitney in Support of Woman Suffrage: Delivered in the Constitutional Convention of Utah, March 30th, April 2nd, and April 5th, 1895* (Salt Lake City: Utah Woman Suffrage Association, 1895), 10.

of Police looked the other way while a group of "repeaters," who had been promised various forms of "protection," went from precinct to precinct to vote the Democratic ticket under a succession of false names. The women in the group reappeared at the same polling station multiple times, changing their outfits from evening dresses to bathrobes to kimonos.[258] The Colorado legislature subsequently found that both parties had participated in fraudulent voting and installed the winner's Lieutenant Governor to office in an attempt to restore integrity to Colorado's state government. According to the *Remonstrance*, this scandal showed the lamentable, if predictable, effect of politics on the Colorado woman: "her ideals have been lowered; the delicacy of her perception of right and wrong has been dulled."[259] Perhaps most importantly, the women of Colorado failed to reform the state's permissive liquor laws. When a 1910 election went two to one in favor of Colorado's "wets," a leading Colorado newspaper observed:

> "The women of Colorado are on trial in regard to the suffrage movement. Their failure to benefit Colorado by their suffrage is doing more to retard woman suffrage in other states and nations than anything else…if the city of Denver as a result of their ballot could be changed from the worst city, morally, in the land, to one of even average decency, then the suffragists could give a reason for asking for the franchise in other states."[260]

In 1912, *The Woman's Protest* went a step further: "Woman Suffrage is no longer on trial. It has been condemned…It lies soiled and dishonored in the dust at the feet of the women of Denver."[261] During her tour of the United States for a book about the variety of women's experiences in America, Elizabeth McCracken concluded: "Truly, as I had been told in

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[258] Kate Kelley, *Election Day: An American Holiday, An American History* (New York: Facts on File, 1991), 148.
[259] *Remonstrance,* 1904.
[260] *Fort Collins Express*, May 17, 1910. Quoted in Molly Elliot Seawell, *The Ladies' Battle* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 97-8.
[261] *The Woman's Protest* (Oct. 1912): 7.

Colorado City, women change politics less than politics change women."[262] While anti-suffragists drew the implicit conclusion that women in Western states were especially depraved, they also used Western examples to make the general point that if women participated in political life as men did, women would likely fall prey to the same temptations.

Anti-suffragists believed that the politicization of women, women's associations, and women's reform efforts would tend not only to weaken their virtue but also to decrease their practical power to do good. The anti-suffrage delegates to the 1913 hearing of the House Committee on Rules emphasized that woman suffrage was inexpedient because it would abolish women's nonpartisan role in social reform. Alice Hill Chittenden compared the anti-suffrage movement to the movement for environmental conservation. Alluding to the Conservation Congress that had taken place in Washington, D.C., the previous month, she said: "Conservation is the watchword of the hour, and we anti-suffragists are true conservationists. We seek to conserve woman's present valuable position in the community as a non-partisan citizen." Chittenden's metaphor suggested that "non-partisan womanhood" was one of the nation's natural resources, which needed to be protected. Eliza Armstrong, another anti-suffrage delegate to the hearing and a member of the Pittsburgh Consumers' League, also highlighted the importance of women's non-partisanship in her speech, "Non-Partisan Woman Wins Where Voters Fail." In it, she described her successful effort to secure the passage of a recent child labor law, in which she had had "a heart-to-heart talk" with politicians of various parties without being asked "whether I was a Democrat or Republican or Bull Moose or Progressive."[263] The House Committee on Rules declined to

[262] Elizabeth McCracken, *Women of America* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 111.
[263] "Non-Partisan Woman Wins Where Voters Fail," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914).

appoint a Committee on Woman Suffrage in 1913, and the anti-suffragists went home victorious.

Anti-suffragists argued that it was women's status as apolitical, nonpartisan citizens that enabled their effectiveness in social reform, and that the ballot would therefore hinder rather than help them. If women got the vote, anti-suffragists warned, the urgent moral causes they championed would be impeded by sectarian politics: if politicized and divided into Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and Progressives, women would find that partisanship narrowed their sphere of influence and made women rivals rather than a unified moral front. It was on these grounds that the General Federation of Women's Clubs long resisted endorsing woman suffrage, remaining neutral despite suffrage agitation among some of its member groups. Anti-suffragists feared the loss of the relative unity and autonomy of women's separate institutions, which enabled them to act independently of the political status quo.

Emily Bissell, a social worker best known for introducing Christmas Seals to the U.S. in an anti-tuberculosis fundraising campaign, emerged as one of the anti-suffrage movement's most eloquent defenders of women's nonpartisan role in social reform. She maintained that the ballot would be "a handicap in philanthropic work" because women's power to shape social reform depended on their disinterested status: women had nothing to gain personally from allocating government funds for certain causes or creating certain offices, and they thus were free to move completely above suspicion.[264] Women could petition legislatures with pleas for industrial safety legislation, more parks, or tenement reform based purely on the merits of the issue, without being suspected of partisan party affiliations and hidden political motives. In 1909, the Delaware Anti-Tuberculosis

[264] Emily P. Bissell, "Ballot a Handicap in Philanthropic Work," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1913).

Association, headed by Bissell, convinced the Delaware Legislature to create a state tuberculosis commission and apportion $15,000 to it annually. [265] Bissell's experiences of successfully lobbying across party lines for tuberculosis legislation as well as for child labor laws led her to conclude: "We were powerful because we had no political entanglements."[266] The ballot was a "clumsy male expedient"; through the "feminine" approach to reform, which relied on the power of personal influence and moral persuasion, women could bring more immediate influence to bear on legislation.[267] Unenfranchised women calling for reform enjoyed male lawmakers' deferential esteem because they had "no selfish, political interests to further."[268] Anti-suffragists saw politics as an inherently selfish business, and therefore incompatible with the ideal character of women's work for the common good.

Did women actually exercise the degree of influence over legislatures that anti-suffragists implied? Anti-suffragists' argument that the disenfranchisement of women empowered women reformers is certainly a paradoxical one. Anecdotes that featured in suffragist and anti-suffragist literature provide examples of unenfranchised women's persistence and creativity. They suggest that women reformers had developed methods of exercising influence over legislators external to the political pressure of voting. (Whether or not this influence was, as anti-suffragists asserted, a function of legislators' reverence for women's unimpeachable moral position, is less clear.) Frances Perkins of the New York Consumers' League, for example, was instrumental in the passage of the 54-hour bill in 1910. Realizing that the measure was about to be defeated, Perkins famously chased down

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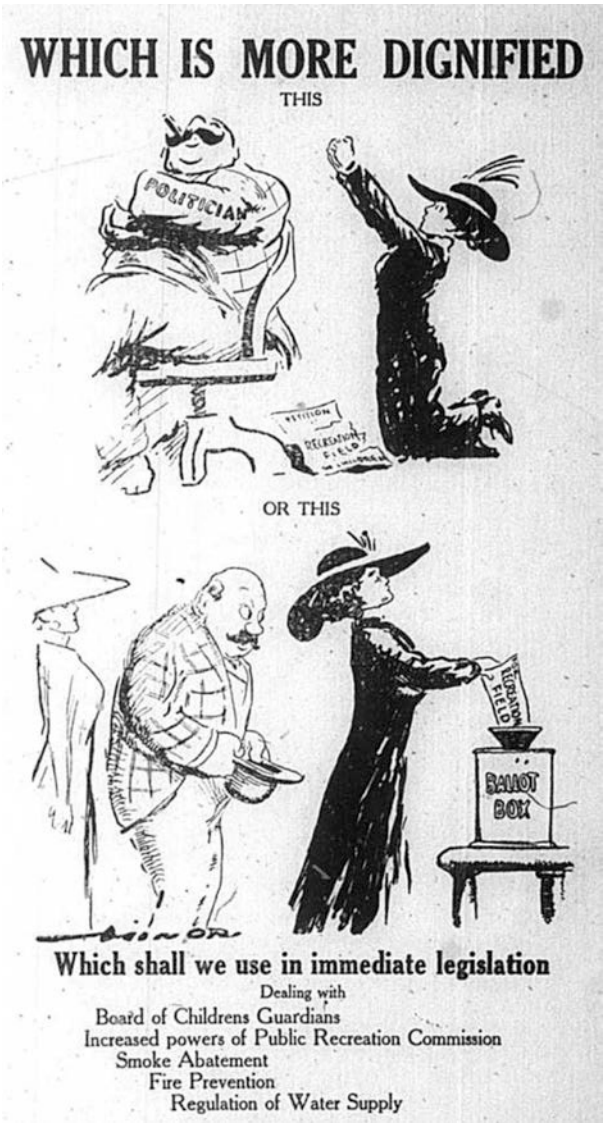
[265] "State Tuberculosis Commission," Delaware Public Archives, http://archives.delaware.gov/collections/aghist/1500-012.shtml. Also Philip P. Jacobs, "The Part of the Red Cross Seal in the Anti-Tuberculosis Campaign in the United States," *Journal of the Outdoor Life* 9 (1912).
[266] Emily P. Bissell, "Ballot a Handicap in Philanthropic Work," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1913): 10.
[267] Bissell, "A Talk to Every Woman," 21.
[268] M'Intire, "Of No Benefit to Woman: She is a Far Greater Power Without Suffrage," 7.

an influential senator, prevented his getting away in a taxi, and restored him to his seat in the chamber in time to vote.[269] Women's presenting pleas to legislators and politicians was widespread practice. The anti-suffragists understood this system as a functional manifestation of chivalry, whereas suffragists felt that it was "undignified." This pro-suffrage cartoon shows a woman attempting to secure funds for a recreation field and suggests that the ballot would make her both more effective and more respected.



A pro-suffrage cartoon reprinted in *The Woman's Protest* 1, no. 2 (June 1912): 9.

