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ANTISUFFRAGISTS AND THE DILEMMA OF THE AMERICAN WEST

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Abstract

Under the leadership of women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, the National Woman Suffrage Association was established in 1868 with the express purpose of granting American women the right to vote as the first step towards equality with men. But not all women supported this movement. Anti-suffragists were entirely satisfied with their role within the domestic sphere, which was best described in Barbara Welter's classic, "The Cult of True Womanhood."[1] Women, they believed, were supposed to be pious, pure, submissive caretakers of their homes and families. For anti-suffragists these supposedly feminine characteristics embodied a woman's identity and explained her role in the home and the larger society. They were not second-class citizens; rather, women enjoyed an elevated moral standing. Thus, woman suffrage was a direct threat to female status.

In the American West, women gained equal suffrage quicker than they did in the East, and western women were quick to testify of its success. Anti-suffragists were determined to halt the spread of female suffrage and the threat that it implied to women's supposed superior moral status. Thus, anti-suffragists' opponents were not only leaders of the suffrage movement like Anthony; their political enemies were the enfranchised women of the West. They were the

[1] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18, 2 (Summer 1966):

antitheses of the women of the Cult of True Womanhood and had to be exposed as unfeminine, immoral, and as ineffective voters.

But to prove their point, anti-suffragists had to leave the domestic confines prescribed by the Cult's ideology. They testified before Congress, published newsletters, and established their own antisuffrage organizations. In an attempt to maintain the code espoused by the Cult of True Womanhood, many anti-suffragists depended on men to promote their campaign by writing essays and representing antisuffragist women in state and national politics. Anti-suffragists tried to convince Americans that suffrage would do more harm than good. Anti-suffragists not only lost their fight against suffrage, they were forced to adjust to a more progressive role for women. In the end, anti-suffragists like Oklahoma's Alice Robinson and Edith Cherry Johnson were left to demonstrate the virtues of the Cult of True Womanhood in a transformed world in which their values were of declining relevance.

Introduction

Thirty years before the United States granted universal suffrage, several states and territories in the American West chose to grant women the vote. In the face of opposition from the East, but spurred by their own successes on both the state and local level, both men and women of the American West campaigned for every woman's right to vote nationwide.[1] The citizens of these western states actively led the rest of the country to universal suffrage by using their own experiences as a positive example. They maintained that equal suffrage had been a triumph in their states and argued that if the measure worked for them, it would certainly have a positive influence on the rest of the country. Women, in particular, testified about their experiences as voting citizens who actively participated in state and local politics. This study is the story of how women in the West shaped the fight for equal suffrage by showing their fellow citizens that women everywhere could successfully participate in American government and forcing their Eastern opponents to adopt suffrage ideals in order to remain relevant.

On the other hand, anti-suffragists also used the western experience to argue against extending the vote to women. Western lawlessness and lack of social development revealed the failure of woman's suffrage there, or so it seemed

[1] For the sake of this study, the West is defined as those states west of the Mississippi River, and the East is defined as the northeastern United States, particularly New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts where the anti-suffrage movement was most popular.

to them. As both suffragists and anti-suffragists campaigned on the state and national levels for their respective causes, they broke through the accepted boundaries of womanhood of the nineteenth century. This proved to be a contradictory situation for anti-suffragists – also referred to as "antis" – who argued that a woman's place was within the home as submissive wives and dutiful mothers but who lived in defiance of this prescription. They, like their suffragist counterparts, organized campaigns, published newsletters and pamphlets, and even testified before Senate and Congressional committees – all to preserve the status of women as promoted by what historian Barbara Welter has aptly called the Cult of True Womanhood.[2]

In her celebrated analysis of the nineteenth-century American woman, Welter argues that a woman, without the virtues of True Womanhood, "no matter whether there was fame, achievement, or wealth, all was ashes. With them, she was promised happiness and power."[3] These supposed virtues were promoted by women's magazines and other related literature, including religious pamphlets and sermons. Women who embodied them all were the kind of females that all men would want to marry. Ideal American women possessed these virtues, and because of them, their husbands and children reflected her goodness and bestowed that goodness on their country.

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[2] Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21.

[3] Ibid., 21.

The Cult of True Womanhood was a prescriptive definition of femininity that was propagated through religion and the popular press. It cast all women as white and middle class. Women understood what kind of behavior was appropriate and becoming for a proper woman in nineteenth century America. This ideology promoted the ideals of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, and these ideals were incorporated – or expected to be – into a woman's everyday life. Regardless of where they lived, they were presumed to abide by these standards, as women were considered to be the moral compasses of American society. Living up to these standards became more challenging as women moved from the well-established towns and cities of the East to the recently built and unstable communities of the West. Yet, despite the frustrations of establishing their own family units, clubs, schools and churches, Western women still understood the values and virtues of the "true woman." It would be within the strictures of True Womanhood that women in the West would promote equal suffrage, arguing that as the moral leaders of the home and of society at large, only they could manage to bring morality to the corrupted world of politics.

Women's magazines and religious writers were certain that American women should be told what would qualify them as "good" women, particularly in light of the ever-changing society around them. With the country's social, political, and economic climate changing, more women were challenging their roles in the home and in the community. Thus, the American woman needed

reminders of how to be the perfect wife, mother, and daughter – one that contributed to her family, community, and country in ways fit for a woman.

Ultimately, though, it was up to the American woman to accept these ideals or not. She could define herself according to what she had been told by magazines, or she could decide for herself. In light of this, writers urged women to follow the virtues of True Womanhood. After all, Welter concluded, "if she chose to listen to other voices than those of her proper mentors, sought other rooms other than those of her home, she lost both her happiness and her power."[4] Purveyors of the True Womanhood ideology recognized that there had been great temptation for women to leave the home and pursue independent lives beyond the prescribed boundaries. "By careful manipulation and interpretation," Welter argues, "they sought to convince woman that she had the best of both worlds – power and virtue – and that a stable order of society depended upon her maintaining her traditional place in it."[5]

For American women, these so-called virtues were not as easy to employ as nineteenth-century writers had argued. Some had hoped that they could keep the virtues and still extend the reach of their duties. "For if woman was so very little less than the angels," Welter argued, "she should surely take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things."[6] Herein lay the seeds of destruction – as Welter describes it – of True Womanhood

[4] Ibid., 40.
[5] Ibid., 41.
[6] Ibid.

ideology. If women were morally superior, then there should be no doubt of the benefits of allowing them to vote and participate in politics. Indeed, not all women were satisfied with the roles and identities that women's magazines and religious leaders had set. Historian Sandra Myres writes, "Many women were not happy with the roles into which they had been forced by the cult of true womanhood. Pedestals were not for them, and they intended to do something about it."[7]

Many of these women who wanted to change the roles of women were those who had migrated to the West. Amid movements for social reform, and an expanding nation, the idea of an expanding role for women had become more widely accepted. Welter writes that the True Woman evolved into what was known as the New Woman. This New Woman still held the virtues of True Womanhood but took advantage of opportunities that had presented themselves outside of the home, including club activities.

Historian Peggy Pascoe wrote of the Protestant women in the 1870s who so strongly believed in the principles of Victorian ideology that they moved to cities in the American West "to try to establish female moral authority" by creating rescue homes. Both Pascoe and Susan Armitage argue that women "civilizers" did not exist in the West as other historians have argued. "The enduring belief," Pascoe writes, "that Victorian women 'cleaned up' the wild West rests on the

[7] Sandra Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800 - 1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 213.

racist assumption that the West only became 'civilized' when white women entered it."[8]

Still, white women dominated the narrative of women's political activity. As arguments for women's suffrage emerged, the standards for respectable womanhood evolved. A woman's influence was not only required in the home; it was necessary for all of American society. Suffragists argued that political leaders could never understand the needs of poor and the outcast quite like a woman. The American government – on all levels – needed the compassion and sensitivity of women to balance the dominating male presence. The middle- and upper class women would protect the working-class women, and they would all make efforts to protect their homes and their children. Who could understand the causes of the home and family better than women?

However, what passed for "true womanhood" in the East was not necessarily applicable to the lives of women in the West, argues Elizabeth Jameson. "Definitions of Victorian womanhood arose from the changing realities of an elite who did not perform productive labor and who were valued for their very economic uselessness."[9] But in the West, with homestead families, "family survival depended on flexibility and interdependence in work roles," rather than the typical division of work along gender lines. While historians have attempted to create a dichotomy that would easily define gender roles in the West, Jameson

[8] Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in The American West, 1874 – 1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xvii.

[9] Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds. *The Women's West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 150.

argues that women were much more active and in the forefront of public sphere roles than others have argued. This interpretation has trumped the findings of historians such as Dee Brown who argued that women tamed the West with the gentle application of eastern normative values.[10]

This presumed dichotomy of gender roles also implied that women in the West had been "given" the right to vote, which ignores that women campaigned for their own political rights. The question of whether men had granted women the right to vote because men had "valued women's civilizing influence or because they recognized women's contributions as workers" remained an issue of debate until historians like Rebecca Mead argued that western women's activity in the suffrage movement was essential to the national movement's success. Though the argument can and has been made that women's suffrage did little in granting women equality with men,[11] the case is clear by now that western women, with the help of their eastern counterparts, worked and campaigned for the right to vote on their own terms. Certainly, male voters had to decide if woman suffrage was right for their cities and states, but it would take active, vocal women to make the arguments that to convince men that woman suffrage was necessary.

The suffrage movement had promoted the ideals of political equality for men and women, but it purposely ignored the needs and the voices of an entire

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[10] Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958).

[11] This argument can be traced back to Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking work, *The Second Sex*. Published in 1949, de Beauvoir argued that without economic independence, women would never be able to achieve full equality with men on any level, regardless of having the right to vote.

population: nonwhites. Both of the leading suffragist and anti-suffragist organizations consisted of white, middle- and upper class women. Although working-class women created their own suffrage organizations, African-American, Chinese, Hispanic, and other nonwhite women were ignored. Suffragists knew that the issue of race was a highly contested issue throughout the country; indeed, even suffragists were deeply divided. While some were abolitionists before the suffrage movement began, others distrusted nonwhites and refused to associate with them. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century with the California gold rush, for example, cheap Chinese labor threatened working white men, while Chinese women were thought to be prostitutes. The Page Act of 1875 was the first step to restrict immigration from China and it aimed at Chinese women by prohibiting the entry of all prostitutes or any woman who arrived for "lewd and immoral purposes." White middle- and upper-class women, suffragist or not, would not risk losing their moral standing by associating with Chinese women.

Moreover, by the 1890s, feelings of nativism were on the rise, as the country was experiencing an economic depression. One in three industrial workers in California was an immigrant, and it was all too easy to blame immigrants from Eastern Europe who had taken over such jobs.[12] The economic

[12] Gayle Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880 – 1911* (Urbana: IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 91.

threat, as well as the threat to the very structure of society, prevented suffragists from currying favor with immigrants and nonwhites.

The issue of race and its role in the suffrage movement was a point of contention among suffragists. In 1866, both women's rights and black rights activists joined together and formed the Equal Rights Association. Its purpose was to pursue sexual and racial equality throughout the United States. However, after the Fifteenth Amendment granted only black males the right to vote in 1869, it caused a deep division in the movement. Frederick Douglass and other equal rights leaders argued that although they supported the women's suffrage cause, the black man's claim to vote was more urgent. As Waldo Martin writes, "Douglass believed that black male suffrage represented a necessary and more viable step toward universal suffrage."[13] Anthony and Stanton, however, believed that sexual equality took precedence over racial equality.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's blatantly racist feminism further alienated Frederick Douglass and other equal rights advocates. "We are moral, virtuous, and intelligent," Stanton once wrote, "and yet by your laws, we are classed with idiots, lunatics, and Negroes."[14] Furthermore, Stanton believed that the Fifteenth Amendment harmed black women more by forcing them to go from one form of slavery to another; Douglass, on the other hand, argued that a black woman faced more obstacles because of her race rather than her gender. Race was literally the

[13] Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 156.

[14] Martin, 158.

dividing issue of the suffrage movement; the national movement split into the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Susan B. Anthony, arguably the most famous suffragist in American history, was disgusted by racial injustice. In a letter to fellow suffragist and author of *The Woman's Bible* Stanton, Anthony criticized Stanton for blaming religion as the cause for division and inequality, and, instead, argued that individuals developed racism and prejudice on their own. "…this barbarism does not grow out of ancient Jewish Bibles – but out of our own sordid meanness!! And the like of you ought to stop hitting poor old St. Paul – and give your heaviest raps on the head of every Nabob – man or woman – who does injustice to a human being – for the crime of color or sex!!"[15]

As passionately as she argued against racial and gender discrimination, Anthony understood that the suffrage movement itself was divided on the issue of race, just as the rest of the country. Those who fought against racial inequality, like Anthony, knew that equal suffrage would not succeed if they included nonwhites in their movement. Thus, suffragists organized among the middle- and upper classes of white women, while working-class women campaigned for themselves and nonwhite women were left with nothing.

[15] Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 2 December 1898, Correspondence: 1844 – 1897, Box 1, Folder 28, Anthony Family Collection, Huntington Library.

Though it began with much attention and fanfare in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention, the national suffrage movement did not experience success until the territory of Wyoming granted equal suffrage in 1869. Historians have long debated why equal suffrage was granted in the West first. Some, like Beverly Beeton, have argued that it was for political purposes. In order to be granted statehood, territories like Wyoming and Utah granted women the right to vote in order to demonstrate that they had enough inhabitants to qualified for statehood. On the other hand, historians such as Rebecca Mead have argued that states in the West were more progressive than those in the East. Still, Sandra Myres writes that there was no real movement on the part of local women to establish equal suffrage in Wyoming Territory. Because these territories states had few women,[16] "there seemed little danger that they could do any great harm at the polls."[17] Thus, equal suffrage was not seen as a risk or a threat to frontier society or a model for eastern states. Once granted suffrage, though, women enthusiastically participated in local politics and were also allowed to hold office and serve on juries.

But because of the small population and Wyoming's territorial status, some anti-suffragists initially did not see woman's suffrage in the West as a significant threat to their way of life in the East. These territories that "experimented" with suffrage could not possibly compare to the already established states on the other side of the country. Anti-suffragists claimed that these new states and territories

[16] According to the 1870 Wyoming Census, there were 1,049 females over ten years old in Wyoming Territory. Myres, 221.

[17] Myres, 221.

posed no threat, but to prove their point, compared the legislative success in equal suffrage states to what male-suffrage states with the hopes of proving their argument: equal suffrage states accomplished little or nothing in comparison to male-suffrage states.

Voting rights, anti-suffragists argued, were an unnecessary burden on women and posed a threat to the order of the American family and society. They feared that the corruption of politics would only harm the virtue of women, rather than women having the purifying influence over government as suffragists claimed they would have. Yet, while the anti-suffrage campaign maintained that women did not have the political savvy that was required to be informed voters, anti-suffragists, ironically, learned the ways of politics and took their cause to the national stage.

For years, national leaders of the suffragist and anti-suffragist movements had argued about the effectiveness of women's suffrage, but while they argued, western suffragists – specifically those in Colorado and California – continued on as if political participation had always been a part of their lives. For many Western women, the vote had functioned only as an extension of their roles as mothers, wives, and citizens. Students of the suffrage movement in the United States, however, have emphasized women in the East and the supposed benevolence of the men in the West. Little has been written crediting the leadership and tenacity of women in the West. Their experience as voters had demonstrated to women across the country that the vote could enhance women's

roles as responsible mothers and patriotic members of the American society at large. They demonstrated that women were capable voters eager to serve their country and families through the political process. In light of such success, anti-suffragists knew the days of their cause were numbered, but rather than accept loss and fade, they emerged in Oklahoma as political participants who used suffrage, rather than campaign against it, as a tool to carry their influence into American politics.

Suffrage in the West took place in three phases. After the Colorado legislature passed a state constitutional amendment granting equal suffrage, it took seventeen years for more states in the West would do the same. Washington passed suffrage in 1910, followed by California in 1911 and Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona in 1912. Then, there was another lull in the suffrage movement until 1918, when Oklahoma and South Dakota were the last states to pass equal suffrage laws before the 19th Amendment was finally passed in 1920.

Colorado, California, and Oklahoma, however, stand out from the list of Western states that granted equal suffrage prior to the national amendment, because they each exemplified certain aspects of the rhetoric that both suffragists and anti-suffragists employed in their campaigns. Colorado and California had sizable populations that both national movements felt would be significant enough to enable comparisons with man-suffrage states. This was especially true for Colorado. Once it had granted equal suffrage, national leaders of the campaigns thought that Colorado could be compared with Eastern states, whereas Wyoming,

with its much smaller population could not. In addition, both states had a significant number of wage-earning women among their populations.

Oklahoma distinguished itself from Colorado, California, and the other equal suffrage states thanks in part to its complex history as well as its unique push for equal suffrage. The state's economic circumstances had matched those of Colorado, therefore leading to a greater willingness to experiment with third-party politics, including Socialism. However, after World War I and the sweeping rise of conservatism across the country, Oklahoma's women demanded equal suffrage not as a tool to establish women's political equality but to use Victorian ideals to moralize American politics.

Some historians argue that as women left behind the Victorian principles and European ideals they abided by to become "frontier women" who helped to tame the "wild" West. Yet, once towns, cities, industries and governments had been established, these women returned to the Victorian principles embodied in the cult of True Womanhood. They formed clubs and volunteered in churches. They raised their daughters with the same ideology and values they had learned as children in the East. Yet, social and political changes throughout the country merged with the regional experiences of women in the west forcing women's roles, responsibilities, and expectations to change. Barbara Welter writes, "The movements for social reform, westward migration, missionary activity, utopian communities, industrialism, the Civil War – all called forth responses from woman

which differed from those she was trained to believe were hers by nature and divine decree."[18]

During the Depression of the 1890s, the American Progressive and Socialist parties were able to recruit more members, claiming that the Democrats and Republicans were not reaching out to the middle and working class Americans. In light of the highly charged debates around the economy and the question of silver in the currency, Americans increasingly became invested in the political process. Women, in particular, were more involved with the political process as economic problems began affecting their homes. Middle-class Colorado club women became politically active in what Rebecca J. Mead describes as "the fluid political environment of the 1890s." As the country faced economic turmoil and debated incorporating silver into the currency, Colorado suffragists were able to capitalize on alliances and strong third party support with farmer-labor support, and they defined woman suffrage as a vital social and economic reform."[19]

Several factors led to woman suffrage in Colorado. "Woman suffrage," argues Mead, "passed in Colorado in 1893 due to economic crisis, consensus on silver in an off-year election, the participation of middle-class club women, the positive example of neighboring Wyoming, and the weak mobilization of the

[18] Welter, 40.