[269] Ann J. Lane, ed., *Making Women's History: The Essential Mary Ritter Beard* (New York: Feminist Press, 1977), 92.

The New York *World* provides further evidence of the kind of influence some women enjoyed. One reason to support woman suffrage, according to the *World*, was that "a few women, representing perhaps ten per cent of the sex, have under present conditions too much influence": these women "have maintained at times a reign of terror over legislative bodies, in consequence of which half the country is now bedeviled by some form or other of harem government, and legislators are forever making ridiculous concessions to women agitators." Anti-suffragist and President of the Massachusetts Public Interest League Margaret Robinson quoted the *World*'s statements to show that woman suffrage was "a menace to social reform," in that it would reduce the power of "earnest women" by replacing it with a one-woman-one-vote system.[270] Anti-suffragists were sincere in their reluctance to lose the disproportionate influence some women had carved out for themselves and in their belief that the loss of this form of influence was not in the nation's best interests.

For the anti-suffragists, women's effectiveness in philanthropic work and social reform constituted an argument against enfranchising women. Suffragist Mary Ritter Beard wrote "The Legislative Influence of Unenfranchised Women" to provide evidence for the expediency of woman suffrage, and anti-suffragist Margaret Robinson gleefully turned the suffragist's arguments against her. Robinson cited Beard's examples of unenfranchised women's success, from inundating Congress with telegrams and petitions in the pure food campaign to Mrs. Bacon's "practically single-handed" securing of the first tenement house laws for her city, as reasons to maintain the status quo.[271] Anti-suffragists expressed exasperation and resentment at suffragists' failure to realize the true value and power of

[270] Margaret C. Robinson, "Woman Suffrage A Menace to Social Reform," in *Anti-Suffrage Essays by Massachusetts Women*, ed. Ernest Bernbaum (Boston: J. A. Haien, 1916).
[271] Ibid.; Mary Ritter Beard, "The Legislative Influence of Unenfranchised Women," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Nov. 1914).

women's current position. Praising the work of the National Child Labor Committee, which had successfully lobbied for the creation of the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912, Minnie Bronson wrote: "Theirs is the work which the suffragist sneers at as 'indirect influence,' but they have written more good legislation upon the statue books of our states for the children who must work than all the votes of men and women combined."[272]

Anti-suffragists insisted that woman suffrage was not a panacea for social problems, and emphatically not the solution to the plight of working women. Anti-suffragists pointed out that many female wage earners would be too young to vote, even if the legal voting age was reduced from twenty-one to eighteen. Furthermore, anti-suffragists denounced suffragists' promise that the ballot would bring "equal pay for equal work" as an "obvious fallacy," arguing that wages were purely a question of supply and demand.[273] "The plain fact is that the ballot has no more connection with wages than the Statue of Liberty has with the tides in New York Harbor," wrote Emily Bissell.[274] Did male workers' votes give them control over their wages and working conditions? The prevalence of strikes and the growth of labor unions showed that political representation was not the solution to workers' problems, anti-suffragists argued; clearly, working men were forced to resort to other means to exercise power and protect their interests. "Alas!" wrote Bissell, the working man "cannot even help himself by his vote to steadier work or a better living. Recognizing this powerlessness of the ballot, he has organized instead, the Labor Union, and the Labor Unions, with all their mistakes, are far better and more available channels of influence than

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[272] Miss Minnie Bronson, "How Suffrage States Compare with Non-Suffrage," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914): 9.
[273] Miss Alice Buck, " 'Vote Will Raise Woman's Pay' – An Obvious Fallacy," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914): 15.
[274] Priscilla Leonard [Emily Bissell], *A Help or a Hindrance* (New York: New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1908), 4.

the voting booths."[275] Anti-suffragists highlighted the fact that the most comprehensive legal protections for working women existed in states where women did not vote. In 1910, Alice Hill Chittenden noted that the twenty states where the law limited the hours of women's labor did not include Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, or Idaho, where women had been voters for decades.[276] (Naturally, industrialized regions had a greater need for legal protections for female workers than rural, sparsely populated Western states.)

When it came to protecting working women, anti-suffragists placed their faith in the tradition of male chivalry, as embodied in a paternal legislative system. They argued the current system was more favorable to women workers than it was to male workers because it allowed for laws that gave women special protection based on their sex. The landmark Supreme Court case *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) established the legality of sex discrimination in protective labor legislation when it upheld an Oregon law limiting the number of hours women were allowed to work. In his defense of the Oregon law, attorney Louis Brandeis presented a report, known as the Brandeis Brief, which pioneered the use sociological evidence in legal cases. Leaders of the National Consumers' League, notably Florence Kelley and Josephine Clara Goldmark, Brandeis's sister-in-law, were instrumental in compiling the brief. It cited medical professionals and others who stated that long working hours had a negative effect on the "health, safety, morals, and general welfare of women." The Court unanimously concluded: "women's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence."[277]

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[275] Emily Bissell, *A Help or a Hindrance*, 6.

[276] Alice Hill Chittenden, "The Inexpediency of granting the suffrage to American women," Address at the tenth biennial of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Cincinnati, May 14, 1910, Reprinted in Edith M. Phelps, *Selected Articles on Woman Suffrage* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1912), 134-144.

[277] Kermit Hall et al., eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 383.

Subsequent legislation to protect women workers, including minimum wage laws and bans on night work, were upheld under the *Muller v. Oregon* rationale.

Anti-suffragists' attitude toward wage-earning women was an ambivalent one. Anti-suffragists challenged suffragists' promise of "equal pay for equal work" not only because it was unrealistic to think that the ballot could accomplish this, but also because they did not agree that this was an appropriate goal. Anti-suffragists adhered to the ideal of the family wage, the idea that a man's wages should be high enough to provide for his dependent wife and children. Anti-suffragists believed that "normal" women tended to leave their jobs after only a short time in order to fulfill their "true" purpose as wives and mothers. Working women within the anti-suffrage ranks tended to see their situation as a temporary one, a burden which marriage would lift from their shoulders.[278] Nevertheless, anti-suffragists wholeheartedly supported legislation to secure humane working conditions for women. They simply maintained that it was more effective for women workers to rely on male protection than to agitate for the right to protect themselves through voting.

Anti-suffragists pointed to Western states where women voted as evidence of the failure of woman suffrage to uplift society. Western women did not rush *en masse* to effect what was sometimes called "sentimental legislation," and saloons continued to flourish. A 1914 article entitled "The Failure of Suffrage to Aid Temperance" pointed out that in eight out of nine prohibition states, male suffrage alone prevailed, and the ninth state (Kansas) had enacted prohibition prior to woman suffrage.[279] Anti-suffragists collected a wide variety of facts demonstrating that woman suffrage had not fulfilled the suffragists' prediction of purification. They noted with disapproval, for example, that the American Social Hygiene

[278] See for example Miss Alice Edith Abell, "What the Majority of Wage-Earning Women Want," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914): 15.
[279] "The Failure of Suffrage to Aid Temperance," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914): 20.

Association had recorded an increase in the number of dance halls in San Francisco after California women got the vote.[280] Suffragists, too, were alert to instances in which Western women's voting behavior could be used to strengthen their position. In the late 1910s, for example, Washington and Oregon enacted prohibition just a few years after extending suffrage to women.[281] Women's votes were understood to have turned the tide against the "wets," and the women of the Northwest were celebrated by suffragists across the nation. Anti-suffragist Mrs. Gilbert Jones conceded that there were pieces of evidence to be found in Western states to support both sides of the suffrage debate, concluding: "the thoroughly unprejudiced opinion is that 'Woman Suffrage' has proved to be utterly 'futile.' Not bad and not good, or rather, not worth while."[282] In 1914, the *New York Times* affirmed the anti-suffragists' conclusion that woman suffrage was "not worth while": "If the entrance of women into politics is not alleviatory, where is there any gain, either for them or for the Nation, in a grant of the franchise?"[283] By framing the woman suffrage debate as a question of expediency, suffragists enabled their critics to dismiss woman suffrage on the grounds that it was not in fact "alleviatory."

Leading suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt recognized that making grandiose claims about the effects of woman suffrage was probably unwise. In the New York suffrage campaign of 1915, she warned suffrage speakers against promising "what women will do

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[280] Margaret C. Robinson, "Woman Suffrage A Menace to Social Reform," in *Anti-Suffrage Essays by Massachusetts Women*, ed. Ernest Bernbaum (Boston: J. A. Haien, 1916).
[281] Eileen L. McDonagh and H. Douglas Price, "Woman Suffrage in the Progressive Era: Patterns of Opposition and Support in Referenda Voting, 1910-1918," *The American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2 (June 1985): 417.
[282] Mrs. Gilbert E. Jones, "Some Impediments to Woman Suffrage," *North American Review* 190, no. 645 (Aug. 1909): 159.
[283] Quoted in *The Year Book of the United States Brewers' Association* (New York: United States Brewers' Association, 1914), 247.

with the vote."[284] A few months earlier, journalist George Creel had satirized the exaggerated claims being made by both suffragists and anti-suffragists about the effects of women's votes in the West. "Anti-suffragists have not yet done full justice to 'the failure of equal suffrage in Colorado,' " Creel wrote, "For instance, twenty years of equal suffrage have failed utterly to lay the dust in Colorado's rivers and the floor of the desert stretches is still covered with a large quantity of sand…There is still the regrettable fact that no cure for baldness has been discovered…"[285] Anti-suffragists' relentless criticism of woman suffrage in the West evidently provided material for comedy, but it also highlighted an important trend. Emily Bissell's assessment of woman suffrage in Colorado would largely hold true with regard to national voting patterns in the 1920s: women in Colorado, she observed, "vote with the men, and for men, and just about like men."[286] The "failure" of woman suffrage to transform Western politics foreshadowed the effect (or rather, lack of effect) of the national woman suffrage amendment in 1920.