[19] Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868 – 1914* (New York University Press: New York, 2004), 53.

opposition."[20] This alliance with third-party politics led to a radical suffrage victory, and although leaders of the National American Woman Suffrage Association[21] such as Carrie Chapman Catt refused to associate the movement with the Progressive or Socialist parties, the mobilization and financial support of these third parties provided suffragists with the ability to campaign throughout the state on vital issues significant at the time. Suffrage leaders were not the only ones who failed to take the alliance seriously; anti-suffragists likewise assumed that their time and energy should be spent focused on the threat of Progressives and the economic crisis rather than the campaigns of local suffragists. Anti-suffragists were confident that men would not be willing to pass the measure and therefore organized their efforts too late. Historian Beverly Beeton also credits the "well-organized" Colorado Women's Christian Temperance Union with sponsoring a five-month speaking tour of the state for the president of the suffrage effort.[22]

The California fight for woman suffrage was longer and more difficult than Colorado's. Their campaign first began in the late nineteenth century, and by 1896, suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony believed that Californians would pass the suffrage referendum, under the leadership of middle and working-class women. But the organization of the anti-suffragists and liquor interests, doubled

[20] Mead, 68.

[21] Hereafter referred to as NAWSA, this organization was formed in 1890 after the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman Suffrage Association reunified to form one national movement again.

[22] Beverly Beeton, *Women Vote in the West: The Woman Suffrage Movement, 1869 – 1896* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1986), 113.

with the division amongst the local suffrage movement stymied the measure. Furthermore, there was opposition to the measure from members of both the upper and working-class, who had not been convinced that woman suffrage was necessary.

But suffragist leaders learned from their mistakes and soon began another campaign. They broadened their movement to include moderate activists, and just as their counterparts in Colorado, more club women invested themselves in reform politics. "Many of them employed 'maternalist' or 'social housekeeping' arguments in addition to basic demands for equal rights," writes Mead.[23] A movement with a broader reach was certain to enjoy more success, except for the fact that the movement was increasingly deeply divided along class lines. While suffragists understood that working women would add strength and appeal to the cause, working women were under the impression that their middle-class counterparts did not sympathize with the unique needs of the working class, and therefore, could not possibly campaign on their behalf. Consequently, wage-earning women formed their own suffrage organization, and Rebecca Mead credits them for the 1911 suffrage victory in California. Once Californians passed equal suffrage, the suffrage movement gained more activists for the cause of equal suffrage – a severe blow to the anti-suffrage movement. It would be one of many to come, including in 1918 from what was once considered the most progressive state in the country: Oklahoma.

[23] Mead, 120.

Originally promised to be the home of the "five civilized tribes," the state of Oklahoma had already experienced its share of tumult and controversy. So-called unassigned lands in Indian Territory were auctioned off in a series of land runs to white settlers. In 1907, the territory became the forty-sixth state to enter the union. Still, the authors of what was viewed as the most progressive state constitution were hesitant to extend voting rights to women. Suzanne Schrems argues that there were two reasons to this. First, just as Colorado leaders had feared that woman suffrage would lead to suffrage for African Americans, Southerners who had migrated to Oklahoma feared that woman's suffrage would foster racial equality. Oklahoma leaders, not wanting to discourage migration into the new state, did not want to risk turning potential new citizens away for any reason. In addition, anti-suffragists feared women would align themselves with socialists, a party with significant influence in the early part of Oklahoma statehood.

Thus, it would not be until eleven years after the Oklahoma state constitution had been ratified that women were granted the right to vote. By that time, the country had fought in World War I, and Oklahoma women, including those allied to the Socialist Party, contributed to the war effort by volunteering their services in the Red Cross and on the homefront alongside women across the nation.

It is necessary to emphasize that Western woman had promoted their cause on the state and local levels, and in many cases, with the help of other

organizations or political movements. In her book *Why Movements Succeed or Fail*, Lee Ann Banaszak argues that what enabled American women to gain the right to vote were the powerful alliances and role models that suffragists had, such as third-party support and the examples of the abolition and temperance movements. Having the support of the Populists in Colorado and the Progressives in California and Oklahoma helped to further the suffrage message and gain more support throughout the states by voting to hold referendum or adding suffrage to the party platform. Such alliances garnered more statewide support for local suffrage organizations, strengthening women's voices and broadening their influence.

The anti-suffragists coalition, however, could not experience the level of success that suffragists had because, Banaszak argues, they "largely consisted of groups reacting to these suffrage allies."[24] This coalition consisted of the liquor and brewing industry, as well as railroad and manufacturing industries. Each group felt threatened by the prospects of woman suffrage and feared that these alliances might wreak havoc on various industries. Anti-suffrage sentiment had been widespread until these suffrage alliances had formed, but these alliances did not form until territories in the West began considering and granting equal suffrage. Once local suffrage movements had been created, suffragists were able to create alliances that spurred on support for their cause. Reactionary groups

[24] Lee Ann Banaszak, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 107.

were unable to energize people and generate enough anti-suffrage sentiment to stop the suffrage from spreading.

With the onset of World War I, leading suffragists understood that focusing on the vote during wartime would only reduce support for equal suffrage. With millions of American men leaving for war, many American women, suffragists and anti-suffragists alike, closed ranks to help in the war effort. They volunteered for the American Red Cross, worked as nurses and telephone operators, and served as replacements in munitions factories. By volunteering their time and effort, suffragists hoped that more Americans, particularly American leaders in Washington, would reward their contributions to the war effort by granting national suffrage.

Not all suffragists supported the war effort, however. Socialists and feminists such as Alice Paul and the members of the National Women's Party were ardently against the war. Anti-suffragists readily pointed out feminist criticisms of their country's efforts. While American men were sacrificing themselves to protect the world from threats to freedom and democracy, they argued, Alice Paul and others like her had the audacity to condemn the United States and its allies. National suffragists were uneasy with the National Women's Party and other suffragists who insisted on campaigning for suffrage rather than help with the war effort. NAWSA leaders feared that this would be seen as extremism and that mainstream Americans would be unwilling to allow these women to have the right to vote and participate in American politics.

However, as the war came to an end in 1919, national leaders, including President Woodrow Wilson, believed that women had proven themselves to be productive citizens, vital contributors to the nation's foreign and domestic concerns. By this time, most states had some form of woman's suffrage. Even New York had granted women full suffrage rights. It had been clear that the nation would soon grant women the right to vote. The momentum that had begun in the West had finally stretched across the plains and into the East. It was only a matter of time before equal suffrage would be passed, and anti-suffragists sensed it.

Wilson began making appeals to states across the country to allow their women to vote, and it was only a matter of time before enough states had ratified woman's suffrage. Indeed, state leaders found less cause to prevent women from having the vote. Anti-suffragist arguments and reasoning had not matched up to the testimonials of both men and women in equal suffrage states. Yet, anti-suffragists pressed on, even after the vote had been granted.

The geographical distance between the women of the East and West mirrored the ideological gulf between to the two groups. Women of the West were more progressive and less limited in their social and public lives, whereas women of the East continued to subscribe to a Victorian lifestyle. But despite these supposed differences, women in the East and the West had much more in common than they had realized. In fact, suffrage united these women across geographical boundaries. Because of their common hopes and fears, the women

of the West became the all-American women who represented the possibilities for women across the United States just like her and demonstrated the potential of all American women. In the following chapters, I will examine these rhetoric threads in order to more fully understand the leadership, inconsistencies, ironies, and ambiguities of Western women in a pivotal period in American women's history.

One such common fear was the threat that political activity posed to women and their femininity. The Cult of True Womanhood ideology, which defined women as creatures who would be most at ease within the confines of the home where they could exert moral influence over their husbands, fathers, or brothers, bolstered these fears. Anti-suffragists argued that granting women the right to vote was a threat to their femininity; they feared that women would soon emasculate men and abandon their duties as wives and mothers. Anti-suffragists argued that women were too delicate to handle the responsibilities of voting; men, on the other hand, were stronger, certainly strong enough to carry the burdens of politics. Politics would inevitably corrupt women. Voting would only confuse women about their roles in the home and in society. Political activism would lead to women taking on men's responsibilities, such as holding office. Or so they believed.

Western women had been raised with the same ideals and beliefs about the roles of women in the home and in society. They knew their responsibilities and duties just as well as their anti-suffrage opponents. Yet, they also seemed to understand that the states in which they lived needed the wisdom of women in

local politics. Women, they argued, would bring a greater sense of morality into the often dishonest and power hungry world of politics. Their sense of morality, suffragists and anti-suffragists agreed, had been a God-given gift for the benefit of the home and the country. Their piety would be enough to protect them from the threat of corruption in the male-dominated political arena.

It was important to suffragists, particularly on the local and state levels, to make the distinction between femininity and feminism. Anti-suffragists and those who were unsure about suffrage believed feminism to be a threat to men and their masculinity. Feminists, anti-suffragists argued, were a threat to the civilized society that had been established, potentially overthrowing the order of the family and the nation as divine providence supposedly intended it to be. Although some suffragists were unabashed feminists, most mainstream suffragists assured male voters that voting would allow women to spread the good influence of femininity into the political arena.

Although leading suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had advocated the equality of women on all levels, local women understood the need to emphasize the piety and humility of women, rather than the empowerment of women. Though they may have believed in the idea of gender equality, they understood that in order to achieve this equality on political and economic levels, they would have to promote the benefits of what had been accepted as womanly gifts, such as purity and piety. Thus, suffragists could not

simultaneously promote the ideals of feminism while campaigning for women's political equality.

Yet another threat to femininity and civilized society had been the possibility that suffrage would allow "bad women," particularly prostitutes from red light districts, to vote. Anti-suffragists eagerly told horror stories of how these immoral and uneducated women were herded into cars and driven to the polls, to the embarrassment of good upstanding citizens. Nothing could be more shameful or threatening to the femininity of good women who were trying to raise their own upstanding citizens and preserve the sanctity of their home.

It is here we see the "gray area" where the public sphere and the private sphere blend together. Ideals of the True Womanhood restricted women and their influence to the confines of family and the home. Suffragists argued, however, that women could use their compassion and moral authority to change the world outside of their homes. As voters, women would be able to carry their influence in politics, potentially changing policies concerning family and the home – their primary areas of interest.

The preservation and influence of motherhood was also a tactic that both suffragists and anti-suffragists used in their rhetoric. What better motivation for voting than the protection and preservation of children and their homes could a woman have, suffragists argued. Only a mother could understand the needs of her children and speak for those without a voice of their own. Anti-suffragists, however, feared that voting and all of its obligations would only take mothers

away from their children. A mother's patriotic role, they argued, was to teach their children how to be loyal and productive citizens for their country. Voting would only serve as a distraction from what needed to be done.

In that era, no one would dare argue that mothers could not adequately defend or protect the nation's children. Suffragists claimed that voting mothers were the most powerful tool in helping to preserve the rights of both women and children. As caregivers, they understood the need for limits on working hours for children or the need for mandatory education. The idea was hardly novel. Before granting full suffrage, many states in the East first granted women voting rights for local school board elections. But women in the West were allowed to vote for much more than school board elections. Colorado women helped to establish a juvenile court system in Denver, and women throughout equal suffrage states voted for laws protecting child labor hours and working conditions, as well as laws that gave mothers custody over their children in the case of divorce.

Suffragists and anti-suffragists also debated the benefits – or the lack thereof – that equal suffrage would garner for wage-earning women and children. Both the suffrage and antisuffrage movements had been dominated by middle- and upper class women, all who claimed to be trying to protect the rights of working-class citizens. Anti-suffragists argued that wage-earning women, though suffragists had promised many things, would not receive as much protection and pay as wage-earning women in male-suffrage states. Indeed, anti-suffragists believed that male-suffrage states had done far more for the cause of wage-earning

women and children than equal suffrage states. Therefore, there was no need for woman suffrage as the men have already taken measures to address wage-earning women and children's issues.

Suffragists, as expected, disagreed and argued that as women and mothers, they were able to better understand the struggles and needs of wage-earning women and children better than their male counterparts. With equal suffrage, not only could middle-class women able to exert their influence over these issues, but wage-earning women themselves would be able to exercise their autonomy and fight for their own rights. They argued that although male-suffrage states had passed laws for the benefit of wage-earning women and children, equal suffrage states could potentially do even more within a shorter amount of time.

Race and ethnicity complicated the issue of wage-earning women. How would rights for nonwhites affect both suffragists and anti-suffragists? Some worried about what political empowerment meant for African Americans, Chinese Californians, and Eastern Europeans, in addition to the Hispanic population in the West. For the most part, suffragists had focused on wage-earning women of Western European ancestry, knowing full well that issues of race would delay the progress of their cause.

National movements, local club members and churchwomen also debated the role of women in society. Clubs especially became influential in cities and towns across the country, including the West. Anti-suffragists believed that voting was entirely unnecessary for True Women who held the authority of both virtue

and organization. Such women, they argued, already had the influence that suffragists demanded. Club women could meet and discuss various topics from politics to literature, and if there were any issues that concerned them, they were free to organize and contact their local leaders. This influence had been sufficient to pass laws that affected women.

This argument did not satisfy suffragists. The influence that club women exercised was limited in nature, always dependent on whether local leaders felt enough pressure to implement the change that the women wanted. Suffrage would allow these women to do more than just meet and discuss the issues. It led to organized campaigns and informed political discussions. In the West, club women were essential to the success of equal suffrage. Middle-class club women in Colorado, for example, became politically active in the 1890s, promoting the cause of equal suffrage. This also applies to the women of California. Club women became "radicalized and politicized by their growing involvement in reform politics."[25] Women's clubs in the West gained more influence with the vote while they maintained the tradition of women gathering and discussing the issues of the day.

The strongest argument for both camps was what woman suffrage could do to or for the American democracy. Anti-suffragists believed that it would destroy the country. The links between suffrage and third parties such as the People's Party and the Socialist Party seemed to all but guarantee the disintegration of the

[25] Mead, 120.

nation. Suffragists were radicals, anti-suffragists claimed, and their affiliation with radical groups confirmed the allegation. But despite the fact that suffrage had been identified with temperance, Populism, and other causes, woman suffrage in the West was not an attempt to overthrow the socio-economic system. Rather, most Western women held traditional political views, insisting on protecting and promoting the roles of wife and mother.

In order to best compare and understand the progress of the suffrage movement, as well as the adjustments the antisuffragist movement made to remain relevant, it is best to organize the historical analysis by using World War I was a dividing line. Chapters one and two cover Colorado and California, respectively, prior to the war. Both chapters address Colorado and California women who campaigned for the suffrage cause, participated in local politics, and, in some cases, ran for political office. Chapters three and four will also discuss Colorado and California, respectively, but just after World War I. The war brings about a more conservative political ideology in the country – one that includes xenophobia and a return to 'traditional' American values. Chapter five will focus on the women of Oklahoma, who gained the right to vote after the war, thanks to the efforts of conservative women who argue that woman suffrage could be used to protect the American democracy, a vital task in light of the war just fought. Each chapter will center on how antisuffragists responded to the success of local suffragists and how that success forced antisuffragists to reconsider their cause and their relevance in American politics and society.

One by one, as states in the West granted women the right to vote, the antisuffragist cause became increasingly inconsequential, especially as both the men and women of the West demonstrated through words and actions the potential for equal suffrage. Most Westerners were thoroughly pleased with how women were participating in the political process and what had happened as a result. As a direct result, anti-suffragists were forced to reframe their argument. What began as a potential burden for inexperienced, ignorant women became an opportunity for good, "acceptable" women to protect the country from the harmful influences of feminism, socialism, and other extremisms that threatened the stability of the nation. Hence, equal suffrage was no longer the enemy; it was an avenue by which conservative women could preserve and defend the status of the American woman. In the end, women – suffragist and anti-suffragist alike – proved that they were indeed "just as able as men."[26]

[26] Florence Howe Hall, "Just as Able as Men," *New York Times* (21 February 1915): XX1.

Chapter 1 –

The Beginning of a Losing Battle:

Colorado (1893 – 1913)

When Colorado became the third state in the country to grant equal suffrage in 1893, it dealt a significant blow to the antisuffragist movement. It was the first state comparable in population to states in the east to grant equal suffrage and demonstrated that the suffrage movement was gaining momentum in the West. Anti-suffragists immediately went on the offensive, attacking women in Colorado for only creating chaos and confusion in the state. "A friend said to me some time ago: 'You know that I have been a Suffragist. I am most thoroughly converted. I have been three months in Colorado. It is enough to cure anyone."[1] Anti-suffragists like Helen Kendrick Johnson knew that if they were to prevent suffrage from spreading further, they would have to demonstrate that Colorado was falling apart at the hands of women voters. But Colorado women would not let the biting remarks of anti-suffragists deter them from their cause. Their independence and demand for reform proved to their male counterparts, and to citizens across the country, that equal suffrage would remain in Colorado.

Suffragists strove to prove that women who voted and were politically active were still good wives and mothers, clearly proving that they can balance the

[1] Helen Kendrick Johnson, *Woman and the Republic: A Survey of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States and a Discussion of the Claims and Arguments of its Foremost Advocates*, New York: D. Appleton, 1897, 101. Text – fiche.

responsibilities of home and the outside world. In a fictional account published originally in the *New York News* and later reprinted in the *Rocky Mountain News*, the narrator tells the story of meeting a young, attractive suffragist who had been very vocal in public of her opinions. Years later, he sees her again, this time as a married woman in the West. When asked about her feelings on woman's rights now, she replied, "I have all I ask or want." She even wore her bloomers without any shame all day while she did her work, and after she was done, "I dress again – as Stephen (her husband) likes to see me."[2]

The suffrage question in Colorado was first brought up in 1868, when Representative David M. Richards urged the Colorado territorial legislature to consider equal suffrage. For the most part, fellow legislators ignored Richards's proposal, but it still remained a hotly debated topic for the next few years. Despite efforts from the territorial governor, the Colorado Suffrage Association, and even Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, legislation for equal suffrage garnered little support. Suffragists persisted, and with good reason, according to Beverly Beeton. "Wyoming was the first state to grant its women the ballot, but suffragists quickly seized Colorado as a more attractive example because the latter state had a larger population and a large urban center where the impact of women

[2] "For Woman Suffrage," *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 Dec 1894, 18, Col. G.

voting could be closely observed."[3] By 1893, Colorado women had the right to vote.

Historian Rebecca J. Mead describes the Colorado suffrage victory as "radical" because of its connection with third-party politics. "Avoiding partisanship but not politics, Colorado suffragists enlisted farmer-labor support, advocated 'free silver' just like everyone else in the 'Silver State,' and defined woman suffrage as a vital social and economic reform."[4] With this alliance between Populists and suffragists, however, territorial leaders feared chances for statehood would be endangered. Though Colorado suffragists had help from national suffrage leaders, they were able to remain in the public eye and campaigned not only for the enfranchisement of women, but also for temperance legislation and issues concerning the farm-labor movement.[5]

Realizing that anti-suffragists would use Colorado as an example of suffrage failures, Colorado citizens quickly organized to defend themselves and equal suffrage. Many claimed that voting women helped to clean up Colorado society and politics. "The fact that they have the ballot has secured in Denver a more rigorous execution of the laws against gambling and other like public delinquencies than was ever before known," wrote the editor of the *Denver News*.[6]

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[3] Beeton, *Women Vote in the West*, 114.
[4] Mead, *How the Vote was Won*, 53.
[5] Ibid., 59.
[6] T.M. Patterson, "Colorado," *Testimonials from Prominent Persons Concerning the Operation of Woman Suffrage in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah*, Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 10, Folder 5, Sophia Smith Collection.

As for antisuffragist claims that women were too ignorant and uneducated to handle the responsibilities of politics, Colorado governor Albert W. McIntire wrote that women knew that it was "necessary for them to investigate the facts for themselves and not to believe all the things they are told, especially keeping in mind that in politics, as in other matters, the source must be considered."[7]

Things were not entirely peaceful, though, under the rule of equal suffrage. Colorado had a history of experimenting with third party politics, particularly Populism. By 1892, issues such as equal suffrage, the eight-hour workday, and child labor laws, became a part of the party platform. In Colorado, the bulk of the Populist party's support came from miners. The mining industry in Colorado had accelerated over the past thirty years and miners became a significant voting bloc. By May 1893, Populism began losing momentum in light of a financial panic that left thousands unemployed.[8] By the gubernatorial election of 1894, then Republican candidate Albert McIntire claimed that Populism harmed Colorado's reputation and "fostered a spirit of anarchy."[9] McIntire's assessment of Colorado's reputation was not unfounded. The Cripple Creek mining strike of 1894 caused national headlines when violence erupted between armed miners and

[7] Albert W. McIntire, "Colorado," *Testimonials from Prominent Persons Concerning the Operation of Woman Suffrage in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah*, Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 10, Folder 5, Sophia Smith Collection.

[8] Carl Abbott, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Niwote, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1994): 143.

[9] Ibid., 144.

sheriff's deputies. Governor Davis Waite dispatched the state militia to control the situation.

McIntire was critical of Waite's decision to send in the militia. Doing so, he claimed, brought negative attention to the state. McIntire, however, would face a similar challenge when he won the gubernatorial seat. In 1896, another mining strike took place, this time in Leadville, Colorado. With the help of the Western Federation of Miners, Leadville miners demanded higher wages and an eight-hour workday. The strike did not end in violence as it had in Cripple Creek, but it still drew national attention. Anti-suffragists in particular paid special attention to the events in Colorado. Although the Cripple Creek was not the state's most violent or significant strike – that would come twenty years later in Ludlow – anti-suffragists began to link the unrest to equal suffrage. "So woman suffrage does not bring all reforms, the joy and the purity that were to be expected from the roseate views which were expounded by advocates of giving women the right to vote."[10]

Both men and women of the West participated in the promotion or demotion of equal suffrage where they lived. They worked as speakers and writers, sharing their thoughts about the political climate in which they lived. Those who dared to criticize suffrage would face certain retribution for their views. W.F. Hynes, a former resident of Colorado, was quoted as saying to the

[10] "A Suffrage Lesson," *Albany Evening Journal* (27 January 1897), Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 16, Folder 1, Sophia Smith Collection.

Washington Post that equal suffrage had been a failure and "it will be a great day for Colorado when the law is repealed."[11] Mr. Hynes went so far as to accusing Colorado women of being "coarse" and claimed that they work only for those who bought their votes. Angered by his comments, writer Zack Shed claimed Hynes was "like many other great men who escape from Colorado and wander off down East without a guardian" and he "talks too much on subjects of which he is ignorant."[12]

"The mistake was not in enfranchising women," Shed continued, "but in waiting so long before doing it."[13] As someone who worked for the suffrage movement, Shed said that he joined the movement with "an abiding faith in their purity, their spirituality, their integrity and their keen intuition which are so necessary to the proper evolution of the race." Thus, Shed, like other suffragists, relied on women's supposed domesticity and piety to argue for suffrage. His response to Hynes' comments demonstrated that when Coloradoans heard such criticism of their state and citizens, they responded in kind.

Defending Colorado women and equal suffrage, Shed argued that, for every accusation thrown against women, the same should be done against the men of the state. If there had been "coarse" women, then there were ten times more men who were guilty of the same behavior. In addition, "if women deserve

[11] Zach Shed, "Woman Suffrage in Colorado," *The Denver Evening Post*, 7 Dec 1897, 3, Col. A.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

disenfranchisement because they take no interest in politics, then fifty percent of the men are in the same boat."[14] Equal suffrage, he said, had been a great success in Colorado, and, despite Hynes' hopes that it would be repealed, equal suffrage would remain. After all, "the noble work which the grand women of Denver are doing today will have borne fruit in the form of a higher civilization than the political methods of men have ever been capable of evolving."[15]

Colorado Governor Charles S. Thomas agreed with Shed's observations, writing that the women of Colorado educated themselves on the issues and felt a sense of duty by possessing the right to vote. Yet, he admitted, "Those who expected a moral transformation from its adoption have been disappointed." Still, he and others believed that it was a woman's duty to assume a greater civic responsibility, "and that through the suffrage, the general standard of womanhood would be uplifted."[16]

Just three years after equal suffrage had become law, the governor was confident that it had been a success. Thomas also understood that he now had to appeal to a new voting bloc, so he chose his words carefully. The home and its traditional role remained intact, and the Colorado woman had not "lost any of her feminine graces or charms through her performance of public duty."[17] The very

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] C.S. Thomas, "Open Letter from the Governor of Colorado," 31 January 1899, Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 9, Colorado: 1877, 1899, 1910 – 1911, 1953, n.d.
[17] Ibid.

presence of women elevated the level of morality and discussion in political assemblies and reminded the men that they should behave like gentlemen, regardless of the intensity of the political debate. Thomas makes it clear in his argument, therefore, that women did not lose their femininity or their influence; rather, they successfully carried that influence into the ballot and beyond.

Thomas was not the only political leader to speak of equal suffrage's success in Colorado. Former governor Alva Adams traveled across the country and testified, "Even the most virulent enemy of woman suffrage cannot prove that any harm has come from the experiment."[18] Those who expected women to change the political landscape were "justified in predicting a higher standard of morals" as a result of equal suffrage. Colorado's men and women took the lead in defending equal suffrage and promoting it to other states.

Antisuffragist attacks continued, though, and they accused Coloradoans of trying to spread the corruption of their state's politics across the country. Shady politicians bought voters, "padded the polling lists and stuffed the ballot boxes" where women – the supposed leaders of morality – voted.[19] Not only had voting corrupted politics; it corrupted women as well. Women were suddenly masculine, and men were feminine. One antisuffragist testified before Congress that as she "passed from polling place to polling place in the city of Denver…there was an

[18] National American Woman Suffrage Association, "Testimony from Colorado," Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 9, Colorado: 1877, 1899, 1910 – 1911, 1953, n.d.

[19] "Woman Suffrage in Colorado, *Anti-Suffragist* 1, 2 (December 1908): 7.

utter absence of sex consciousness on the part of men and women."[20] If a woman behaved outside of the limitations of the Cult of True Womanhood, she lost her identity. If both men and women lost their "sex consciousness," they both lost their identities.

Such an argument found powerful support in Lawrence Lewis, a correspondent for the *Denver News*. Granting equal suffrage demoted women from their elevated status as men's "superiors," he claimed. Furthermore, a woman's presence at the polling place did nothing to rid politics of corruption. Woman suffrage "did not prevent fights, acts of intimidation, and the arrest of workers and voters of both sexes" nor did it "prevent gross insults being offered…to women." An anonymous Colorado resident wrote a similar sentiment to the editor of the *Anti-Suffragist*. She "loathed" going to the polls as did "most of the decent women," but she did so because decent voters were needed. Still, after five years of voting, "I fail to see the purifying effects of the female voters out here, and would like to tell the suffragists so."[21]

Public debates such as these took place often within the pages of local and national newspapers. Through letters to the editor and various editorial articles, men and women openly shared their views on suffrage and the reasons for their respective arguments. One such debate took place in a November 1899 issue of

[20] "Suffrage Hearing Before the Joint Judiciary Committee," *Anti-Suffragist*, 1, 3 (March 1909): 1.
[21] "A Colorado Voter's View," *Anti-Suffragist* 1, 3 (March 1909): 4.

Denver Evening Post. Marshall DeWitt could not understand the logic behind anti-suffrage sentiment. "What an absurdity," wrote DeWitt, "to think that the mothers of a nation should be denied a voice in making the laws of the nation."[22] Arguing that men and women had the ability to support those things that were virtuous and repeal that which was not, DeWitt argued that Colorado had become a leader in the West by taking a step forward in equal suffrage. Colorado had "firmly planted her feet on this eternal principle of equality." "In many respects," he concluded, "she sits like a queen in the grand constellation which symbolizes a great nation and matchless people, and woman suffrage is the fairest jewel in her crown."[23]

DeWitt's opponent, however, could not have disagreed more. Known only as "Mrs. J.W.R.," she refused to vote at all, despite suffragists' insistence that it was a woman's patriotic duty. "On election day a lady friend asked me if I intended to vote. I replied that I did not as I had never been convinced that such a move could bring a reform to politics."[24] Voting had been such a shameful experience that this same friend had voted once before but refused to do it again. Voting women behaved in a "rude, coarse manner" in which the women at the polls were behaving. By voting, women were stooping to the lowly levels of politics and rather than raising the standard of morality, they were becoming

[22] "Two Widely Divergent Views of Woman Suffrage," *The Denver Evening Post*, 26 November 1899, 17.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

indistinguishable from the dirty politicians and the cronies that had dominated the country's leadership.

Mrs. J.W.R had clearly subscribed to the virtues of the Cult of True Womanhood. If politics was indeed beneath a woman, then the livelihood of the home and family were her biggest concerns. A voting Colorado woman did not realize the importance of her purpose as a woman, and, therefore, had compromised her value and virtue. "Heaven assigned her the most responsible, most holy rights that could have been bestowed on the human race, but like a very little child with a costly wax doll could not appreciate its true worth and has abused it."[25]

Instead of voting, J.W.R. exhorted to her fellow female citizens that they should maintain their roles as wives and mothers. Such roles had been divinely-ordained for them, and they were capable of using their influence within the home to change the environment – political and social – outside of the home. There was a strategy to such influence:

> When the husband comes home after a day in corrupt politics to the cozy little fireside, with a warm supper ready and a womanly woman presiding over all, who can sit down with him and talk the subject over in an intelligent manner, do you not think it would bring about a reform more speedily than to come home to a cold house, with no supper ready and his wife away to some woman's club meeting?[26]

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

It was within the walls of the home, she argued, that a woman could, "in a quiet, intelligent way," reform politics and politicians. As a mother, she would raise her sons to be the kind of men who could replace the leaders of today. If her home was in disarray and her children running amuck, there would be no possibility of the woman carrying a positive influence over the world outside her home.

Women were not only shirking their domestic responsibilities, but they were abandoning their reform agenda, anti-suffragists argued. A temperance election provided a test case. In an election on May 17, 1910 in Denver, citizens voted to keep the city "wet" and anti-suffragists jumped at the opportunity to condemn women voters. They did so by quoting writers for the *Fort Collins Express* in Colorado who claimed that they "expected that the women's vote would be dry, but the result showed that their influence and vote did not tend to change the result from what it would have been had only the men voted."[27] The writers defended suffrage claiming that women did indeed have the right to vote as much as men but "no one has ever pointed out where woman suffrage had any influence for good." This "failure" to reform Colorado laws, the writers claimed, only harmed the suffrage movement elsewhere. "Their failure to benefit Colorado by their suffrage is doing more to retard woman suffrage in other States and nations than anything else."

[27] "Women Vote 'Wet,'" *Anti-Suffragist* 2, 4 (June 1910): 8.

Pro-suffrage writers for *The Denver News*, however, disagreed. For them, the election was "a vindication of woman suffrage, as well as Colorado citizenship." In addition to voting on the temperance issue, citizens also voted for commissioners and supervisors and numerous amendments. The *Hartford Evening Post* commented, "The people who are using this puny argument against the granting of full suffrage everywhere to women have failed to realize or acknowledge just how much the women did achieve in the Denver election."[28] The success of the vote included the election of Ellis Meredith, a leading suffragist and newspaperwoman, as president of the Denver Election Commission. Meredith would continue the Progressive movement in Colorado by pursuing additional election reform.

The election demonstrated that not all women wholeheartedly supported the temperance movement. Gail Laughlin, another local suffrage leader, demanded equal access to alcohol, rather than prohibition. Alderman James O'Driscoll presented a bill that would prohibit the sale of alcohol to women in hotels and cafes. With a petition of protest signed by the members of the Women's Public Service League in hand, Laughlin protested against the bill and insisted that as long as men were served liquor, it was discrimination to deny women of the same privilege.[29] O'Driscoll argued, though, that there had been a seventy-five percent

[28] "Denver and the Woman's Vote," *Hartford Evening Post* (2 June 1910), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 1, Folder I, Colorado Historical Society.

[29] "Women Demand Equal Rights to Buy Drinks," *Denver Express* (8 January 1913), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 2, Book 1-3, Scrapbook 3 (1912 – 1913).

increase in liquor sales in Denver over the course of five years, and he blamed it exclusively on women who drank in cafes. Laughlin called the bill "narrow, barbaric, and immoral."[30] The bill did not pass.

Ellis Meredith, Laughlin, and others like them used what was available to them to promote equal suffrage. For Meredith, her reputation as a journalist gave her the opportunity to use newspapers to speak of what Colorado women had accomplished with the vote. In an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1908, Meredith wrote that a man who was interested in politics "may be rabid on the subject of the tariff and hardly know the name of his alderman. The woman who is interested in politics begins at home, and has a vital interest in the quantity and purity of the water supply."[31] Women, in other words, viewed politics as a means to protect the home and make their city and state safe for their children.

When local advocates of suffrage began meeting with outsiders, the impression of suffrage was vastly different from Mrs. J.W.R.'s and Lawrence Lewis's. In an editorial written for *Outlook* magazine in February of 1912, Theodore Roosevelt wrote of his belief in and support of woman's suffrage, wherever women had wanted it. Women, and only women, he argued, should determine whether or not there should be equal suffrage. He made it clear, however, that the suffrage movement should not be judged based solely on the

[30] Mildred Morris, "O'Driscoll Stirs Hornet's Nest," *The Denver Republican* (7 January 1913), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 2, Book 1-3, Scrapbook 3 (1912 – 1913).

[31] Ellis Meredith, "What it Means to Be an Enfranchised Woman," *Atlantic Monthly* 102 (August 1908), 196.

women who also insisted on outrageous stunts to prove a point. Having equal suffrage did not rob women of their femininity, nor did it emasculate men. "I do not believe these undesirable apostles are in any way to be accepted as exponents of the cause, and I call attention to the fact that they are prominent, not in the region where woman suffrage does exist, but in regions where it does not exist."[32]

Roosevelt admitted that significant change had not taken place in the states where equal suffrage was law, but what little changes had taken place were for the betterment of the state. In addition, these women had not become the brutes as anti-suffragists had predicted. Roosevelt wrote, "In those Western States it is a real pleasure to meet women, thoroughly womanly women, who do every duty that any woman can do and who also are not only in fact but in theory on a level of full equality with men."[33] Women were able to vote while still maintaining their homes and fulfilling their duties as wives and mothers

Confident and proud of equal suffrage, local writers took it upon themselves to prove that equal suffrage improved conditions in Colorado. Joseph G. Brown wrote of the "multiplying benefits and blessings" that followed the inception of suffrage. Women were enlightened and equal to the challenge of politics. "Through all the complicated and ever-changing situations," Brown

[32] Theodore Roosevelt, "Women's Rights; and the Duties of Both Men and Women," *Outlook*, 3 Feb 1912, 262.
[33] Ibid.

wrote, "they have been active, enthusiastic participants."[34] Through clubs, women educated themselves on political issues, organized, and took the lead in reform movements. They did not limit themselves to club movements; "they organized their own ward and precinct committees" to have a direct influence in Denver politics.[35]

Yet in 1912, nearly twenty years after Colorado women received the right to vote, anti-suffragists claimed that suffragists were hanging their heads in shame over the Colorado debacle. Woman suffrage was a toy, the anti-suffragists declared, and in Colorado, "the paint has worn off the toy, and women have tossed it away."[36] Anti-suffragists pointed to the corruption and scandal unfolding in Denver, and wrote, "These are the conditions that exist in a state where women have voted for nineteen years."[37]

By implementing suffrage, anti-suffragists argued, society risked the stability and security of the already-established democracy. Women, in their naïveté and ignorance, would never be able to understand the intricate workings of government and would easily fall victim to corrupt politicians, including Populists. Fearful that the success of Populism would spawn the birth of socialism, anti-suffragists asserted that Populists manipulated women for their votes. If this

[34] Joseph G. Brown, *The History of Equal Suffrage in Colorado, 1868 – 1898* (Denver: News Job Printing, Co., 1898): 28.
[35] Ibid., 32.
[36] "The Paint has Worn Off," *The Woman's Protest*, October 1912, 7.
[37] Ibid.

strategy prevailed with the spread of woman suffrage, the fall of democracy was imminent or so claimed these alarmists.

The anti-suffragists argued that suffragists had forced Colorado women out of their natural environments and into the voting booths, just as they had done in Wyoming. Only a few received the vote "hopefully and joyfully, but by large numbers of the eminently intelligent and respectable it was accepted reluctantly and with mass indifference."[38] Moreover, women voters wielded little influence on Colorado legislation, including legislation that would protect women and children. This issue, which would be debated for years to come, demonstrates how important politics and legislation were to the anti-suffragists.

For the National Association Opposed to Suffrage, Colorado served as the ultimate example of the failure of suffrage. *The Woman's Protest* quoted both men and women who initially supported suffrage but who now admitted "that their hopes have been disappointed." Mrs. Francis W. Goddard, described as "one of Colorado's most prominent and respected women," said that she had supported woman's suffrage for many years but finally saw it as a mistake. "The experiment is a failure," she claimed. "The best thing for both [Colorado and women] would be if to-morrow [sic] the ballot for women could be abolished."[39] Others made

[38] "Suffrage a Stagnant Movement in Colorado," *The Woman's Protest*, June 1913, text – fiche, p. 6.

[39] National Anti-Suffrage Association. "Woman Suffrage," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 11.

similar statements, regretting their stands for suffrage and acknowledging their error in judgment.