In the Progressive Era, women's civic activism did not necessarily translate into fervent support for woman suffrage. In fact, in some cases, it may have had the opposite effect. In "Some Impediments to Woman Suffrage," an article published a year before Washington State brought the "suffrage doldrums" to an end, Mrs. Gilbert E. Jones attempted to explain the suffrage movement's lack of success. She concluded that the many opportunities which had opened up to women in recent decades contributed to women's indifference towards suffrage: "In social, civic, philanthropic centres she [woman] is a

[284] Quotation from Catt's letter of Oct. 9, 1915 to speakers, in Doris Daniels, "Building a Winning Coalition: The Suffrage Fight in New York State," *N.Y. History* 60 (Jan. 1979): 71.
[285] George Creel, "In Colorado," *Harper's Weekly* 40 (May 8, 1915).
[286] Priscilla Leonard [Emily Bissell], "Woman Suffrage in Colorado," *Outlook* 55 (March 2, 1897): 791.

leader and a power…all this *without* the ballot."[287] Mrs. H. E. Talbot, president of the Ohio Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, offered a similar explanation for why only three percent of Ohio women had expressed support for suffrage in a 1912: "The avenues of usefulness are open to the women of the state of Ohio in every direction – schools, churches, industries, hospitals and, as a matter of fact, all civic matters. Recently we have been fortunate enough to have a legislature enact for us a bill which provides for the appointment of women in all public institutions where women and children are cared for. This was done without any votes for women."[288] By the early twentieth century, middle and upper class women had gained an arena in which to try their abilities and opportunities to exercise power and influence. American women from all walks of life had gained significant legal protections in the half-century since the Seneca Falls Convention. Suffragists portrayed American women as oppressed citizens deprived of their rights. The suffrage movement might have made more rapid progress if more American women had felt themselves to be oppressed, but many did not. In the Progressive Era, middle and upper class women enjoyed more independence than ever before, and many felt that the trend was one of increasing opportunity for women. In this context, anti-suffragists' contentment with the status quo seemed reasonable to many women.

Anti-suffragists claimed to represent the "normal woman" at a moment when what it meant to be a "normal woman" was changing. As the twentieth century progressed, women's public activities took up more space in anti-suffragists' arguments and in their lives. The ideal of women's role as "civic housekeepers" allowed anti-suffragists to reconcile new activities, such as presiding over the National Federation of Day Nurseries,

[287] Mrs. Gilbert E. Jones, "Some Impediments to Woman Suffrage," *North American Review* 190, no. 645 (Aug. 1909): 159.
[288] Mrs. H. E. Talbot, "Ohio Proves Only 3% Favor Woman Suffrage," *The Woman's Protest* (Jan. 1914): 7.

with old values, such as maternal nurturance. Anti-suffragists drew a key distinction between the public and the political, insisting that in violating this separation, woman suffrage would mean more loss than gain – for women and for the nation. In a 1907 speech to the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, Mrs. Barclay Hazard had made the case for women's nonpolitical participation in public life: "we must accept partisanship, political trickery and office-seeking as necessary evils inseparable from modern conditions, and the question arises what can be done to palliate the situation. To our minds, the solution has been found by the entrance of women into public life."[289] As another anti-suffragist put it: "Outside the political machinery, there is a world…where all reform begins."[290]

Anti-suffragists' understanding of the relationship of women to society and to government made sense to many Americans in the Progressive Era. Opposition to women's entrance into political life remained strong into the early 1910s. By the mid-1910s, the suffrage movement had gained sufficient strength to compel numerous states to hold referendums on woman suffrage, but they resulted in more defeats than victories: Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts all rejected suffrage proposals at least once between 1912 and 1915. Jubilant at the anti-suffragists' 1915 victory in New Jersey, President of the New Jersey Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage Mrs. Edward Y. Breese said: "We hope that the result will put an end to the activities of the suffragists. Perhaps now they will turn their energies and their executive ability to a nonpartisan effort toward solving some of the great social, civic and economic problems of the day."[291]

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[289] Mrs. Barclay Hazard, "How Women Can Best Serve the State" (Chicago: Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1907).
[290] *The Anti-Suffragist* 1, no. 2 (Dec. 1908): 13.
[291] "Suffragists Sad, Antis Jubilant," *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1915.

Mrs. Edward Y. Breese would be disappointed. Resistance to suffrage was waning, especially among men. Women's increasingly prominent role in public life and reform efforts in the early twentieth century gradually made the idea of votes for women seem less radical and more reasonable to the general public. The "undeniable magic in the word 'progress' " made the cause of woman suffrage seem increasingly inevitable, and America's entrance into the war to make the world "safe for democracy" turned the tide in favor of the suffragists.

5. "Unceasing War Against Feminism and Socialism": The Final Phase of the Anti-Suffrage Movement

In April of 1914, the New York anti-suffrage association gave a luncheon at the Hotel Biltmore. The hotel ballroom was decorated in white, black, and rose red, the official anti-suffrage colors, and filled to capacity. There were roses and lilies on every table, a large banner bearing the word "Anti-Suffrage" on the wall, and an American flag over the committee table. A group of Hungarian musicians strained to make itself heard above the voices of the thousand women in attendance. When the featured speaker, the writer E. S. Martin, rose to address the crowd, he struck an ominous note at the otherwise festive event. "The opposition of men is almost negligible," he warned the anti-suffragists, "Men will give the vote to women if they keep asking for it, for love, or because it is the easiest thing to do." President of the NYSAOWS Alice Hill Chittenden was next to address the gathering. "Don't say that 'suffrage is coming.' Give a solemn pledge that you will never say it," she urged her listeners. "Woman suffrage is not coming. I honestly don't believe it is, and Mrs. Dodge doesn't believe it. We think, if the other Western States do not go for suffrage this year, that it will never come at all."[292]

Woman suffrage was, in fact, coming, and Chittenden's anxious insistence that she "honestly" did not believe it suggests that she sensed the shifting of public opinion. The decade between 1910 and 1920 witnessed steady growth in support for woman suffrage, the fruits of decades of statewide campaigns, tireless lobbying, and grassroots organizing. A week before the anti-suffrage luncheon in New York, first-time women voters in Chicago had participated in the city elections in numbers that made national headlines. Having won partial suffrage the previous year, Illinois women were the first women east of the

[292] "Antis Call Fight for Votes Sex War," *New York Times*, April 16, 1914.

Mississippi to cast their votes in a major election. Suffragists identified the 1914 elections in Chicago as a triumph and a turning point for the suffrage movement.[293] Carrie Chapman Catt, who would become president of the NAWSA the following year, observed: "The effect of this victory upon the nation was astounding. When the first Illinois election took place in April, the press carried the headlines that 250,000 women had voted in Chicago. Illinois…proved the turning point beyond which politicians at last got a clear view of the fact that women were gaining genuine political power."[294] It was a triumph for the suffragists not only because of the number of women who voted but for the number of saloons their votes closed. The *New York Times* reported that women's votes had shut the doors of over one thousand saloons by creating sixteen more "dry" counties in Illinois, and concluded that although politicians could not yet predict women's voting behavior, "they only know women are in politics to stay."[295]

Further evidence that momentum was building for the suffrage movement came several months later, in June 1914, when the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) officially endorsed woman suffrage after decades of staunch neutrality. A relatively conservative women's group that rejected radical measures such as divorce reform and the legalization of prostitution, the GFWC provided the suffrage movement with increased legitimacy in the eyes of the public as well as the mass support of its thousands of clubs and millions of members. The GFWC's endorsement of suffrage provoked indignation among anti-suffragists, who denounced its decision to "inject politics into

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[293] NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1940), 94.
[294] *Illinois Women: 75 Years of the Right to Vote* (Chicago: Chicago Sun-Times Features, 1996), 1856.
[295] "Women Shut 1,000 Saloons," *New York Times*, April 4, 1914; "Chicago Women for Full Suffrage: Politicians Are Puzzled, Admit That They Cannot Tell the Tendency of Women on Political Questions," *New York Times*, April 10, 1914.

philanthropies."[296] Mrs. Dodge wrote a letter to President Wilson to assure him that the GFWC's official position did not reflect the sentiments of many of its members.[297] The GFWC's endorsement of woman suffrage was a blow to the anti-suffrage movement both in terms of practical politics and symbolic significance.

The First World War brought the national debate about woman suffrage to a head. The United States entered the war in April 1917, when President Wilson convinced Congress that the United States must do so in order to make the world "safe for democracy."[298] When men were sent to the warfront, over a million American women took over industrial jobs that had been performed by men, a phenomenon which permanently altered Americans' understanding of women's roles and capabilities. The war transformed the activities of both the suffragists and the anti-suffragists. During the war, the suffrage movement benefited from the effective combination of a militant faction and a moderate majority, while the anti-suffrage movement migrated further to the right and diverged increasingly widely from the mainstream attitude toward the question of woman suffrage. This chapter will explore the gradual defeat of the anti-suffrage movement, which in its final phase embodied in an acute form the climate of patriotism, conformity, and anti-radical sentiment that prevailed during and after the First World War. Between 1917 and 1920, anti-suffragists' arguments centered around the belief that suffragism, feminism, and socialism were intimately interconnected aspects of the same movement, which aimed to subvert American values and effect a social revolution.

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[296] "Voices of Protest of 'Antis': Mrs. Dodge on Indorsement [sic] of Suffrage by Women's Federation," *New York Times*, June 15, 1914.
[297] "Antis Address Wilson: Clubwomen Not All for Suffrage, Mrs. Dodge Writes," *New York Times*, June 29, 1914.
[298] *The President's War Message and Proclamation of War* (San Francisco, California: A. M. Robertson, 1917), 16.