To further demonstrate their point that local citizens had not cared for nor did they want equal suffrage, editors of *The Woman's Protest*[40] had quoted another local paper, the *Sunday Opinion* published in Pueblo, Colorado which claimed that local women did not care for suffrage and neither had the men. "Conditions are no better, and it is generally believed that they are worse since the franchise was granted them." The editorial quoted a Mrs. Anna Kelly, a local woman who had campaigned for suffrage but after it was granted, changed her opinion. "I, too, felt at first that the franchise for women would be a great thing," she said. "To-day I know the conditions of my own State are not bettered….I believe the conditions which women's votes were to eliminate, or at least better, are worse to-day than they were before 1894."[41]

According to critics, there were two victims as a result of equal suffrage: the home and the state. This was another one of the many reasons why equal suffrage in Colorado was a failure: it did not create laws "that particularly or

[40] Launched in 1911, *The Woman's Protest* had become the first journal that the national anti-suffrage movement utilized. As suffrage continued to spread, anti-suffragist leaders created new periodicals, replacing the previously used journal. Suffragists, however, had been the first to utilize the power of the press for their movement. Martha Watson's *A Voice of Their Own* provides more information on the importance of organizational newspapers in the suffrage movement.

[41] "The Present Situation in Colorado," *The Woman's Protest*, June 1914, Vol. 5, No. 2, 8.

notably elevated the race or enhanced the conditions of living in Colorado."[42] From the home, women carried the kind of influence necessary to maintain the integrity and morality of American society without having to fully enter it. Women lobbyists were all "misguided" in believing they could leave their children in the morning "for what they thought was the uplift of the race, while the race itself, represented by their children at home, was being looked after in an indifferent way by proxy." The writer also claimed that woman suffrage had done nothing to end prostitution, claiming, "The social evil has not disappeared." Juvenile delinquency and divorce rates were on the rise. Furthermore, voting rights "alienated many good women from the work of the home and the pleasures and responsibilities of wives and mothers."[43]

To make matters worse, members of the National Antisuffrage Association proclaimed that the "State government of Colorado has gone to smash." Citizens openly criticized their leaders, showing disloyalty and disrespect. Leaders could not solve the state's mounting problems because suffragists threatened "efficient, honest and capable officials" who criticized the suffrage movement. Thus, immorality and corruption gained control of Colorado politics, leaving its government in dire conditions. Suffrage destroyed Colorado's women; if women were granted suffrage nationally, they would destroy the national democracy.

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[42] "Failure of Suffrage in Colorado; Why it Fails," *The Woman's Protest* 1, 3 (July 1912): 4.

[43] Ibid.

Elizabeth McCracken, in her essay on Colorado's equal suffrage, echoed the sentiments of the anti-suffragists. McCracken went to Denver to investigate the consequences of equal suffrage. The amount of distrust in the city made it difficult to help those in need. She had "natural suspicions" of people's motives, thus making charity work more challenging. If women could not do the charity work, she observed, then no one could. Her experience led her to conclude that suffrage not only took the woman out of the home, but also hindered her charity work. McCracken returned from the city as an antisuffragist. "However suffrage may be regarded as an abstract problem, it is not to be denied that in Colorado its use by women has…brought grave disaster upon those women."[44] Suffrage did not allow women to care for society as only they could and also impeded the political process as well as the social relations of the country.

In several instances, *The Woman's Protest* published a comparison article, comparing the laws of a suffrage state – always Colorado – to that of some non-suffrage state. Anti-suffragists hoped that by doing so, they could demonstrate that not only were suffragists failing to create new, beneficial legislation, but that women in non-suffrage states were enjoying the benefits of protective legislation without having to carry the burden of suffrage. In some instances, the comparisons demonstrated that equal suffrage hurt rather than helped protective legislation. For example, Colorado had a law forbidding life insurance on children

[44] Elizabeth McCracken, *The Women of America* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1904): 111.

below ten years of age; Connecticut, however, had no limitations. Although there were some cases of legislation existing in Colorado that did not exist in other states, the law was of no real significance in the minds of anti-suffragists.

The state of Nevada, anti-suffragists claimed, was learning from the example of Colorado and the other bordering equal suffrage states. Mrs. Wenonah Pinkham from Colorado claimed that Nevada, which was surrounded by suffrage states, was a state where "vice is rampant, having been driven from the other States by the women and taking refuge under the protection of the man-governed State."[45] Woman suffrage created so much chaos, the good men fled to a vice-ridden state just to escape. Though Pinkham did not live in nor was a native of Nevada, she carried herself as an authority on the state and implied that by allowing women the vote, women would leave their natural duties, take over the state, and corrupt the entire system. Nevada was an innocent victim of woman suffrage. Editors of the Reno, Nevada newspaper, *Gazette*, agreed with Pinkham. Describing anti-suffragists as "among the best women of the land," *Gazette* editors were certain that suffragists had "infested" areas and forcefully "dragged" women into politics. Nevada and other states, they agreed, could not risk a governmental collapse with woman enfranchisement.

According to the pro-suffrage study of Dr. Helen Sumner Woodbury, however, things could not have been better in Colorado. Indeed, there remained

[45] "How Colorado Looks From Nevada," *The Woman's Protest*, September 1914, text – fiche, p. 6.

many problems that needed to be addressed, but Woodbury insisted that equal suffrage had "exercised a good influence" over women. Colorado women were now more knowledgeable about political and social issues, which in turn helped them train their children to be better citizens. The state and, subsequently, American democracy itself benefited from having women add their voices of moral authority to the political spectrum. Woodbury argued that "the Colorado experiment" marked "a step in the direction of a better citizenship."[46]

In a study conducted twelve years after the implementation of equal suffrage, Woodbury hoped to understand the impact of women on local politics. After surveying 1,200 voters, both men and women, Woodbury concluded, "it was safe to say that the most conspicuous effect of equal suffrage has been upon legislation."[47] Contrary to Helen Kendrick Johnson's conclusions, Woodbury argued that although it was impossible to prove beyond a doubt that women's clubs could not have brought about the passage of said laws, it was still "probable that the votes of women have effected [sic] the desired end with less effort and in less time" than suffrage states.[48] Thus, despite the claims of *The Woman's Protest* and antisuffragist leaders, women voters were having a significant, positive impact on legislation.

[46] Helen Laura (Sumner) Woodbury, *Equal Suffrage*, (New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1909), text – fiche, p. 260.
[47] Ibid., 211.
[48] Ibid.

Colorado women gladly travelled around the country to tell their stories and experiences of suffrage where they lived. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists testified about their political experience – or in some cases, their lack thereof. Most importantly, these women would travel to eastern states to tell their stories to suffrage and anti-suffrage leaders, and, at times, to political leaders in Washington. Mrs. Howard Stansbury of Denver, Colorado, was the main speaker at a meeting for the Massachusetts Woman's Suffrage Association, a meeting hosted by Julia Ward Howe, a well-known national suffrage leader.[49]

Mary C.C. Bradford worked as the president of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs and also served as superintendent of schools in the city and county of Denver from 1909 until 1912. From 1913 until 1920, she served as the state superintendent of public instruction. Bradford was also known as a leading Colorado suffragist who helped suffrage movements throughout the West. She used Colorado women's experiences with legislation and as office holders to promote the cause across the country. According to Bradford, the Eighteenth General Assembly passed bills such as the Child Labor Law, laws that compelled men to support their wives and children, and regulatory laws like pure food laws, in addition to others. "For the triumph of these measures," Bradford wrote, "immense credit is due to the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the

[49] "Mrs. Stansbury's Address," *Rocky Mountain News*, 12 Jan 1897, 6, Col. C.

Woman's Club of Denver, Miss Gail Laughlin."[50] In the fall of 1910, forty-three of the sixty-two counties in Colorado elected women as County Superintendents of Schools. Colorado women were "far from regarding the franchise as a toy to be discarded when its novelty has become outworn."[51]

Colorado judge Benjamin Lindsey had long been an advocate for equal suffrage, and he owed his success to the women voters of the state. As the author of the Colorado Adult Delinquency Act of 1903, which made adults criminally responsible for contributing to juvenile delinquency, Lindsey was considered an authority whose policies and leadership of the juvenile court system were applauded nationwide. The Adult Delinquency Act was adopted in other states, and the juvenile court was an example to other states of how to deal with children who failed to attend school or involved in crimes. In addition to his policies for children, Lindsey found a political support group in women and thus became a significant advocate for woman suffrage. With their support, he easily won his elections, and because of his success, he helped the suffrage cause.[52]

In 1910, Lindsey wrote his own assessment of the results of equal suffrage and concluded, "It has been one of the great bells that has aroused Colorado to the work of flushing filth from its politics, bettering economic conditions, mitigating

[50] Mary C.C. Bradford, "Equal Suffrage in Colorado, from 1908 to 1912…", (Denver: Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, 1912): 2.

[51] Ibid.

[52] "Heaviest Scratched Vote Ever Recorded in Denver; Fills Boxes Twice Over," *Rocky Mountain News* (4 November 1908), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 1, Folder 1.

the cruelties of industrialism, promoting equal and exact justice, and making for a more wholesome and expansive environment."[53] Progressive era reforms such as initiative, referendum, and recall, as well as the establishment of regulatory boards like water commission all took place because of women voters. As for those who alleged that women voters neglected their homes in exchange for the ballot, Lindsey claimed that Colorado – which had "the sanest, the most humane, the most progressive, most scientific laws relating to the child…in the world" – passed child welfare laws that also protected motherhood, the home, and society as a whole.[54]

Not everything was perfect under equal suffrage, Lindsey admitted. Corruption tempted everyone, regardless of sex, therefore women were just as vulnerable to holding on to positions for the sake of power. "Now this is a point that I want you to make clear," Lindsey said in an interview, "I have found that women in politics are no better and no worse than men." When an issue became a question between a bread line and selfish interests, both men and women tended to look out for themselves. Yet, Lindsey insisted that states in the East should extend the franchise to women "as a matter of justice and the practice of justice is just as beneficial for a community as it is for an individual."[55]

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[53] Benjamin B. Lindsey, *Measuring Up Equal Suffrage* (1910), Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 10, Folder 9, Sophia Smith Collection.

[54] Ibid., 2.

[55] "Woman Suffrage in the West: An Interview with Judge Ben B. Lindsey," *American Suffragette* 2, 2 (October 1910), History of Women microfilm, Reel 242.

Consequently, Lindsey's comments became fodder for anti-suffragists who used his words against him and the suffrage movement. His admission that the franchise did not cure the social ills that suffragists claimed it would only help to fan the flames for the antisuffragist movement. Still, Lindsey became a leader in his own right for the suffrage movement, expressing himself through writing and speeches of the success of equal suffrage. With suffragist Sarah Platt Decker, Lindsey wrote an assessment of how suffrage worked in Colorado. "No one would dare to propose its repeal," he said, "and, if left to the men of the State any proposition to revoke the right bestowed upon women would be overwhelmingly defeated."[56] Suffrage did not take women from their homes, their home responsibilities, or their children, he wrote. It required only a few minutes to cast her vote, and "in that ten minutes she wields a power that is doing more to protect that home now, and will continue to do more to protect it in the future, and to protect all other homes, than any power or influence in Colorado."[57]

Lindsey's campaigns extended far from Colorado into the Western states and even across the country. On one such occasion in 1916, Lindsey met with Theodore Roosevelt who had been impressed with how Colorado women had handled their responsibilities of being voting citizens. Based on their success, Roosevelt had promised to include equal suffrage in the party platform. "Col.

[56] Sarah Platt Decker and Ben B. Lindsey, "How it Works in Colorado," (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1909?), 6.

[57] Ibid.

Roosevelt told me that he was convinced by this record that woman suffrage would be to the advantage of the country," claimed Lindsey.[58]

Citizens of Colorado seemed to agree with Roosevelt's assessment. In 1913, they elected the first female senator in the country's history to the Colorado state senate. Thus, suffragist Helen Ring Robinson proved anti-suffragists fears correct that equal suffrage would lead to women seeking political office, but she argued that there had been a need for a woman's influence not only with the ballot but within the walls of the state legislature as well. "I took to the Legislature the spirit of the housekeeper and the homemaker," she said. And she insisted that women in the legislature would not think or vote like their male colleagues. "Business interests get along very well in the hands of men," she claimed, "but women are more interested in persons. Laws will not get by a woman without her seeing how they will affect the individual."[59] Robinson, like other suffragist leaders, knew that equal suffrage would not be implemented across the country if people were convinced that woman only wanted to be the equals of men, just as feminist principles proclaimed. Suffragists had to be careful that despite voting and running for office, their intentions had not been to be placed on equal ground with men and usurp their authority – rather, they had hoped to demonstrate that a woman's moral influence was desperately needed in American politics to assist men in leading the country.

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[58] "Roosevelt a Suffragist," *New York Times*, 13 June 1912, 1.
[59] "Woman Legislators Should Be Womanly," *New York Times* (23 Nov. 1913): 12.

But before Robinson was elected to the State Senate, another woman politician – whose name was not specified in the *Anti-Suffragist* – claimed that while the average woman was better than the average man, "the average woman politician is as bad as the average man politician – only she is worse!"[60] Although they had lofty ambitions to purify and reform politics, women politicians easily fell to the temptations of corruption because of their supposed ignorance. "It is much the same thing as a woman marrying a man to reform him," she argued. "In nine cases out of ten he draws her down to his own level instead of being lifted to hers."

Colorado women, like women in other equal suffrage states, had the challenge of proving that suffragism was not the same as feminism, nor was it the Colorado woman's desire to threaten the masculinity of men. Sofia M. Lorbinger, managing editor of the *American Suffragette*, argued that suffrage was "not based on contrasts between the sexes nor on animosity of one sex against the other." Actually, women wanted to "remain companions with men and to work with them harmoniously." Their goal as suffragists was not to feminize the electorate and debase society. Rather, for the good of civilization, she wrote, women should not be ignored in the political arena.[61]

[60] "The Vote for Women," *Anti-Suffragist* 3, 1 (September 1910): 6.

[61] Sofia M. Lorbinger, "Suffragism, Not Feminism," *American Suffragette* 1, 6 (December 1909), History of Women microfilm, Reel 242.

Still, Colorado women began demanding more recognition on political ballots. By 1912, some women believed it was time for a woman's party, while others argued that they should endorse women candidates on the old party tickets. Regardless, Gail Laughlin claimed that even with the vote, women "never really had a voice in affairs, as they have never been heard except on election day."[62] Not all women agreed with Laughlin's statement, including Sarah Platt Decker, president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Some considered Decker a candidate for Lieutenant Governor, while others suggested that she run for the Senate, but she, like newsman George Creel, agreed that electing women to office would take time. "In other states, where equal suffrage is still being debated," wrote Creel, "Mrs. Decker's vigorous candidacy for the senate would have been most hurtful to the movement." Knowing that anti-suffragists argued about women challenging men for political office, Creel continued his statement against Decker's political run, saying, "It would be instantly alleged that the granting of the suffrage right to women would mean female governors, senators, presidents and the absolute demolition of the home."[63]

National antisuffragist leaders were dubious about suffrage's successes in the West. In their nationally distributed magazines, anti-suffragists made it clear that the so-called successes in the West, especially in Colorado, were not the great

[62] "More Political Jobs for Women, Cry of Fair Sex Here," *Rocky Mountain News* (4 February 1912), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 2, Book 1-3, Scrapbook 1 (1912).

[63] George Creel, *Rocky Mountain News* (13 January 1912), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 2, Book 1-3, Scrapbook 1 (1912).

achievements that national and local suffragists had made them to be. Indeed, the women who were supposed to be the moral influences over local and national political issues did not fully understand the consequences of their actions or decisions. This was certainly proven, anti-suffragists would later claim, in a miner's strike that took place in southern Colorado.

In September 1913, 11,000 miners in Ludlow, Colorado struck the Colorado Fuel & Iron Corporation, a company owned by the powerful Rockefeller family and Standard Oil. The miners were protesting against the low pay, dangerous working conditions, and the company's complete control over the miners. In response, CF&I evicted the miners and their families. With the help of the United Mine Workers, the miners moved their families into tent colonies in the nearby hills. There, they continued their strike.

When evictions failed to end the strike, CF&I hired strikebreakers to attack the tent colonies, but the miners fought back. Gradually, the fighting intensified until CF&I asked the governor for his help in the matter. The miners had hoped that the National Guard had come to save them from attacks; instead, the governor had ordered the militia to stop the strike. Initially, the governor had ordered that the Guard protect the property, but under pressure from business interests, the Guard marched on the colonies. The entire day of April 20, 1914 had been spent fighting, with the National Guard employing two machine guns and miners firing off their pistols. By the time the smoke had cleared the next day, ten men, two

women, twelve children, and one militiaman had died. One boy had been the victim of a stray bullet; two women and eleven children who had hidden in a cellar choked to death on smoke after the Guard had set the colony on fire.[64] The Ludlow Massacre, as it has been called, reflected poorly on a state in which women had had the right to vote for the last twenty-one years. "We do not think for a moment that the present deplorable condition of affairs in Colorado is due to the votes of women," wrote editors of anti-suffragist newspaper *The Woman's Protest*, "but we do say that it exists in spite of twenty-one years of woman suffrage."[65]

To bolster their argument, editors of anti-suffragist newspapers utilized local anti-suffragists, including newspaper editors, to prove their point. Many of these critics believed that women had stirred up the emotions of both the owners and the strikers. Local women who had been prominent in the political scene criticized the governor who had wanted to maintain peace while the women simultaneously created more animosity among the strikers. "We have always hesitated to say anything against the influence of women in politics," the *Fort Collins Review* had claimed. "As a general rule, its influence may be healthful, but in this one instance we have no hesitation in saying that it has been most detrimental to good government. Their sympathies have run away with their

[64] Carl Abbott, *Colorado, A History of the Centennial State*, Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 3rd Ed., 1994, 153.

[65] "The Present Situation in Colorado," *The Woman's Protest*, June 1914, Vol. 5, No. 2, 7.

judgment and they stand arrayed against the State in the greatest crisis of recent years."[66]

For fourteen months, the striking coal miners in Ludlow, Colorado were at a negotiating standstill against the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, and the Victor-American Fuel Company. After Colorado governor Elias M. Ammons asked for support from the Colorado National Guard, the nation's eyes had turned to southern Colorado and the events that would unfold, leading to the massacre that would take place in April 1914.

The Ludlow Massacre created an opportunity to expose women's naïveté and unpreparedness when dealing with such emergencies. The strike garnered headlines across the country, and with antisuffragists waiting for any and every opportunity to pounce on suffragists and their claims of success, Colorado women were condemned for their roles – however minor or insignificant – in the events that unfolded in Ludlow. After Colorado women urged the governor to call on federal troops for help, antisuffragists criticized women for waiting too long to take action. Not only had the governor already made the call, it was simply not enough effort to satisfy critics. It was like "locking the door after the horse had been stolen."[67]

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Margaret C. Robinson, Letter to the Editor, "Doubts Mrs. Nathan," *New York Times* (28 February 1915): X2.

The massacre was so terrible and shocking that it created "by far the greatest amount of turmoil and violence of any State in our Union."[68] One suffrage critic argued that the massacre should not be blamed on the woman voter, but "it does show that her influence as such is of no consequence either way."[69] George R. Conroy, an author of antisuffrage essays, argued that the strike forced Colorado to "abdicate its sovereignty and call for Federal troops" to control rebellion in the state. Colorado had become a disgrace to the rest of the country as a result.[70] Herein lies the heart of the antisuffragist argument against Colorado women and the Ludlow Massacre. The problem was not necessarily how women reacted to the situation; it was that equal suffrage did not prevent a situation like this from arising in the first place.

Citing the miners' strike, anti-suffragists argued that Colorado supplied "one of the best object lessons of the evil results of woman suffrage."[71] The "feminized electorate" neglected to secure a workmen's compensation law as well as other legislation that could have prevented the strike. To make matters worse, the "weak and indifferent electorate" elected a similarly weak legislative body.

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[68] "More About Colorado," *The Woman's Protest* 6, 6 (April 1915): 12.

[69] Ibid.

[70] George R. Conroy, "Two Kinds of Opinions From Suffrage States," *The Woman's Protest* 7, 6 (October 1915): 7.

[71] National Anti-Suffrage Association. "Woman Suffrage," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 9.

This weakened electorate and its attitude of indifference caused what anti-suffragists described as "bloodshed and anarchy in the mining districts."[72]

Twenty years of equal suffrage was not enough to deter anti-suffragists from referring to Colorado as a failure of women's suffrage. Using the same arguments from years past, anti-suffragists argued that women were no longer interested in political participation. Fewer women were seeking office – though this argument seemed to be a statistic that even anti-suffragists would approve of – and fewer women attended political conventions. This proved to writer S.D. Brosius that the vote "was thrust on the women of Colorado." Although a few women accepted the responsibility "hopefully and joyfully," most women accepted it "reluctantly and by the mass with indifference."[73]

In response to Brosius's article and other critical sentiment that suffrage had lost its momentum, the *Rocky Mountain News* claimed that those who made such allegations were "nosey and trouble-seeking people." Suffrage, the editors wrote, had nothing to do with the failure to elect women officers. This was never an issue that only concerned women voters, nor would women voters only vote for a candidate because of her sex. "Denver women have too much pride in their

[72] Ibid., 10.

[73] S.D. Brosius, "Suffrage a Stagnant Movement in Colorado," *The Woman's Protest* 3, 2 (June 1913): 6.

independence of character and in their talent for governmental policies to sink them into a mere scramble for preferences because of sex."[74]

Still, women did make gains in political offices. By February 1914, Commissioner of Safety Alexander Nisbet appointed Mrs. Margaret Conway as special investigator and inspector of amusements. Her primary responsibility was to censor "public amusement of all kind, including public dances, parks, motion picture shows and theaters."[75] Thus, a woman in office carried her domestic responsibilities of morality into the public sphere in an official capacity.

The roles of women in the public and private sphere were blurred for Colorado women after the inception of equal suffrage. Although critics suggested that the blending of both spheres could not occur, Colorado women proved otherwise, and they did so with the enthusiastic support of their male counterparts. Women could not be expected to remain in the home, argued the editors of the *Rocky Mountain News*, because the development of technology and factories limited what was done within the home. "Little was left to occupy it but the function of motherhood," and many women wanted more than the responsibilities of motherhood. A woman "insists that she must extend her activities in order to follow the interests of the home into a wider field…and this is a field that is

[74] "Suffrage Loses Nothing," *Rocky Mountain News* (25 May 1913), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 3, Book 4-5, Scrapbook 4 (1913).

[75] "Mrs. Conway is City's New Policewoman," *Rocky Mountain News* (26 February 1914), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 3, Book 4-5, Scrapbook 5 (1913 – 1914).

increasingly regulated by legislation."[76] While the writers conceded that the woman's sphere was the home, they argued, and women verified, that the sphere has become much broader than anti-suffragists acknowledged. Suffrage did not challenge the essential ideology of female domesticity, but extended it to the public arena.

Colorado's twenty years of suffrage – despite anti-suffrage effort – inspired the national suffrage movement to pursue its agenda throughout the West. And regardless of how long suffrage existed in the state, it did not deter anti-suffragists from criticizing the measure and calling for its repeal. Still, as Colorado women were voting and, in some cases, winning political positions, suffragists were able to convince Americans that women could bring their superior morality and piety into the political arena. The strategy certainly gained the attention of anti-suffragists, but it was not enough to convince them that women's suffrage was effective and essential…yet.

[76] "Woman's Sphere is the Home," *Rocky Mountain News* (20 April 1914), Margaret Long Collection, Manuscript 730, Box 3, Book 4-5, Scrapbook 5 (1913 – 1914).

Chapter 2 –

The Anti-Suffragists Versus The Progressives:

California (1911 – 1914)

In 1896, inspired by the suffrage success in Colorado, California suffragists believed it was their turn to join the list of equal suffrage states. Led by national suffrage leader Susan B. Anthony, suffragists throughout the state organized, believing that Colorado's momentum would propel California forward. But they underestimated the rigor with which anti-suffragists would collect and organize themselves after the surprising and embarrassing defeat they suffered in 1893.

Oddly, the anti-suffragist campaign aligned itself with liquor interests throughout California, appealing to the upper-class women, particular the more conservative women in the northern part of the state. Anti-suffragists also joined with conservative clergymen who spoke out against equal suffrage measures.[1] In a speech given after the 1896 loss, Reverend Anna Shaw claimed that she and her fellow suffragists had been sure of a suffrage victory just ten days before the election. "Everything looked as if the Populistic [sic] party would carry California until ten days before the election, when affairs for the Republicans begun [sic] to brighten," she said.[2] Although the suffragists had gained the support of "persons and associations among the highest classes," anti-suffragists had associated

[1] "It was a Bunker Hill," *Denver Evening Post* (3 December 1896), 3.
[2] Ibid.

themselves with powerful liquor interests. The loss was shocking and devastating to suffragists. "It was not a Waterloo," Shaw claimed. "It was a Bunker Hill."[3]

The defeat of the suffrage referendum in California had been a huge coup for anti-suffragists across the country. With suffrage restricted to just a few states in the West, Colorado remained the largest state where women could vote and stayed at the heart of the debate for the next eighteen years while the suffrage movement had hit the proverbial wall.[4] This stall had convinced anti-suffragists that suffrage had just been a passing phase. Suffragists' success, the antis believed, had been limited to relatively insignificant states and would hopefully be contained in the western region.

Nevertheless, anti-suffragist criticism of Colorado continued until the national suffrage amendment passed in 1920. Hoping to point out the failures of suffrage, anti-suffragists worked to end the movement all together. The suffragists, on the other hand, continued to press on despite facing setbacks in California. Their perseverance paid off when, in 1911, California finally passed equal suffrage. Thanks to the efforts of clubwomen, the leadership of the WCTU, and work of labor and socialist organizations, suffragists capitalized on the progressive movement that had taken hold of the country. They were able to point towards the countless number of women who had stepped up across the country to fight for

[3] Ibid.

[a] By 1896, three states had passed equal suffrage – Wyoming (1869), Colorado (1893), and Idaho (1896). Although Utah Territory also passed equal suffrage, fears of Mormonism spurred the federal government to repeal the measure.

social justice. Defending the women, children, and the poor had proven the suffragist argument that women and their inherent moral values would revitalize politics, just as they had for the American society.

By the early 1900s, the Progressive movement took hold in California and created a new political environment, one that encouraged a mindset of reform. Issues such as prohibition garnered more support in California, but not statewide as Progressives had hoped. There were too many differences along class and religious lines that prevented sweeping change throughout the state. As Kevin Starr writes, Northern California was "Catholic, foreign, and labor-oriented," but "in Protestant-dominated Southern California, many communities…voted themselves dry, while others, most noticeably Pasadena…made constant warfare against the saloon."[5] Such differences plagued the suffrage movement in the 1896 campaign, but by the 1910 campaign, suffragists understood that in order for suffrage to pass in California, working-class women would have to become a part of the effort, just as middle-class women led the effort in 1896.

California suffragists, after years of failed attempts at equal suffrage, finally had a reason to rejoice in 1911. Once women had been granted the right to vote in California, they took advantage of any opportunity to speak about their successes and subsequent joys to any other state with male-only suffrage. When voters in the state of Oregon were voting on equal suffrage, the equal suffragists of

[5] Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245.

California made certain to make their voices heard. "Not only are the people of Oregon deeply concerned as to what the fates will bring them June 4, but all women thruout [sic] the land, especially the women of California, who amid their unwonted cares appeal to you and await the encouragement which will follow your favorable decision."[6] Rights for women in one state would have an impact on women in all states, suffragists firmly believed.

Once California passed equal suffrage, it joined the list of states over which suffragists and anti-suffragists debated. California's larger geographical and population size had proven to be an even greater source for both praise and criticism of equal suffrage. Just as with Colorado, however, what was said in the debates differed from what was actually happening.

Indeed, California women rose to the occasion and were eager to share their experiences with the rest of the nation. It became a priority to reassure skeptics that women voters were not challenging the traditional roles of women, nor were they seeking to upend the values of the American home and family. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Gertrude Foster Brown, president of the Woman Suffrage Study Club, wrote that women "are naturally conservative, and instinctively distrust such a radical change as woman suffrage implies."[7]

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[6] "An Appeal from the Equal Suffragists of California to the Voters of Oregon," Sophia Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 5, Multiple States: 1909 – 13, n.d.

[7] Gertrude Foster Brown, "Need to be Jolted," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 2 June 1912, 7.

California women were responsible voters who understood that their role in politics would be to serve as the moral leaders of politics.

Friends had written to her, she claimed, speaking of how they relished the opportunity to participate in government. "All the stale objections to women voting seemed to fade away," one friend wrote. There were no longer any fears about the state of the polls or whether women would become too "mannish" or if women would abandon their babies and their homes. "Women were at each polling place to care for any babies whose mothers could not leave them long enough to vote." In addition, the polling places had been given new tents that were "clean and tidy." "Things were done decently," she said, "and in order and it seemed as if women always voted here."[8]

Not only were women able to maintain their femininity and keep their traditional roles, but also their votes were more valued than their male counterparts, another woman wrote. "Suffrage here seems to show that women's vote is more intelligent than men's," she claimed. Even women of voting age in the schools were taking greater interest in their civics classes, realizing that knowledge and understanding of the issues would make them better and more productive citizens.[9]

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

The women of California remained active in their clubs and other social organizations. Caroline Severance, known across the state as the "mother of clubs" organized the first woman's club in Los Angeles and later established the Friday Morning Club, one of the largest and strongest women's organizations in the country. The purpose of the clubs was to establish a "closer fellowship with rare women."[10] The clubs would also allow women to learn how to educate their daughters, both in domestic and social duties. These goals were in addition to the political responsibilities these women held.

Famed journalist and suffragist leader Ida Husted Harper argued that suffrage in California had been a turning point for the movement, because until that moment, woman suffrage had only been passed in smaller and newer states of the union. California, however, had been in the Union longer and its population was much larger than the other equal suffrage states. Harper had hoped that because women in the state were voting and become more heavily involved in the political process, states in the other parts of the country would no longer be fearful of women in politics.[11]

But the threat of women taking on men's roles in politics still loomed for many, and local suffragists did not help to calm such fears. In fact, anti-suffragists

[10] Ella Giles Ruddy, ed., *The Mother of Clubs, Caroline M. Seymour Severance: An Estimate and an Appreciation* (Los Angeles: Baumgardt Publishing Co., 1906), Caroline Severance Papers, Box 75, Folder 1, Huntington Library.

[11] Ida Husted Harper, "What the Election Did for the Cause of Suffrage," *New York Times*, 10 November 1912, SM1.

argued that equal suffrage would rob women of their feminine qualities and, instead, instill feminist ideologies. Women would behave as men, in direct contradiction to the ideas of the Cult of True Womanhood. The True Woman would know her place in society, but suffrage would convince other women of their potential to take over the jobs typically held by men. In her book *The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation*, Emma Goldman argued that voting women did not purify politics, and working women could not compete with working men because women were not equipped "with the necessary strength to compete."[12] Still, women were convinced they could compete because equal suffrage gave them false ideas of their strength and potential.

Maud Younger, however, argued that all women, especially wage-earning women should vote. It had little to do with empowerment and much to do with protection. "It is of the utmost importance that there should be good factory laws," Younger wrote, and "that a woman should work under sanitary conditions with protection for life and limb." Wage-earning women did not need the vote to challenge men and their power; they needed to vote to protect themselves and their interests.

Additionally, wage-earning women not only needed laws protecting them from poor working conditions, they needed job security in light of the "daily competition" from Asians, specifically the Chinese labor force. The Chinese had

[12] Emma Goldman, *The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation* (New York: The Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910), 5.

more power and influence than a wage-earning woman, Younger argued, because "the native-born Chinese have a weapon far more powerful than any she has. They can vote for the law-makers [sic] who govern her, and she cannot." Younger was wrong, though. According to Kevin Starr, California progressives "had the least sympathy for Asians."[13] In fact, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 denied citizenship and voting rights to Chinese Americans, and it would not be repealed until 1943. Still, Younger insisted, "In California every adult may vote excepting only Mongolians, Indians, idiots, insane, criminals, and women." [14]

Anti-suffragists predicted – and correctly so – that if granted suffrage, women would want to seek offices within government. After Woodrow Wilson had been elected to the presidency, a California attorney and leading suffragist, Mrs. Clark Shortridge, wrote a letter of congratulations to the president-elect. She also offered Wilson some advice: "In making up your Cabinet, please consider the women of the ten suffrage States. As a member of your Cabinet a wise, scholarly woman would bring to your council great assistance for the universal good of the people."[15] It was just as anti-suffragists and followers of the Cult of True Womanhood had feared: having the vote would not be sufficient for suffragists. They were, indeed, all feminists who sought to usurp men and their masculinity by pursuing their political offices.

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[13] Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 259.

[14] Maud Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote," (San Francisco: California Equal Suffrage Association, 1911), History of Women Microfilm, Reel 9042.

[15] "Wants Woman in Cabinet," *New York Times*, 10 November 1912, 9.

Yet, California women continued to write their letters of support for equal suffrage, including a former New Yorker who had been a self-proclaimed anti-suffragist, even after moving to California. When the measure appeared on the ballot, she encouraged her husband to vote against it. But in less than two years, Isobel Slawson Chappell's ideas had "radically changed." The vote had become her duty and she took it seriously by studying the issues and understanding political science. She voted her conscience and was convinced that "99 per cent of the women voters of California did exactly the same."

For those who claimed that equal suffrage in California was a failure, Chappell argued that they needed only to take a look at the California Legislature to see the influence of women. Legislators had been pressured by women to vote for the Red Light Abatement and Injunction Act, an attempt to eliminate prostitution. For two years, legislators had failed to pass the measure because, according to Chappell, they "had no pressure brought to bear upon the subject from their constituents."[16] Chappell went on to argue that because of the woman's influence in the voting booth, conditions for women and children had improved significantly.

But the criticism of suffrage persisted and some actions by local suffragists only added fuel to anti-suffragist fire. There had been several instances when California suffragists had not behaved as "traditional" women of the True

[16] Isobel Slawson Chappell, "Suffrage in California," *New York Times*, 18 May 1913, C6.

Womanhood ideology should; one woman heckled Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan during a speech he gave at a meeting of the National Popular Government League. According to *The New York* Times, suffragist Helen Todd stood while he spoke and asked, "And how about popular government for the women, Mr. Secretary?"[17] National attention for such moments led to bad publicity for the suffrage movement because they were considered the antics of fanatical suffragists.

Another occurrence of outbursts took place at a suffrage debate in Carnegie Hall, where men spoke for and against woman suffrage. Men from Colorado and California had arrived to speak of the success of suffrage, while men from the State Men's Association Opposed to Political Suffrage for Women and members of the New York State Women's Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage represented the anti-suffragist point of view. During one exchange, Everett P. Wheeler spoke of how male suffrage had been enough for the state of Massachusetts, as it accomplished everything equal suffrage had in Colorado and California. And though, both male and female suffragists spoke up against Wheeler, one woman in particular yelled, "Massachusetts isn't in the United States." Wheeler took advantage of her ignorance and claimed that she had proven his next point: "There are grave physiological and biological reasons why the powers of suffrage should not be intrusted [sic] to women." Women were

[17] "Bryan Heckled by Suffragist," *New York Times*, 7 December 1913, 10.

incapable of voting because "their natural physical structure of nervous, unreasonable temperament" did not allow them the ability to make strong decisions. Their emotions easily overpowered them.[18]

It was no secret that temperance unions and clubs allied themselves with the suffrage cause. The suffrage loss in 1896 was due in part to liquor interests who feared the temperance movement and united with the anti-suffragist cause. But once suffrage did pass in 1911, anti-suffragists questioned why – if women could now purify and cleanse the state of all its social evils – were saloons still present throughout California. Alice Stone Blackwell, a national suffrage leader, stated that although suffrage had not yet led to the statewide prohibition of alcohol, "it has always led to a large extension of dry territory."[19] Still, anti-suffragists believed voting women deserved the criticism for not serving as the moral authority they claimed they would with the vote. Not only did saloons and other liquor interests operate throughout the state, claimed Mrs. Clarence Hale of Maine, but California citizens voted to keep such interests. "In Los Angeles, the vote in favor of the saloon was three to one," Hale stated.[20] Though Hale never listed statistics of the vote, such as how many women voted for or against the measure, her statement implied that voting women supported liquor interests.

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[18] "Suffragists Hiss Opposing Debaters," *New York Times*, 27 Jan 1914, 1.

[19] Alice Stone Blackwell, "Suffrage and Temperance," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (14 February 1913): 14.

[20] Mrs. Clarence Hale, "Against Woman Suffrage," Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 14, Folder 12, Sophia Smith Collection.

When California granted equal suffrage in 1911, it had only been by a margin of 3,500 votes that the measure had passed. It had, indeed, been a struggle for national and local suffragists to convince California voters that equal suffrage was necessary for the morality of the state. After a devastating loss in 1896, suffragists were thrilled that they finally won their war, regardless of how narrow the margin of victory was. Yet, anti-suffragists believed that California had not actually been a significant victory for equal suffrage; rather, the close win had been an indication of how Californians did not truly approve of woman suffrage. Anti-suffragists, therefore, were convinced that it would only be a matter of time and convincing arguments for the state to repeal the measure.