A few months after the United States entered the war, the anti-suffrage movement underwent major internal changes. Mrs. Dodge resigned her presidency of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in July 1917. She was succeeded by the wife of a Republican senator, Alice Hay Wadsworth, who relocated the national association's headquarters from New York to Washington, D.C., where she had hitherto presided over the local anti-suffrage association. While the reasons for the leadership change remain unclear, historians have speculated that anti-suffragists recognized the need for a leader based in Washington, D.C., at a moment when suffragists were turning their attention to securing the federal amendment, and that anti-suffragists welcomed the prestige of having the daughter of the renowned statesman John Hay as their president.[299] Additionally, the national association changed the name of its official organ from *The Woman's Protest* to *The Woman Patriot. The Woman Patriot* evidenced a change in the tone of the anti-suffrage movement, its pages filled with charges of treason and subversion, character assassination, and other forms of inflammatory rhetoric. Suffragists even coined the term "Wadsworthy" during this period to denote statements that matched the anti-suffrage leader's vitriolic style.[300] As it began to look increasingly likely that national woman suffrage would become a reality, more moderate anti-suffragists tended to drop quietly out of the movement, which affected its overall tone. In the sidebar of each 1918 edition of *The Woman Patriot* was a quote from French Premier Georges Clemenceau, which implicitly drew a parallel between the ongoing war in Europe and the internal war against suffrage: "In all wars he is a conqueror who can believe a quarter of an hour longer than his adversary that he is not beaten. We shall continue to war to the last quarter of an hour, for the last quarter of an hour will be ours."

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[299] Benjamin, *A History of the Anti-Suffrage Movement in the United States from 1895 to 1920,* 266.
[300] Jablonsky, *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party*, 99.

Suffrage and anti-suffrage organizations responded to America's involvement in World War I by redirecting their resources and activities into patriotic mobilization efforts. When Congress declared war, NAWSA President Carrie Chapman Catt made the decision to declare the NAWSA's support for the war effort. In doing so, she put aside her own antiwar sentiments, defied the opposition of her fellow members of the Woman's Peace Party and pacifist suffragists, and effectively distanced the suffrage movement from the peace movement.[301] A shrewd, pragmatic strategist, Catt aligned the suffrage movement with the war effort in order to prevent suffragists from being marginalized (as pacifists were) and because she perceived the opportunity to generate widespread public approval and gain President Wilson's support. During the war, the NAWSA suspended its active lobbying at the national level and transformed its local chapters into volunteer groups that worked for the war effort in various ways, including knitting clothes for soldiers and raising money. By November 1917, seven months after the U.S. declared war, the Woman Suffrage Party in New York had sold more than a million dollars' worth of war bonds. Thanks in part to the New York suffragists' patriotic image, New York women gained the right to vote in the November 1917 referendum – a dramatic reversal of the result of the previous referendum in 1915 and a crushing blow to the anti-suffrage movement.

Anti-suffragists competed to outdo the suffragists in patriotism. Even before the entrance of the United States into the war, the anti-suffrage movement had thrown itself into the cause of "Preparedness." When a Preparedness Parade took place in New York City in 1916, the antis set up a First Aid Station at Broadway and Fourteenth. Anti-suffragists who had completed courses in Red Cross home nursing and first aid staffed the station dressed in

[301] Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Marie Cantlon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America: Women in North American Catholicism* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1054.

nurses' caps and aprons. Alice Hill Chittenden and other leading figures of the anti-suffrage movement took shifts (and went on record as having done so in *The Woman Patriot*). The First Aid Station assisted "tired mothers on the sidewalk with sleepy children," demonstrated how to sterilize and put on first aid bandages, and distributed over 15,000 cups of milk, coffee, lemonade, and water.[302] Anti-suffragists' supportive presence at the Preparedness Parade was both earnest and theatrical: it was a performance of patriotism.


THE WOMAN'S PROTEST 5

Anti-Suffrage—For Patriotism and Preparedness

THE PARADE PASSING UNDER THE ANTI-SUFFRAGE BANNER

THE FIRST AID STATION AT FOURTEENTH STREET AND FIFTH AVENUE

The anti-suffragists set up a first aid station at a Preparedness Parade in New York. Originally printed in *The Woman's Protest* 9, no. 2 (June 1916).

In 1918, both suffragists and anti-suffragists attended the "Win the War for Permanent Peace Convention" in Philadelphia, held by the League to Enforce Peace.[303] At the convention, President Taft introduced Mrs. Preston, the First Vice President of the New

[302] "Anti-Suffrage: For Patriotism and Preparedness," *The Woman's Protest* 9, no. 2 (June 1916): 5.
[303] " 'Win the War for Permanent Peace' Convention," in *The World Court*, vol. 4 (New York: International Peace Forum, 1918), 827.

Jersey Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, as "the most beloved woman in the country," to the delight of the anti-suffragists and the displeasure of the suffragists. "I wish you could have seen the discomfort of the suffragists," wrote the correspondent for *The Woman Patriot*, "They were completely knocked out and not pleased."[304] Both suffragists and anti-suffragists perceived that public recognition of this kind carried weight and that being "beloved" could affect the outcome of the debate about woman suffrage.

Like suffragists, anti-suffragists realized that the war provided an opportunity for women to demonstrate their value as American citizens. While suffragists saw women's response to wartime exigencies as confirmation that women were (or ought to be) citizens in the same sense that men were citizens, anti-suffragists saw it as confirmation that women's citizenship differed from men's and should serve the nation in a uniquely feminine way. The Red Cross exemplified anti-suffragists' ideal of womanhood. *The Woman Patriot* regularly featured "Tributes to the Red Cross," including a letter from Anna Rohlfs in praise of women's roles as mother and nurse: "in both she comes before us in an aureole of devotion, patience and love. Self-forgetful, untiring, a ministering spirit."[305] *The Woman Patriot* also featured regular reports from state anti-suffrage associations on their Red Cross work. Sometimes these took the form of dollar amounts raised or descriptions of homes transformed into Red Cross headquarters, but the message was consistent: as West Virginia AOWS President Mrs. Gallagher expressed it, "West Virginia anti-suffragists are working day and night to go over the top with a big excess over our allotment for the Red Cross."[306] For anti-suffragists, supporting the Red Cross enabled them simultaneously to express patriotism and to affirm conventional gender roles.

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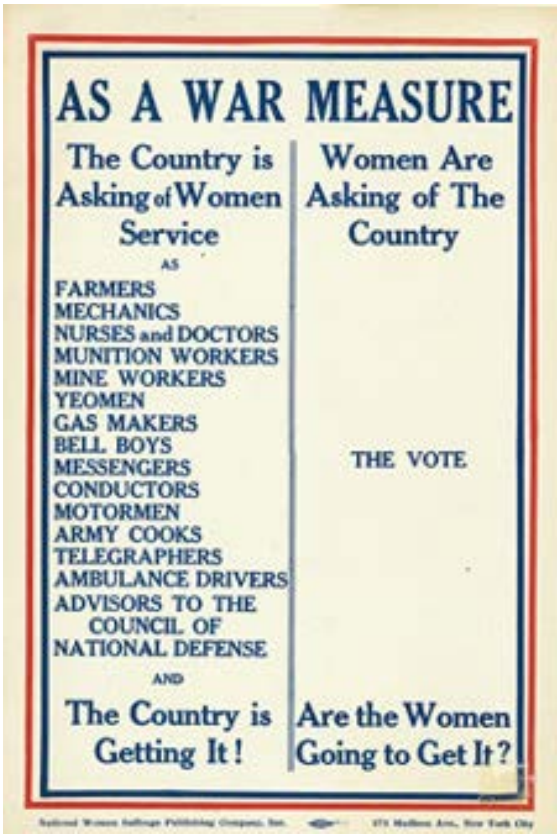
[304] " 'The Most Beloved Woman in the Country,' " *The Woman Patriot*, May 25, 1918.
[305] Anna Katharine Green Rohlfs, "Two Tributes to the Red Cross," *The Woman Patriot*, May 11, 1918.
[306] "West Virginia," *The Woman Patriot*, May 25, 1918.

Because suffragists linked women's contributions to the war effort to women's right to vote, anti-suffragists accused them of "political profiteering."[307] Suffragists implied that women had earned their right to have a voice in American politics through their loyal and courageous wartime service, sometimes explicitly framing their demand as quid pro quo, as in this 1918 broadside.



NAWSA broadside, 1918. Image courtesy of the Women's Suffrage Ephemera Collection, Special Collections, Bryn Mawr College Library, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

Anti-suffragists saw the suffragists' expectation of a reward for service during wartime as despicable, declaring that they (anti-suffragists) "bitterly resent unscrupulous attempts of suffrage leaders to turn [the] unselfish service of all women to the profit of those who

[307] "Antis to Protest to Congress and War Service Organizations Against Political Profiteering," *The Woman Patriot*, Dec. 14, 1918.

demand political pay for patriotism."[308] When suffragists explicitly connected their Red Cross work with the suffrage campaign, for example, anti-suffragists rebuked them in an article entitled "The Red Cross is Not in Politics."[309] The vehemence with which anti-suffragists denounced the suffragists' "profiteering" suggests their perception of the degree to which the war furthered the suffragists' cause.