The antis would not simply sit and wait for the measure to be repealed, however. By writing letters and publishing pamphlets, they used California as a model of the imposition and the inefficiencies of equal suffrage with hopes that not only would Californians repeal the measure, but the remainder of the country would learn from their example as well. "A minority of the voters," anti-suffragists argued, "imposed" woman suffrage on the state of California. In addition, women did not register to vote in the numbers that suffragists hoped. Referring to a statement from California Secretary of State Frank C. Jordan, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage – hereafter referred to as NAOWS – claimed that 180,000 women – "only a fraction over 27 percent of the women" – registered to vote for the 1912 Presidential election, "a most interesting

and important national election." Suffragists forced the issue of suffrage on a population unwilling to vote. If only twenty-seven percent of California women registered, anti-suffragists argued, it did not justify equal suffrage elsewhere. "Thus, one of the crying evils of our day has been aggravated by the enfranchisement of women in California – the evil of an irresponsible or disinterested voting class who do not vote."[21]

Soon after the NAOWS published their pamphlet about the lack of female registered voters, the *New York Times* published a special article about how California's women handled their new responsibilities as voters. According to the article, between thirty and thirty-five percent of women who actually voted, more than the twenty-seven percent the NAOWS claimed in their pamphlet. The *New York Times* article, however, was not concerned with the number of women who voted; rather, they addressed how the women voted. Although the author wrote that the women voted just as the men, he or she also wrote that women were educating themselves about the process of politics. "They have attended meetings and listened to addresses and debates. A number of their clubs have…advocates of the different parties to present their respective arguments before them."

[21] "Some Facts About California's Experiment with Woman Suffrage," National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS), Sophia Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 14, Folder 5, n.d.

Furthermore, women were not only voting – some worked as registration and election officers.[22]

According to one *Los Angeles Times* article, women were registering to vote in large numbers. By November 7, 1911, 50,000 women in Los Angeles registered to vote, and by the end of the day, registrars expected the number to grow to 70,000. The Women's Progressive League alone registered 3,000 women, and members of the League would continue to register new voters until the election. "They employed fifty automobiles yesterday and covered a larger territory in a more systematic way than they have done on any previous day of their remarkable efforts."[23]

Suffragist leaders were quick to praise California women for their political activism and their eagerness to purify politics. Ida Husted Harper claimed that women immediately rose to the occasion and the results were immediate. California had been "swept clean of its corrupt political forces by the great wave of insurgency."[24] When leading anti-suffragist Minnie Bronson argued that California's eight-hour work law could not be credited to women voters because they were not yet lawmakers, Alice Stone Blackwell wrote that it made no difference when either measure was passed "…as it was passed by the same

[22] "California Women Voted as Men Did," *New York Times*, 17 May 1912, 2.
[23] "Women's Votes Rise in Might," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 November 1911, 17.
[24] Ida Husted Harper, "Woman Suffrage in Six States," Edith M. Phelps, ed., *Selected Articles on Woman Suffrage* (Debaters' Handbook Series, Minneapolis: H.W. Wilson Company, 1912), 29.

Legislature which also passed the woman suffrage amendment."[25] Women were, indeed, lawmakers, beyond the influence of clubs or social organizations.

In addition to having influence beyond clubs or social organizations, politicians hoped that women would carry influence for their political parties. In December 1911, the incumbent mayor of Los Angeles, George Alexander faced a difficult reelection bid against the Socialist candidate, Job Harriman. In 1910, as they campaigned for office, Harriman had every reason to believe he could win the mayoral election. Although Progressives in both Republican and Democratic parties were still in power, Socialists were gaining momentum and popularity. Now that women had gained the right to vote, Socialists hoped women would tip the balance in their favor.

Gaining popularity did not mean they had gained influence in local government, however. Los Angeles leaders resisted unions and opposed strikes within city limits. Those who did strike were arrested or fined, but workers would go on strike anyway. On October 1, 1910, momentum slowed significantly for Socialists. In the middle of a strike that called for the unionization of the city's metal trades, the *Los Angeles Times* building was bombed. The bombing killed twenty-one of the newspaper's employees and injured hundreds more. After months of investigating, authorities arrested and convicted brothers John J. and

[25] Alice Stone Blackwell, "Miss Bronson's Fallacies," Edith M. Phelps, ed., *Selected Articles on Woman Suffrage* (Debaters' Handbook Series, Minneapolis; H.W. Wilson Company, 1912), 99.

James B. McNamara, both unionists. The bombing harmed Socialist standing in Los Angeles and ruined Harriman's chances for victory.

The election was the first challenge for California women after they gained suffrage, and it created headlines across the country. The possibility of a Socialist becoming mayor in a major American city was enough to concern those who feared equal suffrage. "Patriots Will Work All the Harder for the Defeat of Harrimanism," declared one headline. Loyalists to democracy were expected to unite against the "Socialist-Labor Union combination" and defeat it with a "tremendous majority" in favor of Alexander."[26] Unions united with socialists, California lawyer Isadore Dockweller told the Women's Progressive League, because "they want Harriman to have the city administration back of him in the McNamara case and they want the Socialists elected to repeal the anti-picketing ordinance."[27] Dockweller's claim mirrored the fear that socialists would use unions to take over local government. A Harriman victory would open the door for a socialist takeover in Los Angeles.

Once women gained suffrage, both parties organized to register women voters. "We shall give our best efforts to the immediate registration of the women who, we believe, will understand the situation and vote against socialism," said the

[26] "Patriots Will Work Harder for the Defeat of Harrimanism," *Los Angeles Times* (3 December 1911): I1.

[27] "Shows Danger of Socialism," *Los Angeles Times* (26 November 1911): I7.

secretary of the Executive Committee of the Good Government.[28] If Harriman defeated the "Good Government" incumbent Alexander, California women would be held directly responsible. The Women's Progressive League, however, would assure Alexander would be re-elected.

The Women's Progressive League was at the heart of voter mobilization in Los Angeles. Although anti-suffragists alleged the increased possibility of Socialism's rise to power with equal suffrage, the Women's Progressive League in Los Angeles also made it a priority to prevent Socialists from gaining power. They proudly displayed their patriotism, organizing their own flag-day demonstration in November 1911, and members opened their homes for meetings to discuss everything from voter registration to voter education.[29] Described by one journalist as "a bulwark of strength by recently-acquired voting power," the League was not affiliated with any particular party. "Women of wide and varying views on general, political, and civic questions" belonged to the group, but in light of this mayoral election, Alexander could count on the League's support.[30] According to another *Los Angeles Times* article, the Progressive League was at the forefront of the mayoral campaign. Businesswomen volunteered their time on

[28] "New Campaign is Now Begun," *Los Angeles Times* (2 November 1911): I7.
[29] "Shows Danger of Socialism," *Los Angeles Times* (26 November 1911): I7.
[30] "The Line of Battle," *Los Angeles Times* (12 November 1911): II4.

Sunday to help register more women voters.[31] Women were not only registering to vote; they were motivating other women to do the same.

In case women did not rise to the occasion, though, a "strong" letter written by the Citizens Committee made it clear that a Socialist victory "would retard the political equality in other States for many years."[32] Indeed, electing a Socialist mayor to run Los Angeles would confirm every skeptic's fear and spell a significant victory for anti-suffragists. But one woman's group – the Alexander Club – was determined to prove women's patriotism and democratic loyalty by mobilizing voters for Alexander. "Every one of its officers are women and they expect to poll almost the solid woman's strength of their precinct for their candidate."[33] Furthermore, it was the duty of every Angelino to make sure that democracy was protected. "It is the duty of every man and every woman who has made up his…or her mind to vote against Socialist government for Los Angeles," one journalist wrote, "to set right other men and women whose feet have been misled into support of the Harriman ticket."[34] The writer encouraged readers to educate themselves and perform their patriotic duty through personal discussions that discouraged Socialist leanings.

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[31] "Progressive League in Forefront of Campaign," *Los Angeles Times* (6 November 1911): II1.

[32] "Women's Rally for Alexander," *Los Angeles Times* (18 November 1911): II8.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Personal Work," *Los Angeles Times* (17 November 1911): II4.

Journalists encouraged and reminded women, in particular, of their duties as wives and mothers to protect their homes from the dangers of Socialism. After all, the "enthusiasm for the decencies and proprieties of life, domestic, social and political, has always been the guiding star of every true wife and mother."[35] Such women – "true women" – would never support a party "that delights in turbulence and revels in disorder."[36] Socialism threatened the country with tyranny and chaos – the rights that women had gained would be all for naught unless they collectively voted against the Harriman ticket.

In straw polls leading up to the election, women overwhelmingly supported the Alexander ticket. Some predicted that more men would vote for Alexander than women, but women surprised everyone.[37] On December 5, 1911, voters showed up at the voting booths to choose between members of the Good Government or those with the Socialist ticket. Alexander won in a landslide. In fact, Alexander and all of the Good Government candidates gained seats.

More than a victory for Alexander, this was a victory over Socialism, and the city's newest voters were credited for this win. "In the great result the power of the new women voters was most effective," said the *Los Angeles Times*. "Their votes made the big majorities for the Good Government ticket."[38] The women

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[35] "What is True Liberty," *Los Angeles Times* (19 November 1911): II4.
[36] Ibid.
[37] "Women Cast Large Vote," *Los Angeles Times* (16 November 1911): II3.
[38] "A Sweeping Victory for Good Government," *Los Angeles Times* (6 December 1911): I1.

brought a "wholesome atmosphere" to the polls, as well as excellent judgment. Another article credited women and the spirit of harmony for the Good Government's overwhelming success. "The Good Government organization and the Women's Progressive League worked in perfect harmony with our own organization [the Citizens' Committee], and each contributed to an equal share toward the result."[39]

Seventy-three thousand of the 83,000 registered women – a much larger number than anti-suffragists would claim – voted in the mayoral election of 1911. Los Angeles women, therefore, were interested in the vote and used it to protect their homes and families. This did not herald the defeat of the anti-suffragist argument, though. In this same election, the question of prohibition was defeated two-to-one, and the *Los Angeles Times* credited the women for this as well. "In every way their influence at the polls was in the interest of true American government and against extreme change."[40]

In 1912, California women would vote in their first presidential election the very one in which anti-suffragists claimed Californian women had little interest. It became a four-way contest between incumbent William Howard Taft, Democrat Woodrow Wilson, Socialist Eugene V. Debs, and former president Theodore Roosevelt. The real contest, however, was between Wilson and Roosevelt, as they

[39] "Credit to the Women and Harmony Spirit," *Los Angeles Times* (6 December 1911): I1.

[40] "A Sweeping Victory for Good Government," *Los Angeles Times* (6 December 1911): I1.

both represented different strands of Progressivism. Republicans were split between Roosevelt and Taft, and Wilson, unlike other Democrats, had strong ties with Progressive ideals. Though Roosevelt was still a popular figure, the split in the Republican Party would lead to a Wilson victory.

Contrary to anti-suffragist claims, California women, by the thousands, educated themselves and became involved in local, state, and national politics. In June 1912, Los Angeles hosted the Republican Convention. When Republicans nominated William Howard Taft for president. Three thousand California delegates – men and women – threatened to walk off of the convention floor and away from the Republican Party because of Taft's lack of action on equal suffrage and other progressive reforms. One female delegate expressed her opinions on the California delegation by saying, "I shall stand with the California's delegation from start to finish, and I will bolt with the delegation if necessary. The only subject on which I shall stand or fall, regardless of the delegation, is that of woman suffrage."[41] Women were not only educating themselves about politics and the current issues. They were also making their voices heard as party delegates.

Still, anti-suffragists insisted that equal suffrage was forced upon the women of California, and as evidence, the antis simply looked to the numbers. One writer argued that while nearly 100,000 women in San Francisco were

[41] "Threat to Bolt by Californians," *New York Times* (13 June 1912), 3.

eligible to vote in 1912, "barely 30,000 have availed themselves of the opportunity."[42] What the author does not mention, however, was that northern Californians were much more conservative than their counterparts in the southern part of the state. When the suffrage issue first appeared on the ballot in the late nineteenth century, southern Californians supported the measure in large numbers, but the measure failed because of the lack of support in the north. Low voter turnout in the north should not have shocked or surprised anyone, but the author believed it did anyway. "It is evident that if all the women of California desired to vote and were united they would hold the balance of power on any proposition put to the electors. But they are not united."[43] Indeed, they were not, which explained why the suffrage measure passed by a narrow margin in the first place.

Those women who did vote were able to implement the kind of changes that suffragists declared they would. By August 1912, California lawmakers had passed laws restricting work hours and ages for children. They also created legislation making school attendance compulsory for children up to fifteen years of age. If a child were illiterate at the age of sixteen, they would be required to attend night school. Children of sick or needy parents could work as long as they were between the ages of twelve and fifteen and obtained the permission of a superior court or juvenile court judge.[44] Just as their counterparts in Colorado,

[42] "Few Women Vote in California," *The Woman's Protest* 1:4 (August 1912), 13.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "Summary of State Laws," *Child Labor Bulletin* 1: 2 (New York: J.J. Little & Ives Company, August 1912,), 7.

California women were able to push for laws that provided better protection and support for children.

Anti-suffragists refused to consider such laws direct results of equal suffrage, because states in the East passed laws similar to those in California without women having to vote for the laws. They maintained that equal suffrage was not necessary to produce child labor legislation. Women in the East were pressured legislators to pass such measures. It must be said, though, that the laws in the East extended work hour limits and compulsory education to those children up to fourteen years of age.[45] Women in the West demanded more.

Hoping to gain some momentum somewhere, the antis remained focused on the lack of voter registration in California, believing it to be the best evidence to prove that equal suffrage was the desire of the minority, not the majority. Anti-suffragists particularly enjoyed pointing out the ignorance of suffragists. "Suffragists have continually preached that voting will not interfere with domestic duties, but it appears that women who have real domestic duties to perform do not agree with them."[46] Suffragists imposed their beliefs on the majority of Californians, and they were also completely out-of-touch with what California women wanted. Once again, however, the writer chose to focus on women in San Francisco, and there was no indication that there were any political differences between San Francisco and cities in southern California like Los Angeles. Instead,

[45] Ibid.
[46] "Registration of Women in California," *The Woman's Protest* (November 1912) 2:1, 7.

the article implied that the entire state was accurately represented by what happened in San Francisco.

The writer did, however, give credit to California for accomplish what male suffrage states had not. "A woman Socialist was elected judge out there…and after election failed to pass her examinations for admission to the bar."[47] Now, suffragists were not only out of touch with women who had "real domestic duties" – they opened the door for Socialism. Though it was only briefly addressed here, the potential for Socialism to rise up in political power and influence only increased with equal suffrage measures. For Coloradoans, Populism and progressivism were the third-party threats; in California and Oklahoma, the third-party threat was Socialism.

California women, however, maintained the success of equal suffrage. Gertrude Atherton, in a letter to the *New York Times*, wrote, "The large majority of voting women in California have proved themselves neither gullible nor hysterical."[48] Their new political responsibility neither overwhelmed voting women, nor did it indicate that suffragists were out-of-touch with typical women. In this particular election year, it was important for California women to demonstrate to their critics to prove that women were prepared to vote on the issues that mattered rather than being caught up in the issues that divided the

[47] Ibid.

[48] Gertrude Atherton, "California's Women," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (20 November 1912): 14.

Republican Party between Taft and Roosevelt. Roosevelt's last-minute conversion to the cause of suffrage was not enough to convince women voters that he supported the equal suffrage measure. Wilson, on the other hand, made it clear that he always supported equal suffrage and the political equality of women. Wilson also wisely took advantage of the division and campaigned to win the votes lost in the Republican divide. As a result, many of California's women voted for the Democratic ticket. "Morally we have carried the State for Wilson," Atherton wrote, "no matter what may be the see-sawing of doubtful counts."[49]

By 1915, Californians were not only defending themselves to anti-suffragists; they began to campaign in other states for equal suffrage. In an article originally published in the *Los Angeles Herald* and later reprinted by the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the author insisted that California women served above and beyond expectations. "They are organizing, studying, comparing notes, acquiring information and making themselves a power in political influence in the community."[50] Women were educating themselves to be better voters and citizens. They took advantage of the opportunities given them and even made a point to discuss issues with others. "The women are taking up in their various clubs many questions of both local and national importance."[51] It was vital for Californians – both men and women – to testify of the benefits of

[49] Ibid.

[50] "California Enlightens the World as to Woman Suffrage," Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 10, Folder 8.

[51] Ibid.

suffrage in order for Americans to believe that equal suffrage had succeeded. It indicated that it was the anti-suffragists and not suffragists who were out-of-touch with women.

This is not to say that anti-suffragists or equal suffrage critics were easily swayed to believe the testimonies they read and heard from men and women of equal suffrage states. In fact, these critics worked harder to find men and women who disapproved of the measure. Former Secretary of State John W. Foster wrote a letter to the *Washington Post* expressing his opinions on what took place in California. Foster claimed to never have supported the measure. Additionally, based on his "study of the subject" and his "careful reading of the local press," he concluded that "the amendment of the State constitution conferring the franchise on women was a serious error."[52] Moreover, Foster claimed that women were not voting and other citizens – "the busy citizen and the laboring man" – were too busy to deal with political issues. As a result, there were very few voters, and there was much corruption.

Foster, who served as Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison, was not born in nor was he a resident of California. Rather, his conclusions on equal suffrage and other progressive reforms were based on a four-month stay in the state. Yet, that stay was long enough for Foster to resolve "it would be wise for the older States of our Union to await the result of the working out in practice

[52] John W. Foster, "Suffrage on Trial," *The Washington Post* (4 April 1913): 6.

of these modern measures of government by such adventurous States as California and other more recent members of the Union."[53] California, Colorado, and other states in the West were "young" states that could experiment with radical ideas such as equal suffrage. They could afford the risks. For states in the East, however, it was best to wait until "they shall have shown by a full test that these revolutionary methods of government are wise."[54]

Alice Chittenden was another outspoken anti-suffragist and widely heard critic of California suffrage. She was also the president of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Chittenden wrote that in less than two weeks of staying in California, she could see the negative effects equal suffrage had on the state. Never specifying when she stayed in California, Chittenden only referred to two local elections that took place while she was there. A Pasadena newspaper that urged the adoption of propositions that would secure land to develop parks and playgrounds. "Not only was every proposition defeated," she wrote, "but only one-fourth of those entitled to vote upon them did so." Because women were not voting, the children of southern California could not have their playgrounds. In another election, after "an active Citizens' Committee of 1,000" campaigned to "save the city from the power of a ring of bosses," the "entire city government from the Mayor down was voted out of office." Also, an amendment that "provided that the city of Los

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

Angeles may engage in any business whatever, which is practically socialism."[55] Chittenden concluded that because of the women's apathy, cities were falling apart and vulnerable to Socialism.

In response to Chittenden's letter, a Mrs. William L. Duff also wrote a letter to the *New York Times* and agreed with Chittenden's conclusions. A resident of Berkeley, California, Duff claimed that equal suffrage created chaos. She quoted the Berkeley mayor as saying, "Surely adequate playground facilities for 7,000 children is a subject for woman's thought and vote, and yet, out of 8,000 women voters, only about 1,500 of them cared enough to vote."[56] If women in California could not be motivated to vote for something as simple as playground equipment for children, then one could assume, Duff argued, that the women would have the same level of apathy in other equal suffrage states.

Chittenden continued her campaign to convince Americans of the problems with equal suffrage, but as the president of New York's antisuffrage association, her first priority was to convince fellow New Yorkers of suffrage failures. In a letter to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Chittenden argued once again that California women were indifferent to suffrage, and their indifference proved that the majority of women did not want or care for the ballot. What changes had been made to California law could not be credited to woman suffrage, she wrote. The eight-hour work law was due to the efforts of labor unions, and the red-light abatement

[55] Alice Hill Chittenden, "Suffrage in California," *New York Times* (11 April 1913): 8.
[56] Mrs. William L. Duff, "Suffrage in California," *New York Times* (28 April 1913): 10.

law passed thanks to the efforts of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. In addition, similar laws were passed in Iowa and Nebraska, both male suffrage states. Moreover, "during the past year New York State has forged ahead wonderfully in regard to laws in the interest of women, and Massachusetts leads in the matter of laws for the protection of women."[57] Women's influence negated any need for women's political power.

Once again, the issue required a voice from California to settle the debate. Helen Bary, a leader with the Woman's Bulletin in Los Angeles, also wrote to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* to contradict Chittenden's allegations. In her letter to the editor, Bary addressed why the voter turnout was so low. "All names not bearing the title 'Miss' or 'Misses' or a given name unquestionably feminine were credited to men. On this basis the showing 50.2 per cent of the registered women voted." Additionally, the red-light abatement act to which Chittenden referred did not pass until after equal suffrage. "Any of the legislators will tell you that the passage this year was due directly to the women's votes."[58] Chittenden also alleged that women's clubs in California became equivalent to political parties, but Bary wrote that the clubs educated women on the current issues. They were essential to the voting process.

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[57] Alice Hill Chittenden, "Suffrage in California As an 'Anti' Views It," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (24 June 1913), Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 14, Folder 1, Sophia Smith Collection.

[58] Helen V. Bary, "Miss Chittenden Mistaken, Says California Woman," Letter to the Editor, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (9 July 1913), Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 14, Folder 1, Sophia Smith Collection.

Chittenden continued her relentless attack on California, though, in a special article for the *New York Times*. Her report, based on a three-month study, claimed, "Creating the millennium with the ballot and regardless of the staggering cost has been California's beautiful dream since woman suffrage carried the State ten months ago." California's new reforms included subsidizing homes and paying prisoners for their work in jail. There was no money for these programs, but the new voting population demanded such things, driving the state into deep debt. "It is probably that no State ever had so many freak bills introduced," she claimed. Chittenden referred to bills that increased regulation, such as a regulatory bill restricting the size of chicken coops and another that regulated the maintenance of hotel rooms. Chittenden hoped that her reference to their "freak" bills and the state-funded programs would reflect socialist ideals and lead to an end of suffrage momentum. "The California situation is an object lesson to other States in which women are clamoring for the right to vote," she argued.[59]

Two days later, Wenona Marlin, a fellow New Yorker, responded to Chittenden's claims in a letter to the *New York Times* editor. She answered each allegation from the pensions for teachers to the "freak" bills. Each bill had a justification. Prisoners who were paid were men who had families to support – they needed the income, however small. Sheets in hotel rooms were regulated for reasons of "health and cleanliness." "If the women have done all this in ten

[59] "Lashes California Petticoat Rule," *New York Times* (14 July 1913): 2.

months," Marlin wrote, "it just shows what women can do for the general good of the public. But what have men been doing?"[60]

Many of California's voting women were eager to testify of the benefits of equal suffrage. Women brought about changes in legislation that protected women, children, and the family. Politicians were now obligated to listen to their female constituents, unless the politicians were willing to risk losing their re-election bids. California's Governor Hiram Johnson, a strong supporter of the suffrage movement, relied on women to support and pass his legislative reforms. Johnson not only supported equal suffrage; he testified to its great success. In a 1915 interview with the New York *Evening Post*, Johnson declared, "The women have met the test and equal suffrage in California has fully justified itself. Were it again to be submitted, the vote in its favor would be overwhelming."[61]

From the passage of equal suffrage in 1911 until 1914, California's voting women rose to the challenge of political activity. They challenged anti-suffragist rhetoric that claimed women did not want the vote and could not handle the responsibility of politics. Women in the thousands registered to be voters, and despite what anti-suffragists alleged, did not simply vote as their husbands did. Equal suffrage not only doubled the voting population – it forced politicians to campaign specifically to women and women's groups. The Los Angeles mayoral

[60] Wenona Marlin, "Suffrage in California," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (16 July 1913): 6.

[61] "Gov. Johnson Says Women Have Been Equal to Difficult Tests," Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 12, Folder 1a, New York, Sophia Smith Collection.

election of 1911 and the presidential election of 1912 demonstrated that women educated themselves about political issues and would not be swayed by old political alliances, such as that with the Socialist Party or with Theodore Roosevelt.

World War I, however, would bring everyday politics and home life to a halt, requiring both men and women to make sacrifices for the sake of their country and the preservation of democracy. The federal and state governments would ask women – suffragist and anti-suffragist alike – to step into the roles left behind by the men and protect the homefront from the evils of the Kaiser and socialism. What California women did was combine their political voice and their social organizations to create a powerful influence within the state. California's industries, as well as it's growing population, would be vital to the allied effort, and the women of California helped to make the state's contributions possible.

Chapter 3:

"In Lieu of Government, We Find Anarchy":

Colorado (1914 – 1920)

Once California became an equal suffrage state in 1911, anti-suffragists knew their fight had become much more complicated and difficult. After all, California was the largest state in the West, and suffragists were able to succeed there despite the obstacles of race and class issues. Anti-suffragists doubled their efforts to broadcast Colorado's equal suffrage shortcomings in hopes they could convince men and women throughout the male suffrage states of the pitfalls of woman suffrage. Colorado then remained a key to the anti-suffragist platform, even twenty years equal suffrage began.

Focusing specifically on class conflicts and the failures of Populism, anti-suffragists argued that suffrage, rather than solving Colorado's problems, only exacerbated them. Moreover, despite having equal suffrage for two decades, anti-suffragists claimed Colorado's laws were not as effective as those in New York, Massachusetts, and other Eastern states. Anti-suffragists hoped that by pointing out these shortcomings, it would expose the chaos and anarchy in the state, leading to its repeal in Colorado and the demise of the suffrage movement. Anti-suffragists emphasized the state laws that were either worse than their eastern counterparts or did not exist at all. Critiquing everything from child labor laws to

the existence of red-light districts, the antis suggested that a woman's morality was better used in a male-suffrage than an equal suffrage state. A woman's influence as a wife and mother was more than enough to create protective legislation that would preserve the family unit. In addition, a male-suffrage state ensured that "bad" women (i.e. prostitutes) did not get to vote.

National suffrage leaders defended Colorado and its twenty-year history with the woman vote, but the real defense came from the men and women of Colorado. In various studies, newspaper columns, letters and the like, state officials and local women vehemently denied the destruction of the state at the hands of woman suffrage. Furthermore, they argued that were it not for woman suffrage and the campaigning and legislation of female voters, children and women would go unprotected.

It had long been an anti-suffragist tactic to compare equal suffrage and male suffrage states to one another, particularly after Colorado granted equal suffrage. Colorado was the first equal suffrage state in the American West to have a population size that anti-suffragists believed to be comparable to that of Massachusetts or New York.[1] Consequently, anti-suffragists believed that just as equal suffrage measures would be defeated everywhere once men and women

[1] With 9.1 million people, New York had a significantly larger population than Colorado, which only had nearly 800,000. However, anti-suffragists believed that because Colorado was initially the largest state with equal suffrage, it could be compared to eastern states with male-only suffrage. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910* 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913): 34.

realized how much more male suffrage states offered to their citizens, particularly their women. Women and children enjoyed similar, if not more, benefits under the rule of male suffrage, without having to pay the cost – literal and figurative – for equal suffrage.

But suffragists – on the national and local levels – argued that equal suffrage allowed women to have more control and input on the various laws debated and passed in the state. The strong Populist movement in early twentieth century Colorado fostered progressive legislation, with women voters taking the lead in pursuing laws that bettered the state, particularly its women and children. With women's suffrage, Coloradoans saw the establishment of the juvenile court system. Under the leadership of Judge Benjamin B. Lindsey, the juvenile court system gave the Colorado legal system a means to create accountability for school-age children who did not attend school or got involved in petty crime. Additionally, the Colorado Committee on Social Legislation introduced laws that addressed child labor regulation as well as a children's code commission that standardized and coordinated child welfare laws.[2]

One such law addressed working children involved in street trades. After equal suffrage was granted in Colorado, a commission was established to fix the minimum wage for working women and children. In addition, news laws set the minimum age for working children, and this applied to a variety of jobs for

[2] Edward N. Clopper, "State Programs for Legislation," *Child Labor Bulletin* 7, 4 (February 1919): 275.

children, ranging from field work to street trade. Girls under the age of ten were "prohibited from engaging in any business or occupation in street or alley," but the law did not make any reference to limit boys who participated in such jobs.[3] Those parents who forced their children to work at the young age of ten were brought before the Juvenile Court.

Massachusetts' anti-suffrage leader Margaret C. Robinson wrote to the *New York Times* and claimed "the rank and file of the suffragists are being systematically deceived by their leaders."[4] Local women who claimed that laws passed in Colorado protected children, particularly working children, did not realize how problematic the laws were. In New York, Robinson wrote, "A girl must be 18 before being allowed to ply a street trade." In Colorado, the law allowed for girls who were at least ten years old to participate in street trade. Robinson made sure to emphasize that New York was a male-suffrage state, implying that male voters – with the influence of women – passed laws that were more beneficial and protective of children than the equal suffrage state of Colorado.

Suffragist Maud Nathan defended the law, however, arguing that Colorado created a system of accountability to ensure the protection of children. Robinson was to correct that such a law existed in Colorado, but she did not mention that the

[3] Ibid.," 95.

[4] Margaret C. Robinson, "What Women Votes Show," *New York Times* (14 February 1915): XX1.

Juvenile Court in Colorado "has the power to bring the parents of such children before the court and sentence them for improper guardianship and neglect of duty."[5] Nathan also admitted that the law in New York was better but reminded readers "the law is not enforced in our city," therefore, it was ineffective.[6]

In response, Robinson argued that the law should not exist at all. "It seems rather strange," Robinson wrote, "to have a law permitting children to do a certain thing and then to punish the parents for letting them do it."[7] Anti-suffragists, she continued, criticized the law and because of their critiques, the city established a commission to author better laws – "another instance of what women can do without the vote," she added. Suffrage, therefore, did not resolve problems; instead, it only complicated them.

In the eyes of the anti-suffragists, Colorado often failed to meet the standards of male suffrage states. "Eighteen states, with a population of 40,000,000, have passed joint guardianship laws…and without suffrage agitation.[8] Mrs. George W. Townshend, an anti-suffragist, led the fight to pass the law in New York, where it was passed a year before it did in Colorado, this article argued. The woman's vote, the argument went, did nothing to hasten the kind of change that suffragists claimed it would.

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[5] Maud Nathan, "Mrs. Nathan Protests," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (21 February 1915): XX1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Margaret C. Robinson, "Doubts Mrs. Nathan," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (28 February 1915): X2.

[8] "Results Without Suffrage," *New York Times* (21 February 1915): C2.

The antis' claims were confident, but their assertions were given without any contextual information. "Colorado, where woman suffrage has existed for twenty years, has 92 percent dry area and only 54 percent of inhabitants living in dry territory."[9] But the authors of this article did not mention how much of this "dry territory" was outside of Denver, where many Coloradoans lived. They go on to claim that Denver had nearly twice as many saloons as the entire state of Arkansas, yet the claim – like so many both suffragists and anti-suffragists made – went without verification.

Colorado conditions had become so terrible as a result of woman suffrage, anti-suffragists alleged, that Colorado's citizens took it upon themselves to warn Nevada of the potential danger in an article entitled, "How Neighboring Suffrage States Warn Nevada." The title, though, was misleading, because the people warning Nevada were not citizens of Colorado – rather, they were members of the Nevada Association of Women Opposed to Equal Suffrage. The strength of the nation "lies in the home and family," the women wrote. And after asserting that equal suffrage only created chaos and discord, Nevada anti-suffragists argued that the state of Colorado was in shambles. "In lieu of government we find anarchy," they wrote. ""In lieu of home rule, Federal control."[10] Marriages had fallen apart, with only two states having higher divorce rates. Never referring to which states

[9] "The Suffrage World," *Business Woman's Magazine* 1,2 (November 1914): 80, History of Women Microfilm, Reel 242.

[10] "How Neighboring Suffrage States Warn Nevada," *The Woman's Protest* 5, 4 (August 1914): 8.

had higher divorce rates, the Nevada group concluded that woman suffrage was to blame for the disintegration of families and government.

"The ballot did not insure me a profitable position," wrote former Colorado suffragist Anna Steese Richardson. The promises of more protective legislation and better wages for women were not realized for Richardson, and she voiced her disproval by comparing Colorado to New York. After campaigning for suffrage, Richardson claimed that only a small minority of women truly wanted the right to vote. The vote was not a privilege, she wrote. It was "one more responsibility added to those the average woman is already carrying."[11] Richardson's argument and experience helped to strengthen anti-suffragist rhetoric.

Equal suffrage promised to enhance education, protect workingwomen, and improve child labor laws. However, when the measure is forced upon women who do not want the responsibility, Richardson argued, such laws would not be as effective as in other states. Women voters were expected to bring their moral superiority to clean up both politics and society, but Richardson said that such lofty expectations were incorrectly placed on a population that did not want the job in the first place. Claiming to speak on behalf "of the mass of Colorado women" but not "the women politicians and office holders…with whom the ballot is strictly a business proposition," Richardson claimed that Colorado homemakers

[11] Richardson, "What the Ballot Did Not Do for Me," 10.

were hesitant to leave their homes but were pressured to vote by politicians.[12] Woman suffrage would only cost women their rights to property and such. What's more, Richardson wrote, as a woman, she had no time to study for proposed legislation to make the right choice. She was also certain that whatever her vote could accomplish "will be counteracted a thousand times by the ballots of those women who vote according to orders from their own unscrupulous men folk."[13]

Richardson was not the only Coloradoan who voiced their disapproval of the equal suffrage measure. Labor leader William Hickey, secretary-treasurer for the Colorado State Federation of Labor, blamed women for the lack of progress made for women, let alone working women. "There are many reasons why suffrage has been a failure," he wrote, "and I fail to see one act on the part of the women that has been to their benefit during the twenty years of suffrage in Colorado."[14] Though critical of suffrage, Hickey insisted "some of the finest women in the world" lived in Colorado, but their efforts to bring reform to the state failed.

In addition to arguments of apathy and "bad" women voters, local politics provided anti-suffragists with more ammunition for their attacks. In 1916, Robert Speer won his reelection bid for his third term as Denver's mayor. For anti-suffragists, this was a disaster for Denver and an indication of how poorly

[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] Ibid., 10.
[14] "Colorado Labor Leader Condemns Woman Suffrage," (Boston: Massachusetts Anti-Suffrage Campaign, 1915), Antisuffrage Collection, Box 14, Folder 17, Sophia Smith Collection.

informed women were, even after twenty-three years experience in politics. "As women vote for or against Robert W. Speer," Colorado anti-suffragists declared, "so will the cause of suffrage rise or fall in the States where it is an issue."[15]

Speer, critics claimed, was a corrupt leader who led Denver into a pit of immorality. Local anti-suffragists did not want Denver to return "to the old ways when a dolorous sisterhood of sin was herded to the polls like cattle by Speer's trusty men." His reelection "made the decent, law-abiding citizens hang their heads in shame and humiliation." Speer's election "would prove conclusively that woman suffrage is a failure." Critics claimed his first term was filled with fraud and political corruption. Almost to the glee of anti-suffragists, Speer won re-election, and critics argued that if fifty percent of eligible female voters voted, Speers would have lost. Anti-suffragists were certain that despite this alleged corruption, suffragists would change their position, praise the accomplishments of the re-elected mayor, and consider his win a victory for local women. This behavior, anti-suffragists believed, demonstrated the hypocrisy and ignorance of the suffrage movement. It was only a matter of time before the remainder of the country realized how naïve suffragists were of the nature of politics.

But Speer's election a third term was not based solely on women's failure to vote – or to vote "appropriately" according to anti-suffragists. He was widely popular. Appointed by President Grover Cleveland as postmaster in Denver in

[15] "Denver Women Fail in Suffrage Test," *The Woman's Protest* 9, 2 (June 1916): 14.

1885, Speer's career progressed politically through service on various boards and commissions. During his first two terms as mayor, Speer's goal was to transform Denver from a western town to a modern city. Speer initiated projects that built new landmarks and improved the city's landscape. His administration also oversaw projects that created paved roads and installed extensive sanitary and sewer systems.[16] As a progressive mayor during the progressive movement, Speer's accomplishments increased his popularity and virtually guaranteed his election.

Progress or not, there was still no doubt that some Denver citizens lived among red-light districts and saloons. For years, Colorado women worked to eliminate red-light districts, and though women voters did not eliminate the districts, some regulatory laws were enacted. Under women's influence, it was a felony for anyone under eighteen years of age to work in "any house of ill-fame," as was "making immoral solicitation."[17] Moreover, heavy penalties were given to men who made a living based on the earnings of "immoral women." Red-light districts continued to exist but with legal restrictions.

Such laws did nothing to change anti-suffragists' opinions about the morality of the voting woman. They insisted that women were unsuccessful in changing legislation. Both Democratic and Republican women, alleged the

[16] Wilbur Fisk Stone, ed., *History of Colorado*, vol. 2, (Denver: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918): 98.

[17] Frances M. Bjorkmann and Annie G. Porritt, eds., *Woman Suffrage: History, Argument, and Results*, (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing, May 1915): 76.

Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, "were so unsuccessful in getting bills passed…that some of the leaders suggest that they try to work together on non-partisan lines" just like their sisters in male suffrage states.[18] If equal suffrage states wanted to accomplish anything, anti-suffragists asserted, would have to look to Eastern states as examples. Indeed, it pleased the anti-suffragists to believe that suffrage was actually a step back rather than an indication of progress and equality.

This fight against red-light districts was not only about eliminating or even limiting prostitution. The debate over suffrage included the anti-suffragist argument that equal suffrage would allow all women, "good" and "bad," at the polling booth. These so-called bad women, mostly prostitutes, would only ruin cities and communities everywhere. "By greatly increasing the number of stay-at-home voters," wrote Margaret C. Robinson, "woman suffrage enables the undesirable element, which always gets out its vote, to gain control."[19] Not only were "good" women, then, apathetic; "bad" women were not.