Anti-suffragists also attempted to undermine suffragists' displays of patriotism by drawing attention to the association between the movement for woman suffrage and the movement for peace. Before World War I, suffragists had commonly argued that one of the ways women's votes would create moral uplift was in tending to promote peace. When the U.S. entered the war, Carrie Chapman Catt quickly realized that pacifism would be problematic for the suffrage movement, and therefore distanced NAWSA from pacifist groups such as the Woman's Peace Party, which Catt herself had co-founded in 1915. In 1918, a Massachusetts suffrage organization refused to appoint two candidates to vice president because it suspected them of pacifist leanings: one woman was "said to have refused to buy a Liberty Bond" and the other was "nowhere on record as having given time or activity to war work."[310] Despite NAWSA's repudiation of pacifism, anti-suffragists were able to exploit the presence of a pacifist element in the suffrage movement, including women such as Jane Addams, chairman of the Woman's Peace Party and former NAWSA Vice President. A few months after the end of the war, Archibald Stevenson of the Military Intelligence Service furnished a Senate Committee with a list of the names of sixty-two men and women, including Jane Addams, which he termed a "who's who in pacifism." The *New*

[308] "Antis to Protest to Congress and War Service Organizations Against Political Profiteering," *The Woman Patriot*, Dec. 14, 1918.
[309] "The Red Cross is Not In Politics," *The Woman Patriot*, June 1, 1918.
[310] "Full Story of the Massachusetts Suffrage Row Over Pacifism," *The Woman Patriot*, June 1, 1918.

York Times published the names of the best-known individuals, with their biographical information and known affiliations, and *The Woman Patriot* eagerly followed its example.[311] It was front-page news in the anti-suffrage paper: "Well-Known Suffrage Leaders Listed by Military Intelligence Service as Active in Pacifist Movement During the War."[312] During the war and the years immediately following it, heightened suspicion of subversion within the borders of the United States was not confined to the anti-suffrage movement. Anti-suffragists turned the climate of suspicion to their advantage when suffragists were implicated in unpatriotic activities.

Least patriotic of all, according to the anti-suffragists, were the militant suffragists, who were "beyond shame."[313] The militant suffragists were led by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, who, frustrated with the NAWSA's patient lobbying, had split with the sprawling suffrage organization to form the National Woman's Party in 1916. While the NAWSA suspended much of its lobbying during the war in order to focus on the war effort, the National Woman's Party continued to press the suffrage question and used more aggressive tactics. Influenced by the English suffragists' motto "deeds, not words," Paul and Burns held the political party in power responsible for the unjust disfranchisement of women. Because Democrats were in power, they waged campaigns to encourage Western women voters to vote against Democrats. National Woman's Party members began to picket the White House

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[311] "Lists Americans as Pacifists: Senate Committee Puts Sixty-two Well-Known Men and Women Into Record," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1919.

[312] "Former Suffrage President Heads 'Who's Who in Pacifism and Radicalism': Well-Known Suffrage Leaders Listed by Military Intelligence Service as Active in Pacifist Movement During the War," *The Woman Patriot*, Feb. 1, 1919.

[313] Annie Nathan Meyer, "The Defeat of Suffrage: The Senate's Action Makes for Unity in Carrying on the War," *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1918.

in early 1917. In June of that year, mob attacks, arrests, and jailings hardened their resolve and marked the beginning of a period of "open militancy."[314]

Whereas NAWSA gave political support to Wilson during the war (Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw served on the Women's Committee of the Council on National Defense), the National Woman's Party opposed U.S. involvement in the war and refused to allow wartime mobilization to distract them from the cause of woman suffrage. The National Woman's Party decried the hypocrisy of a government that cast itself as the leading defender of democracy around the world but refused to enfranchise half its population at home. Standing outside the gates of the White House, they held banners with messages such as: "President Wilson is deceiving the world when he appears as the prophet of democracy. President Wilson has opposed those who demand democracy for this country…We in America know this. The world will find him out."[315] They also maintained a watch fire outside the gates of the White House in which they burned the words of President Wilson's speeches about democracy. Such tactics powerfully undermined Wilson's claim to represent democracy, justice, and liberty. They provoked cries of subversion and disloyalty among anti-suffragists and others. To criticize the U.S. government in wartime, many believed, was to give an advantage to its enemies. The suffragists, wrote New York anti-suffragist Annie Nathan Meyer, "should feel unspeakably humiliated that the question of suffrage could not have waited for the end of the war."[316] When Germany granted women suffrage immediately following the armistice, National Woman's Party members declared that

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[314] Linda G. Ford, "Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 284.

[315] Photograph, National Archives, in Linda G. Ford, "Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 291.

[316] Annie Nathan Meyer, "The Defeat of Suffrage: The Senate's Action Makes for Unity in Carrying on the War," *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1918.

Germany was more democratic than America. In response, anti-suffragists proposed sending the suffragists to Germany.[317]

The National Woman's Party openly criticized the government at a moment when many Americans were hostile to any form of dissent and little inclined to distinguish between different kinds of dissenters. The Espionage Act (1917) and the Sedition Act (1918) fostered a climate of suspicion and conformity, and allegations of radicalism were frequently leveled against the National Woman's Party. Between 1917 and 1919, the American media published accusations of its "bolshevism" and incriminating links with socialists and anarchists. Even members of the political Left assumed the radical leanings of the National Woman's Party. In early 1918, Max Eastman's socialist magazine *The Liberator* identified "Alice Paul and her young army of militants" as one of the "leading radical forces in American politics in the near future."[318]

Anti-suffragists saw the actions of the National Woman's Party as confirmation of a link they had long suspected between the woman suffrage movement and other radical movements and ideologies, especially socialism. The affiliation between woman suffrage and radicalism, which had previously been a peripheral concern of the anti-suffrage movement, became a preoccupation over the course of the war. Anti-suffragists believed that socialism, feminism, and suffragism were interconnected aspects of the same subversive agenda, which proposed to transform women's role in society and women's relationship to the state. In its first edition in April 1918, *The Woman Patriot* declared: "Antisuffragists to

[317] " 'Germany More Democratic Than America,' Say Suffragists: Why Not Send Them to Germany with the Other 'Reds'?" *The Woman Patriot*, Nov. 30, 1918.
[318] "A Militant Suffrage Victory," *Liberator* 1 no. 1 (March 1918).

Wage Unceasing War Against Feminism and Socialism."[319] Anti-suffrage publications such as Benjamin Hubbard's *Socialism, Feminism, and Suffragism, the Terrible Triplets, Connected by the Same Umbilical Cord, and Fed from the Same Nursing Bottle* referred to support for woman suffrage as "suffragism."[320] Construing the movement for woman suffrage as an "ism" implied that it was an ideology equivalent to feminism and socialism rather than simply a movement to achieve a specific political reform. Anti-suffragists understood all of these movements to constitute an attack on patriarchal authority, on Christianity, and on the idea that the family, rather than the individual, was the basic unit of the state.

What did "feminism" mean to the anti-suffragists and what was the relationship between feminism and suffragism? "Woman suffrage is the keystone in the arch of feminism," wrote Mrs. Oliphant, General Secretary of the New Jersey Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, "The women opposed to suffrage stand for the conservation of the home, the suffragists for the sex revolution which means the disruption of the home."[321] It was probably accurate to identify woman suffrage as the "keystone in the arch of feminism," given that self-identified feminists viewed political representation for women as the *sine qua non* for achieving greater liberty and equality for women; but it was less accurate to identify all suffragists as advocates of a "sex revolution." When Mrs. Oliphant made this claim in 1914, "feminism" was a new word in the U.S., a vague doctrine that had yet to be conclusively defined. The month before, the "First Feminist Mass Meeting" had been held at

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[319] "Anti-Suffragists to Wage Unceasing War Against Feminism and Socialism," *The Woman Patriot*, April 27, 1918.
[320] Benjamin V. Hubbard, *Socialism, Feminism, and Suffragism, the Terrible Triplets, Connected by the Same Umbilical Cord, and Fed from the Same Nursing Bottle* (Chicago: American Publishing Company, 1915).
[321] "Attacks Woman Suffrage: Mrs. Oliphant Says Movement Is for Sex Revolution," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1914.

the Cooper Union in New York. Handbills for the event bore the capital-letter heading "What Is Feminism? Come and Find Out," promising that a series of well-known men and women including Frances Perkins and Floyd Dell would give their answers to "what feminism means to me."[322] The word "feminism" had burst suddenly onto the scene, as Nancy Cott observes: "Only a rare quirk prior to 1910, usage of 'feminism' became frequent by 1913 and almost unremarkable a year later."[323] "Feminism" became a useful term to express the way women's lives, attitudes, and behaviors were changing – a more modern way of referring to "the woman movement." Because it was a new shorthand for a complicated social phenomenon, its meaning in the 1910s was flexible and contested. To the anti-suffragists, feminists were women who were dissatisfied with domestic life and conventional gender roles, and who therefore advocated a "sex revolution." Anti-suffragists saw the demand for woman suffrage as symptomatic of this dissatisfaction and believed that it would encourage more women to turn away from marriage and motherhood.

Woman suffrage was a goal of feminism, as anti-suffragists observed, but not all suffragists were feminists. Anti-suffragists assumed uniform beliefs among their opponents, but in fact suffragists represented a wide political spectrum. The women's movement comprised diverse groups and goals, including political equality for women, other forms of civil rights, labor reform, child welfare, birth control, and sexual freedom.[324] One of the sources of suffragists' success was their creation of a coalition of different classes and types of women: rural and urban women, factory workers and professionals, clubwomen and advocates of "free love," outspoken feminists and pro-temperance homemakers. Some

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[322] Handbill for Feminist Mass Meeting, 1914, reprinted in Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 12.
[323] Ibid., 13.
[324] Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

suffragists identified themselves as feminists, but many did not. In 1909, *The American Suffragette* had featured an essay entitled "Suffragism Not Feminism," which clarified that suffragists did not espouse the "perverse" and "eccentric theories of the 'feminists' " and assured readers that "women do not want to ape men, but wish to remain true women, good daughters, sisters, mothers, and we claim emphatically that none of the attributes of ideal womanhood will be sacrificed to the ballot."[325] Perceiving the need to distinguish themselves from "the feminists," some suffragists explicitly affirmed their support for the conventional ideal of womanhood. They shared anti-suffragists' wariness of "feminism" – or at least, they recognized that many Americans did. Anti-suffragists and others associated feminism with radical impulses, an attitude of antagonism towards men, and the vague possibility of a "sex revolution."

Anti-suffragists argued that woman suffrage was a means to an end for socialists as well as for feminists: woman suffrage was "the companion, the handmaiden, the forerunner of Socialism."[326] It is hard to understand the intensity and the certainty with which anti-suffragists reiterated this belief during and after the First World War. In fact, suffrage organizations consciously kept a distance from socialist organizations, which has led historians to conclude that anti-suffragists' suspicion of suffragists' radicalism was simply a reflection of the anti-radical "hysteria" of the late 1910s and not "based on reality."[327] Anti-suffragists' determination to stamp out radicalism by defeating woman suffrage was not rooted in logical reasoning. However, their perception of a correlation between support for woman suffrage and for socialism had a basis in reality.

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[325] Sofia M. Loebinger, "Suffragism Not Feminism," *The American Suffragette*, Dec. 1909, reprinted in Dawn Keetley, John Pettegrew, eds., *Public Women, Public Words: A Documentary History of American Feminism, 1900-1960* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 11-12.
[326] *Remonstrance*, April 1914.
[327] Benjamin 264.

Anti-suffragists pointed out that many socialists supported political equality for men and women. By the 1910s, the suffrage movement had fully embraced the participation of working women, and socialists began to campaign vigorously for votes for women. American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers asked all trade unionists to offer active support to the suffrage movement. Eugene V. Debs, the influential socialist leader who was arrested and imprisoned for sedition during the war, was a longstanding supporter of woman suffrage. *The Woman Patriot* mocked the suffragists for boasting the support of "that distinguished convict."[328] The support of labor organizations such as the American Federation of Labor and the Women's Trade Union League was vital to the success of the suffrage movement in the 1910s, but it was also problematic in that it raised the possibility of suffragists' sympathy with socialist and radical groups. Russian women got the vote immediately following the Russian Revolution in late 1917, which strengthened anti-suffragists' assertion that woman suffrage was the "Immediate Demand of Socialism."[329] "Naturally the platform of the Socialists includes a vote for every citizen," acknowledged millionaire socialite and suffragist Alva Belmont, adding, however, that this did not mean that advocates of a vote for every citizen were socialists.[330]

To achieve equal rights for women, was it better to work toward a revolutionary change in society or to fight for rights within the existing system? Would a different economic system lead to equality between women and men? Women who advocated woman suffrage came to different conclusions about these questions. Feminists such as Jane

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[328] "Former Suffrage President Heads 'Who's Who in Pacifism And Radicalism': Well-Known Suffrage Leaders Listed by Military Intelligence Service as Active in Pacifist Movement During the War," *The Woman Patriot*, Feb. 1, 1919.

[329] "Woman Suffrage First and Foremost, Immediate Demand of Socialism," *The Woman Patriot*, May 11, 1918.

[330] Mrs. Oliver H. P. [Alva E.] Belmont, "Woman's Right to Govern Herself," *North American Review* (Nov. 1909): 673.

Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman saw the solution to the oppression of women in a more cooperative economic system rather than one atomized into family units. Max Eastman described Gilman's attitude toward women's domesticity: "In this 'home,' this private food-preparing and baby-rearing establishment, she sees a machine which breaks down all that is good and noble in women."[331] Gilman and other feminists attempted to denaturalize the traditional gendered division of labor. Women who challenged sexual conventions also opposed the political oppression and economic dependence of women. Feminist and birth control advocate Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, for example, was a leader in the International Workers of the World and a suffragist. Socialist-turned-anarchist Marie Equi, known for work as a doctor who performed abortions, was also active in the woman suffrage movement in Oregon. Such women provide evidence of the overlap between woman suffrage and behavior that was perceived to be "radical." It is interesting to note, however, that just as not all suffragists were politically radical, not all radical women were suffragists. "Free love" advocate and anarchist Emma Goldman opposed woman suffrage (though she never would have joined an anti-suffrage association) because she predicted that "the Puritanism of woman" would tend to increase the legislation of morality and forms of social control such as Prohibition.[332] Overall, most suffragists, including most members of the militant National Woman's Party, sought to work within the existing social structure for improved rights and did not embrace the anticapitalist stance of socialists.

Between 1917 and 1920, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage exemplified what Kim Nielsen described as "the entanglement of antiradicalism and

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[331] Floyd Dell, *Women as World Builders: Studies in Modern Feminism* (Chicago: Forbes & Co., 1913), 25.
[332] "Woman Suffrage," in Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1917), 209.

antifeminism."[333] During and following the First World War, anti-suffragists connected healthy, patriotic Americanism with normative gender roles and characteristics. At the bottom of each page of *The Woman Patriot* was a quote about womanliness: "Woman is the most perfect when womanly" (Gladstone), "A good woman is the loveliest flower that blooms under heaven" (Thackeray).[334] For the anti-suffragists, militant suffragists embodied everything women should not be, and their protests represented political, social, and sexual disorder. Elaine Tyler May argues that following the Second World War, the containment of communism and the containment of feminism formed different aspects of the same collective emotional response or ideological trend, a trend she terms "domestic containment."[335] The impulse to "domestic containment" could also be observed in the anti-suffragists' reaction against what they perceived to be the "triplets" of socialism, feminism, and suffrage.

Ultimately, even though (or perhaps because) the militant suffragists' tactics were controversial, they played a key role in the success of the suffrage movement. The National Woman's Party attracted publicity and kept the public spotlight on the woman suffrage movement, while the NAWSA continued to lobby legislators patiently and build grassroots support at the local level. The militant suffragists' treatment in prison, including the forced feedings that resulted from their hunger strikes, shocked the public and aroused sympathy – especially when, after being released, the prisoners toured the country on a train dubbed the "Prison Special" to speak about their experiences. In short, the militant suffragists "created a

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[333] Kim E. Nielsen. *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2001), 2.
[334] *The Woman Patriot*, June 26, 1920.
[335] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988; reprint, New York: Basic Books, 2008), 16.

situation in which something had to be done."[336] Furthermore, the militancy of the National Woman's Party had the effect of making the NAWSA, which represented the vast majority of suffragists, appear eminently moderate, reasonable, and respectable.

The way National Woman's Party picketers drew attention to the disparity between American ideals and practice put pressure on Wilson to demonstrate his commitment to democracy by enfranchising women. When wartime patriotism was running high, militants' insistence that democracy would prevail in the end resonated powerfully with the public. "Woman suffrage is coming," wrote Eleanor Booth Simmons days before the New York referendum that marked the defeat of the New York anti-suffragists, "it's coming all over the world, a part of the larger democracy. No brief check here and there can stop the onward sweep."[337] It was undoubtedly a savvy political strategy to portray woman suffrage as inevitable, but it was also an increasingly accurate assessment of the progress of the woman suffrage movement.

The NAWSA's war work and the National Woman Party's protests form only part of the story of how the war turned the tide for the woman suffrage movement. Women's willingness and ability to step into men's jobs during the war greatly, if indirectly, furthered the cause of woman suffrage. For the anti-suffragists, suffragists' references to this phenomenon were merely another manifestation of the suffragists' wartime profiteering. "The politically ambitious women are making much capital out of the fact that 1,266,061 women in the United States," and even more in Britain, had entered industry since the start

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[336] Linda G. Ford, "Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), 279.

[337] Eleanor Booth Simmons, "Bugaboo of Anti-Suffragists Reacting Against Them: Every Argument Opposing Votes for Women Answered by Practical Work Done by Equal Rights Sponsors," *New York Sun*, Nov. 4, 1917.

of the war, reported *The Woman Patriot*. [338] The resigned conclusion of this article revealed the degree to which the wartime transformation of women's roles affected the way people thought about women's demand for the vote: "Whenever you hear a lot of talk or see a lot of publicity about women taking the places of men, it is simply an advertisement which might as well be worded: 'Wanted – Votes for Women.'"[339] As suffragist Eleanor Booth Simmons observed in late 1917, much had changed since the anti-suffrage 1914 luncheon at the Biltmore: "Nobody gets up now in halls amid pink, black and white decorations and declares that Woman's Place Is the Home. One can't, you know, with women driving ambulances and making munitions and organizing committees and working on railroads and taking the census and so on."[340]

The last congressional hearings on woman suffrage took place in January 1918. The first day was given to the NAWSA, the second to the National Woman's Party, and the third to the anti-suffragists. "We are engaged in a great foreign war. It is not the proper time to change the whole electoral system," argued one anti-suffragist. A suffragist replied: "There never was a more propitious time…than this hour for America to grant the right of suffrage to the noble women of this Republic."[341] The Amendment passed the House, in a dramatic reversal of its 1915 position. This policy position change serves as a useful marker of the shift in public opinion: in 1918, 71 percent of representatives supported woman suffrage,

[338] "Women in War Work," *The Woman Patriot*, April 27, 1918.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Eleanor Booth Simmons, "Bugaboo of Anti-Suffragists Reacting Against Them: Every Argument Opposing Votes for Women Answered by Practical Work Done by Equal Rights Sponsors," *New York Sun*, Nov. 4, 1917.
[341] NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It*, 132.

whereas only 47 percent had done so three years before.[342] Suffragists continued to face resistance, however, in the Senate.

President Wilson announced his support of a federal woman suffrage amendment shortly after the January 1918 hearings, reversing his previous position that woman suffrage should be left to the states to decide. In September 1918, Wilson urged the Senate to pass the woman suffrage amendment as a "necessary war measure." He perceived it as vital to morale to have women's support during wartime and to maintain the moral integrity of the United States in the eyes of other countries. Wilson argued that women had earned the right to vote through their wartime activities. "We have made partners of the women in this war," he said, "shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?"[343] Some historians contend that women's war work was merely a convenient pretext for politicians in Britain and the U.S. to change their positions in favor of woman suffrage when they realized their opposition to it had become untenable. Whatever the reasons behind President Wilson's change of heart, his decision proved decisive for the suffragists.

The war to make the world "safe for democracy" came to an end in November 1918. "At this instant of history," commented the *New Republic*, "democracy is supreme."[344] The House and (at Wilson's urging) the Senate passed the woman suffrage amendment in June the following year and sent it to the states for ratification. When Congress passed the amendment, the Women Voters' Anti-Suffrage Party sent its members a postcard laying out

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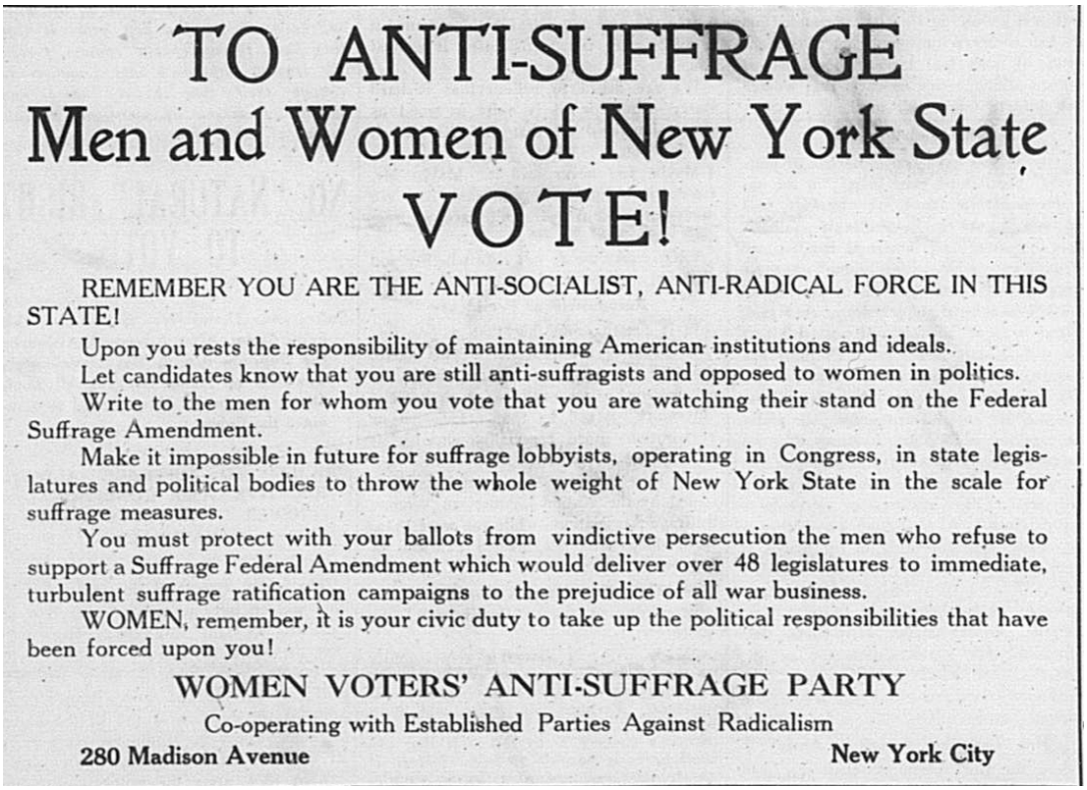
[342] Eileen L. McDonagh, "Issues and Constituencies in the Progressive Era: House Roll Call Voting on the Nineteenth Amendment, 1913-1919," 121.
[343] "Appeal of President Wilson to the Senate of the United States to Submit the Federal Amendment for Woman Suffrage, Delivered in Person Sept. 30, 1918," in Ida Husted Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 5 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1922), 763.
[344] *New Republic*, Nov. 16, 1918.

their three options for the future: to suspend their present anti-suffrage organization, to continue their present anti-suffrage work until November 1920, or to re-organize into a Women's Non-Radical Association. They also ran advertisements in *The Woman Patriot* such as this one.



TO ANTI-SUFFRAGE
Men and Women of New York State
VOTE!

REMEMBER YOU ARE THE ANTI-SOCIALIST, ANTI-RADICAL FORCE IN THIS STATE!

Upon you rests the responsibility of maintaining American institutions and ideals.

Let candidates know that you are still anti-suffragists and opposed to women in politics.

Write to the men for whom you vote that you are watching their stand on the Federal Suffrage Amendment.

Make it impossible in future for suffrage lobbyists, operating in Congress, in state legislatures and political bodies to throw the whole weight of New York State in the scale for suffrage measures.

You must protect with your ballots from vindictive persecution the men who refuse to support a Suffrage Federal Amendment which would deliver over 48 legislatures to immediate, turbulent suffrage ratification campaigns to the prejudice of all war business.

WOMEN, remember, it is your civic duty to take up the political responsibilities that have been forced upon you!

WOMEN VOTERS' ANTI-SUFFRAGE PARTY
Co-operating with Established Parties Against Radicalism
280 Madison Avenue New York City

Originally printed in *The Woman Patriot*, October 26, 1918.

But the victory of the suffrage amendment was far from certain, as anti-suffrage associations assured their members. Southern states remained steadfast in their opposition to votes for women. One member of the Mississippi House of Representatives was recorded to have exclaimed: "I would rather die and go to Hell than vote for woman suffrage!"[345] Rallying to the cry of states' rights, ad hoc anti-suffrage organizations sprang up in Southern towns and cities during the spring and summer of 1920. Kate Gordon, a Louisiana suffragist, switched her position to support the anti-suffrage side in the final struggle over ratification

[345] Quoted in NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won It,* 147.

in the South because of her conviction that woman suffrage should come through state action only, not through federal force. Southern anti-suffragists circulated articles such as Macon journalist James Callaway's "The White Woman's Problem," which warned that empowering black women with the ballot would empower the black community and threaten the white community – especially white women.[346] Thirty-six states were needed to ratify the amendment. Thirty-five states had ratified it by the summer of 1920, when the amendment came to Tennessee.

Suffragists and anti-suffragists descended on Nashville in late August. They established headquarters (the anti-suffragists chose the Hermitage Hotel) and launched energetic publicity campaigns. But it was the influence of a mother that decided the matter after all. Tennessee legislator Harry T. Burn arrived for the roll call wearing a red rose on his lapel, signifying support for the anti-suffragists. A last-minute telegram from his elderly mother, who liked to read Mrs. Catt's speeches, convinced him to change his vote. "I notice some of the speeches against," his mother wrote, "They were bitter." She urged him to "be a good boy" and "vote for suffrage."[347] Harry Burn did as his mother told him and became a hero of the suffrage movement when Tennessee narrowly ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, making it United States law.

Anti-suffrage historian Thomas Jablonsky concludes that anti-suffragists "contributed mightily to their own demise" in the years leading up to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, but acknowledges that the suffragists' success was probably "unstoppable" regardless of changes within the anti-suffrage movement.[348] For the anti-

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[346] James Callaway, "The White Woman's Problem," reprinted in *The Woman Patriot*, June 26, 1920.
[347] Quoted in Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1975), 336.
[348] Jablonsky 111.

suffragists, the transition to life as voting citizens was remarkably seamless. They registered to vote, went to the polls, and translated their opposition to woman suffrage into a crusade against radicalism. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage reorganized as The Woman Patriot Publishing Company and continued to publish *The Woman Patriot* into the 1930s.

The continuity of the national anti-suffrage association's activities revealed how much more was at stake for anti-suffragists in opposing the suffrage movement than simply the right to vote. Anti-suffragists sought to defend a certain worldview against the encroachment of another and a newer one. In the late 1910s, anti-suffragists came to see American society as fundamentally divided. On one side of the gulf were people who advocated woman suffrage, pacifism, socialism, feminism, anarchy, and sexual freedom. On the other side were anti-suffragists and others who valued Christian teachings, self-sacrificing patriotism, a family-centered lifestyle, patriarchal authority, and the sanctity of marriage and motherhood. In their defense of America against its critics and against those who sought to change the social order, the anti-suffragists, later the Woman Patriots, understood their own side as the truly American side. In a sense, the anti-suffragists were right: they were defenders of the American tradition, in that their value system and social vision reflected how America had been in the past. Suffragists, by contrast, sought to break with a tradition they viewed as oppressive to women. The First World War, like the Civil War, was a moment when continuity became impossible and change became inevitable. Suffragists seized the opportunity for change and finally achieved what they had struggled to do for more than a half-century, while anti-suffragists struggled to hold onto the world they felt slipping away from them.

Conclusion

"The demand of women for higher education, better laws and all the rest was infinitesimal compared with the demand they have made and are making for the suffrage," wrote suffragist Alva Belmont in 1909, "From all these lesser gains the suffrage is as far apart as the poles. It means the altering of State constitutions, a fundamental change in the Government itself, whose ultimate results the wisest cannot foretell."[349] Today, it is hard to imagine how radical the idea of votes for women was a century ago. Unlike opportunities for women in higher education and the professions, the right to vote would apply to all American women all the time. Woman suffrage proposed to redefine the nature of women's citizenship and to alter women's relationship to the state and to society. It would establish an official means for women to represent themselves in politics and participate in government. The woman suffrage movement challenged Americans to think about women and about democratic government differently. As defenders of the status quo, anti-suffragists maintained that the burden of proof in the debate about woman suffrage rested entirely with those who were demanding "sweeping and revolutionary change."[350]

The debate about woman suffrage was about more than women's right to vote. It raised questions about the nature of women and men and about their respective roles in modern life. To what degree should women be active in public affairs? Were women physically, mentally, and emotionally qualified to make political decisions? Should the law accord women equal rights or special protections? Could women be citizens in the same sense that men were citizens, or were women destined to serve their country in a uniquely feminine way? What was the basis of women's celebrated moral influence and what was the

[349] Mrs. Oliver H. P. [Alva E.] Belmont, "Woman's Right to Govern Herself," *North American Review* (Nov. 1909): 673.
[350] Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York: Duffield & Co., 1913), 3.

best way to harness it for the common good? Reasonable, well-meaning people came to widely divergent conclusions about these issues. The intensity of the debate about woman suffrage was magnified as it became a forum for these unsettled questions and their shifting answers.

Anti-suffragists were women who placed their faith in the traditional answers to these questions. Even though their position seems strange and paradoxical to us today, anti-suffragists represented the mainstream response to the question of votes for women for most of the seventy-year struggle for equal suffrage. Their arguments against votes for women expressed a normative conception of gender roles, one rooted in a patriarchal tradition, in Christian doctrine, in the legal tradition, and in the social custom of separate spheres for men and women. Anti-suffragists felt that suffragists were deeply misguided in attempting to replace the favorable and meaningful legal and social position women had attained with a doctrine of equal rights and individualism. Anti-suffragists held that women fulfilled their primary function and highest mission through wifehood and motherhood, and that participating in politics would be detrimental to their familial role. In this conviction, the weight of history and of modern scientific orthodoxy was on the anti-suffragists' side. Social Darwinism, physiology, and psychology, as they had developed up to the early twentieth century, confirmed anti-suffragists' view that women and men were more different than similar and should thus have different functions in society. Even as anti-suffragists began increasingly to participate in the public realm of philanthropy, charity, and reform, embracing what historians have termed "social feminism," they maintained their support for the idea that women had a "sphere" and merely expanded that sphere to include nonpartisan

"civic housekeeping."[351] In their defense of the disproportionate legislative influence of society's "best" women, anti-suffragists expressed a deep distrust of lower class, foreign-born, and nonwhite women, which resonated with middle-class Americans' anxieties about large numbers of "ignorant" and "un-American" voters. The agitation for woman suffrage seemed to anti-suffragists at once actively hostile to a normally gendered, family-centered worldview and symptomatic of its decline in American society.

Anti-suffragists' position, as anti-suffragists themselves sometimes acknowledged, was an attitude as much as an argument. "The argument against suffrage is a *feeling* and an ideal rather than a *reason*," one Tennessee woman wrote in a letter to the head of her state anti-suffrage association.[352] Anti-suffragists generated lists upon lists of reasons to oppose woman suffrage, but they recognized that their opposition to votes for women was not only rational. "There are few logical arguments against woman suffrage, while there are very many for it," acknowledged a New York anti-suffragist in a speech before the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.[353] Anti-suffragists sometimes struggled to articulate a justification for the way things had always been done and understood. Regardless, the appeal of custom and continuity remained strong in the view of many men and women. "What is it that this suffrage movement has had to meet, as it has plowed along up hill for fifty years, with its tremendous battery of arguments which it discharges into thin air?" Charlotte Perkins Gilman asked at a suffrage convention in 1904, "What it has to

[351] On "social feminism," see for example William L. O'Neill *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (New York: Quadrangle / The New York Times Book Co., 1971), 64.
[352] Quoted in Benjamin 211.
[353] Mrs. Charles H. Parshall, "Woman Suffrage is Not a Panacea for Social Evil," *The Woman's Protest* (Nov. 1912).

overcome is not an argument but a feeling."[354] This thesis has explored the way anti-suffragists attempted to translate a powerful feeling into a set of arguments.

Anti-suffragists mounted a defense of the status quo at a moment when American society was changing all around them. In 1914, journalist and political commentator Walter Lippmann tried to characterize Americans' sense of their changing, uncertain, and unfamiliar context. "We are unsettled to the very roots of our being," Lippmann wrote, "There isn't a human relation, whether of parent and child, husband and wife, worker and employer, that doesn't move in a strange situation."[355] Anti-suffragists longed for life to go back to normal. They understood themselves to be representatives of "the normal woman,"[356] who was implicitly Anglo-Saxon, native-born, middle or upper class, and "home-loving."[357] Anti-suffragists' appeal to tradition and their commitment to conventional gender roles resonated widely.

What it meant to be a "normal woman" changed between 1868 and 1920. The feminist ideal of the well-educated, independent "New Woman" increasingly reflected real women's experience and gradually gained popular acceptance. The idea of votes for women came to seem less strange and more reasonable as greater numbers of women began to operate in the public world of work, clubs, philanthropy, reform, and politics. The First World War dramatically accelerated the transformation of women's roles that had been underway for decades.

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[354] Quoted in Ida H. Harper et al., *History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. 5 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1922), 92.
[355] Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (New York: M. Kennerley, 1914), 152-153.
[356] See for example "Ten Reasons Why The Great Majority of Women Do Not Want the Ballot." Nebraska Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, Omaha, Nebraska [1914?], reproduced in Laura McKee Hickman, "Thou Shalt Not Vote: Anti-Suffrage in Nebraska, 1914-1920," *Nebraska History* 80 (1999): 63.
[357] See for example Emily Bissell, *A Help or a Hindrance*, 8.

The great irony in the history of woman suffrage is that after all suffragists' grandiose predictions and all anti-suffragists' grim warnings about the effects of women's votes, the effects of the Nineteenth Amendment were far from revolutionary. In the 1920 presidential election, the first in which all American women could vote, the voting proceeded with an uneventful smoothness that foreshadowed the anticlimactic political effects of women's ballots. Before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, anti-suffragists had painted a dark picture of politically active women abandoning their children in order to go to the polls (a fanciful image, but one with symbolic resonance). In November 1920, the suffragists were delighted to report that the problem of women voters' abandoned children had not been a problem after all. *The Woman Citizen* related the story of one polling station in New York City:

> "At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the policeman at one polling place reported that he had held more than forty babies and that he had every expectation of doubling this record. 'It's quite the usual thing for these women to check their babies with me,' he laughed. 'They probably know their children will be safe under the care of the New York Police Department. But I don't mind. I like to hold babies."[358]

Woman suffrage may have been revolutionary in the sense that it transformed women's civic standing, but it did not bring about "sweeping and revolutionary change" in real-world politics. In 1909, *Pearson's Magazine* summarized the impact of women's votes in the West: "Woman has done nothing with the suffrage – that is, nothing revolutionary, startling, uplifting, or sensational."[359] This proved to be the case on a national scale after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which ushered in a decade of conservatism in national politics. In the early 1920s, claims about the impact of women's votes were so contradictory and speculative that social scientists Stuart Rice and Malcolm Willey could

[358] "Woman Comes of Age: Her Record at the Polls," *Woman Citizen*, November 13, 1920.
[359] Ike Russell, "What Women Have Done with the Vote," *Pearson's Magazine* 22 no. 4 (Oct. 1909): 539.

only draw an ambivalent conclusion: women were neither "merely the same as men," they concluded, but nor did women "vote with marked independence."[360] Furthermore, the 1920s witnessed an overall decline in voter participation. At the time, low voter turnouts were often blamed on recently enfranchised women. It remains unclear whether this explanation reflected actual voting behavior because polls were not counted by sex in most states.[361] "Is woman suffrage failing?" asked *The Woman Citizen* in 1924. Jane Addams retorted that the question should be: "Is suffrage failing?"[362]

There is some evidence that women's issues received greater attention as a result of their enfranchisement, most notably the passage of the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921, commonly known as the Sheppard-Towner Act. The act passed due to pressure from the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, which had formed shortly after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Its main goal was to reduce the infant mortality rate, which it achieved by funding maternal health care centers and public health nursing services. Though a landmark piece of legislation, the Sheppard-Towner Act proved to be an anomaly. The 1920s witnessed significant setbacks for welfare, which Linda Gordon suggests may have been due to women reformers' struggle to learn "a language of politics rather than morality." Women who had been active in reform began the process of translating one form of activity and power into another, which led to "a waning women's movement and a waxing female bureaucracy."[363] On this count, it appeared that the anti-suffragists' predictions had been right: women's votes did not notably uplift

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[360] Stuart A. Rice and Malcolm M. Willey, "American Women's Ineffective Use of the Vote," *Current History* 20 (Jul. 1924), 641-47.
[361] Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 102.
[362] Quoted in Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics Before and After 1920," in Louise Tilly, Patricia Gurin, eds., *Women, Politics, and Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 160.
[363] Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 98.

American politics, and women's enfranchisement diminished the world of non-political female benevolence by politicizing women's reform efforts.

With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in the summer of 1920, anti-suffrage associations disbanded and anti-suffragists registered to vote. A handful of antis turned their opposition to woman suffrage into a crusade against radicalism and feminism – two vaguely defined and, in their view, intimately interconnected threats. Over the course of the twentieth century, the phenomenon that historians have termed "antifeminism" took on other forms. Today, most feminists believe that women should have the right to choose to abort a pregnancy, but many conservative women fervently disagree. Sociologist Kristin Luker argues that in the debate about abortion, abortion itself is merely "the tip of the iceberg." She explains the debate as the clash of two conflicting worldviews and understands the perspective of antifeminists in this light. "For most of them this is the first time their deepest values have been brought to explicit consciousness, much less challenged," Luker writes, "They are outraged because these values are so taken for granted that people have no vocabulary with which to discuss the fact that what is at odds is a fundamental view of reality."[364] Luker's analysis of pro-life women's perspective could equally be applied to the anti-suffragists of several generations earlier.

The debate about the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) testifies to the continuity and persistence of both feminism and antifeminism in American history since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Alice Paul presented the amendment to Congress in 1923 as the "Lucretia Mott Amendment" to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Seneca Fall Convention. Congress passed the ERA in the early 1970s, but the "Stop ERA" campaign led

[364] Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984), 159.

by Phyllis Schlafly defeated the amendment at the state level. Today, American women continue to disagree about the meaning of "women's rights" and the measures used to secure and protect those rights. The debate about women's role in American society is far from settled.

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