The vote of the prostitute was one of the greatest threats to civilized American society in the anti-suffragist opinion. Anti-suffragists could not bear to imagine the possibilities of evil and immorality that would spread across towns and cities everywhere because prostitutes and others like them would have a say in

[18] Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, "Significant Facts," *The Woman's Protest* 11, 3 (July – August 1917): 10.

[19] Robinson, "What Women Votes Show."

proposed legislation. By giving them the vote, a "good" woman's responsibility became even more complicated. It would now not be enough to simply vote – it would be up to this "good" woman to ensure that she and fellow "good" women would outvote those of ill repute.

Moreover, anti-suffragists feared the vote of the working-class woman who was ignorant of politics and the intricacies of American government. Once again, the divisions along class lines and the separation between working-class women and middle-class women are highlighted. These women who were not as heavily involved in clubs or political organizations as their middle or upper class counterparts could not possibly cast an intelligent or at least a well-informed ballot. Equal suffrage created a possibility that the "immoral" vote would outnumber the "moral." Anti-suffragists argued that the political equality of the sexes was not worth risking the moral standing of American society. Colorado's experience with equal suffrage was enough to demonstrate the problems of the "bad" and "ignorant" women voters.

But *Rocky Mountain News* journalist George Creel and Judge Benjamin Lindsey strongly disagreed. "The ballot does not endow the unskilled laborer's ignorant wife with the manners of a Vere de Vere, nor lift the prostitute above her shame...For if the word of slander is to be taken, Colorado's elections are controlled by the 'immoral vote,' and every election day affords opportunity for

prostitution's triumph."[20] This is indicative of how much of a middle-to-upper-class movement suffrage really was. Middle and upper class women considered it their responsibility to educate working-class women and to convert prostitutes into proper, acceptable women. But working-class women and prostitutes remained in Colorado, and anti-suffragists were left to complain about the "immoral vote" but to no avail. Their argument was not enough to repeal suffrage in the state.

Despite their failure to end equal suffrage in Colorado or stop its momentum from spreading elsewhere, anti-suffragists persevered. They criticized women who pursued political office, claiming that they had taken their political activity too far. Suffrage had already challenged the roles of women by taking them outside of the safe boundaries of the home where women presumably belonged. Anti-suffragists predicted that suffrage would not be enough for women who demanded political equality – it would only be the beginning of political activity, particularly for feminists.

Feminists, anti-suffragists alleged, now wanted to take the place of men in positions of power. Anti-suffragists believed their fears were validated when the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association sent a letter to Woodrow Wilson requesting that he choose a Democratic woman from Colorado to serve as the secretary of the United States Committee on Suffrage. The position, the anti-suffragists made sure

[20] George Creel and Benjamin B. Lindsey, "Measuring Up Equal Suffrage," in Edith M. Phelps, *Selected Articles on Woman Suffrage*, 2nd ed, (Minneapolis: H.W. Wilson Company, 1912), 91.

to announce, paid $2,500 annually and between thirty and forty suffragists had signed the letter. The Colorado Equal Suffrage Association was determined to see women appointed to various political jobs. In fact, Mary C.C. Bradford, president of the association, resolved "to work for the recognition of women in the dispensing of Federal, State and city positions."[21]

Despite anti-suffragist attempts to strike fear into the hearts of men with their latest accusation, Colorado women did not hide their desires to gain political office or positions of power. Ellis Meredith, the veteran journalist who also helped lead the Colorado suffrage movement, was elected as the president of the Denver Election Commission in 1911. During her four years as the Commission's president, she continued her fight for reform. Meredith's election to the Election Commission was an easy target for anti-suffragist critics who argued that equal suffrage would lead to women pursuing political office. Although, "there is nothing especially attractive about the office," women were doing exactly what Colorado suffragist Sarah Platt Decker once said they would not do. "Nothing is more certain," Decker once said, "that women, when they become enfranchised, will never, in any large numbers, appear as office seekers. It is probable that office will be thrust upon the ablest of them."[22] Indeed, women did not run for public office in large numbers, and Ellis Meredith already had a reputation as a

[21] "Colorado Suffragists Seek Political 'Plums,' *The Woman's Protest* 4, 4 (February 1914): 13.

[22] Rheta Childe Dorr, *What Eight Million Women Want* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Company, 1910), 313.

newswoman and local suffrage leader. Still, the pursuit of public office, to anti-suffragists, indicated that women were using suffrage to further their roles outside of the home.

State Senator Helen Ring Robinson openly supported the efforts of women in the political arena and urged women to serve whenever and wherever possible. In her book *Preparing Women for Citizenship*, published after World War I, Robinson wrote, "The woman who is a good citizen, a good American, should do her part…in organizing politics into the service of the real interests of the family and so the real interests of the nation."[23] Though anti-suffragists argued that women had the influence and moral authority to change the world through her life as a wife and mother, Robinson argued that women had the responsibility and patriotic duty to be active in American politics and society. "For generations they [women] were trained to think it 'womanly' to be ignorant of political needs and processes – as it was 'womanly' to faint."[24] Suffrage did not only grant women the right to vote, Robinson declared. It was much more than a spot at the polling booth. Rather, it created an opportunity to claim oneself as a part of the state and its business. "The greatest value of equal suffrage," she wrote, "is that it is teaching men and women to say 'We' in the affairs of their State."[25]

[23] Helen Ring Robinson, *Preparing Women for Citizenship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918): 7.
[24] Ibid., 14.
[25] Ibid., 40.

Her argument echoed that of many suffragists who believed that as the country's moral leaders, women had the responsibility of ensuring that all members of society – men, women, and children – and across class lines would be protected by the law. To do so, women would have to take on the duty of creating a system of accountability. It would be in place to protect the country's most vulnerable and ensure that the government or corporations did not take advantage of hard-working citizens. A woman could not consider herself truly patriotic until she looked beyond her home and family to notice what her community and fellow countryman were experiencing around her. "She cannot become a good citizen till, opening her eyes…she sees the grimy huddle of shacks over in Jumbletown, beyond the railroad tracks, as well as the beautiful parkings of the new boulevard and the statue of Shakespeare in front of the public library."[26]

A patriotic woman did not only act on her own – she joined organizations that were created for the betterment of her community and city. Robinson argued that membership to these organizations – in addition to other clubs – helped create a greater sense of patriotism and pride. Civic work was war work, she claimed. "There can be no national preparedness and efficiency without community preparedness and efficiency."[27] In order to achieve such preparedness and efficiency, women must do everything they could to contribute – including

[26] Ibid., 29.
[27] Ibid., 36.

educating themselves on political issues and keeping their local leaders accountable.

By 1918, Robinson had spent five years as a politician and believed that the best way for women to influence legislation was not to approach lawmakers or laws as mothers, a social identity that by definition limited their political role and knowledge of subjects. Rather, she argued, it would be more effective to follow the example of Moses. Moses had absolute control – he was the "only voter" and "could substantiate his views with the assertion, 'And the Lord said unto Moses'" – but still he focused on imparting only ten laws over the Israelites.[28] By doing so, he correctly exercised his influence without abusing his power. In the same way, women were advised to focus their attention on a few issues, gather their strength, and gain momentum to push those few bills through the legislature and make them laws.

Robinson's historic political career and influence over Colorado women was not enough to convince anti-suffragists that the vote had corrected all of Colorado's wrongs. Nor was it enough to change anti-suffragists' minds about suffrage itself, as if that was a part of the suffrage platform. An editorial published in New Jersey criticized Robinson for not being able to change the anti-suffragist's mind. "If Mrs. Robinson even scored one point that would pull a person of open mind, one 'sitting on the fence,' to the side of suffrage, we would

[28] Ibid., 46.

like to hear it."[29] Instead, they claimed that Robinson believed that enough men had supported equal suffrage and their support had been enough to demonstrate suffrage's success and the potential it carried for the rest of the country. Those men who were against suffrage, she claimed, were "a set of 'pin heads.'" This criticism was "so abusive in its tone," wrote the editors, "so temperamental in its ridiculousness, and so inaccurate as to fact, that suffrage might do well to come out and be quite candid with the people of New Jersey in repudiating such talk."[30]

Anti-suffragists incited such editorials by employing rhetoric that both claimed women were already burdened with the responsibilities of the home and also accused women of being incapable of political autonomy. Women, they argued, did not have the mental capacity to make good political choices. To prove their point, they often quoted local suffragists and tried to demonstrate their ignorance on the issues. One such suffragist, anti-suffragists argued, had claimed that "men of the East who exploit humanity" caused all of Colorado's troubles. Anti-suffragists mocked the claim, saying, "This is a sad state of affairs in Colorado, certainly. 'Men of the East' without votes in Colorado, are able to 'exploit humanity' there by 'indirect influence' in spite of women's votes."[31]

Colorado's "sad state of affairs" demonstrated that equal suffrage unnecessarily doubled the vote, adding a bloc of voters who did not understand the

[29] "Colorado," *The Woman's Protest*, 7, 6 (October 1915): 10.
[30] Ibid.
[31] "A 'Message from Western Women Voters,'" *The Woman's Protest*, June 1916, Vol. 9, No. 2, 11.

complexities of government or the implications of political issues to the voting population. These voting women could not possibly bring morality into the political arena because they did not know politics in the first place. Anti-suffragists had no problem in suggesting that suffrage leaders were too focused on the cause of equality to be concerned with the potential chaos the equal suffrage could stir. Therefore, it was the anti-suffragist's responsibility to clean up the mess left behind by suffragists and to lead the movement for repeal, rather than reform.

Yet, many Coloradoans stood firm in their support for equal suffrage. State political leaders had joined the ranks of local suffragists and publically declared their support for the measure, agreeing that the equal suffrage experience "has been beneficial to the people of Colorado."[32] The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mrs. Helen L. Grenfell, stated that women were not only serving their country, but they were doing so in addition to caring for their homes and children. "Instead of thinking less of their homes after women were granted the ballot," she argued, "women began to consider them more carefully, and sought to bring into these close corporations something of the scientific spirit of the age." In addition, voting had not eliminated the traditional values that had been cherished by

[32] National Woman Suffrage Association, "Testimony from Colorado," Sophia Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 9, Colorado: 1877, 1899, 1910 – 1911, 1953, n.d.

nineteenth century American women. Indeed, Grenfell claimed, "interest in the old-fashioned womanly arts has increased instead of diminished."[33]

Colorado's political leaders also happily supported the equal suffrage amendment. In a proclamation made to the remainder of the nation, members of the Colorado Senate declared that because "the operation and effect of Woman Suffrage in this State is being made the subject of misrepresentation in other states," they were obligated to defend Colorado women. Suffrage was not only a nod to equal rights and democracy, it "has proven in all respects materially helpful to good government among the people."[34] Women voters elected responsible leaders to government, the senators claimed, and there was a greater respect for the law.

National suffrage leaders lent their support as well. Just as their anti-suffrage counterparts, national leaders republished or quoted from any newspaper editorial or article that sang the praises of equal suffrage. "From every point of criticism," the Colorado paper *The Public* declared, "suffrage in Colorado has been a great civic success."[35] Just as a woman's presence was necessary inside the home, it was needed within government. Without her influence, "government lacks all the qualities of a home which every government to be just and

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Colorado Speaks: Colorado's Proclamation to the Nation," (National Woman Suffrage Publishing, Co., 1915), Suffrage Collection, Series I: Box 10, Folder 9, Colorado: 1877, 1899, 1910 – 1911, 1953, n.d., Sophia Smith Collection.

[35] "The Truth About Colorado," National Woman Suffrage Association, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 9, Colorado: 1877, 1899, 1910 – 1911, 1953, n.d., Sophia Smith Collection.

progressive must possess." Voting did not add to her responsibilities, the author insisted. Rather, it gave her "the means of better performing those duties of citizenship which they already owe." Women such as the aforementioned Anna Steese Richardson may have been good and responsible women but were "bad citizens."

Suffrage leaders knew that despite its twenty-year experience with suffrage, Colorado remained vulnerable to anti-suffragist attack, and therefore, suffragists also knew to be prepared for it. When anti-suffragists criticized Colorado, suffragists "called for an avalanche of indignant refutation from the most representative men of the state." The men did not hesitate in their response. Former Governor Alva Adams declared, "Even the most virulent enemy of woman suffrage cannot prove that any harm has come from the experiment." Judge Benjamin Lindsey, who helped establish the Juvenile Court system in Denver, claimed that Colorado had "the most advanced laws of any State in the Union for the care and protection of the home and of children."[36]

Indeed, Colorado men took it upon themselves to speak of the successes of equal suffrage. George Creel, an investigative journalist and politician from Colorado, argued that women successfully handled their political responsibilities and all members of Colorado society enjoyed the benefits. Members of the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to

[36] National Woman Suffrage Association, "Testimony from Colorado."

Women responded to Creel's commentary by arguing that rather than cleaning up the corruption of politics, politics had corrupted women. While Creel praised women for the creation of stronger laws protecting women and children in the workplace, the Massachusetts anti-suffragists argued that such legislation had actually been a part of a larger, nationwide movement. Colorado could not be credited, therefore, as being the leader in protective laws. "It was not Colorado, but Massachusetts, which was the first State to establish a minimum wage commission," the anti-suffragists reminded readers.[37] Indeed, in the wake of progressive momentum, a Massachusetts commission was assembled in 1911.[38] Colorado, on the other hand, did not form its commission until 1917.[39]

State political leaders and local suffragists were not the only ones to come to Colorado's defense. Outsiders helped to contribute to the equal suffrage defense, as well. Dr. George Elliot Howard, professor of political science and sociology at the University of Nebraska, disagreed with the anti-suffragist assessment of how Colorado compared to other states. Allegations made by the anti-suffragists about the failure of suffrage were "without foundation," and women voters had actually a positive impact on the state of affairs in Colorado. From 1910 to 1913, a "veritable revolution" had taken place and "women were the

[37] Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, "Woman Suffrage in Practice," Antisuffrage Collection, Box 14, Folder 16, Sophia Smith Collection, 8.

[38] H. LaRue Brown, "Massachusetts and the Minimum Wage," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 48 (July 1913): 13.

[39] Industrial Commission of Colorado, *Colorado Minimum Wage and Labor Law for Women and Minors*, Denver: Eames Brothers State Printers, 1917, 2.

controlling force." Laws calling for direct legislation, a municipal water plan, eight-hour workdays for women and children were only some of the significant changes made to Colorado law. Women had taken the responsibility seriously and "made good of the ballot."[40]

More than the testimonies given in defense of woman suffrage in Colorado, women's actions demonstrated their willing participation in the public arena, whether through legislation or in the war effort. As World War I began, Colorado's Julius Gunter created the country's first State War Council and called on all of the state's citizens to join in the war efforts.[41] Just as their sisters would across the country, Colorado women joined the ranks of the Naval Coast Defense Reserve and the Red Cross in its efforts to aid the military effort.

Eager to move on from the violence of the Ludlow massacre in 1914, many Coloradoans believed that by leading the patriotic effort, they could prove the state's maturity to the rest of the nation. Soon after Ellis Meredith's term on the Election Commission expired, she moved to Washington D.C. to continue her work for women's rights until the United States declared war in 1917. Using her skills as a journalist, Meredith wrote for the *Denver Post* and told stories of the atrocities of war and the valiant American fight against the Germans. She paid

[40] "The Suffrage World," *Business Woman's Magazine* 1,3 (December 1914): 78, History of Women Microfilm, Reel 242.

[41] Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David G. McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1994): 268.

special attention to the efforts of women and how they could make a positive difference in the war effort.

By the time the war was over, politics in Colorado reflected politics across the country. There had been a shift in momentum from the progressive movement of the early twentieth century to a more conservative ideology. Progressive Republicans quickly rose to power in Colorado after Democrats spent much of their time campaigning on domestic issues than those that echoed patriotism and American superiority. Suffrage leaders, including Meredith, focused on the passing and ratification of the nineteenth amendment, an indication of how well-established equal suffrage was in Colorado. Anti-suffragist efforts to use Colorado to stop suffrage progress in the West failed once again.

Having equal suffrage for over two decades did not diminish Colorado's significant role in the anti-suffragist campaign. Although the first ten years of suffrage in Colorado created a positive image for the suffrage movement across the country, the Ludlow Massacre returned the state to the national headlines, perpetuating anti-suffragist attack on the voting women. Yet, in the face of overwhelming scrutiny and criticism, Colorado's men and women persevered with equal suffrage. As World War I began, anti-suffragists remained focused on criticizing local affairs, but Colorado women focused their attention to the war effort, just as women had across the country. Nothing – violence, criticism, or even war – stopped Colorado women from voting.

Chapter 4 –

Suffrage Has 'Ruined the State of California': The Anti-Suffragist Hope California (1914 – 1920)

While Colorado women kept busy deflecting attacks on equal suffrage and its effectiveness, California women were gaining momentum as more women stepped into the political arena. Just as antisuffragists predicted, once women had the right to vote, they would want to run for political office. California women wanted to prove themselves equal to the task of political office. In addition, as antisuffragists equated suffragism with feminism, the likes of Alice Paul and other outspoken feminists did much to spur the antisuffrage rhetoric. Clubwomen maintained their influence and work by remaining involved in the social and political activities of their communities. Once the Great War began, however, little else mattered besides the fight to preserve and protect democracy from the threat of Socialism and Bolshevism. The war changed the course of politics throughout the country, including the suffrage movement on all levels.

In 1912, after Woodrow Wilson's presidential election victory, no political party could exclusively rely on women's loyalty or support. Though they had allied themselves with Progressive Republicans previously, the divided Republican Party deterred some women from supporting the Republican ticket, in spite of Theodore Roosevelt's last-minute support of equal suffrage. Wilson's

progressive policies, including his pro-suffrage stance, helped to solidify women's support. Moreover, Wilson campaigned on an anti-war platform, one that appealed to women across the country.

In addition to President Wilson's support, congressmen spoke up for women's suffrage. In January 1914, Colorado representative Edward Taylor and California representative John Raker introduced a measure to create a special committee on woman suffrage in the House. Both Democrats, Taylor and Raker hoped that this committee would educate representatives in Congress about the benefits of equal suffrage. Although the measure failed, they were determined to create the committee, and they found support among active women such as the Women's Congressional Union and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). "If the Democratic Party fails to take advantage of the great opportunity before it, the women of the country will hold it responsible at the polls," threatened one Union member.[1] The committee would not be established until 1917, but it provided an opportunity for men and women from across the country to testify of the effects of equal suffrage. It took the initiative of two Westerners with experience in the subject to create such an occasion.

Support on the national level from the country's leaders did nothing to deter critics' attacks on equal suffrage. One such person wrote anonymously to the *New York Times* and alleged that the voter turnout in male suffrage states in the election

[1] "Suffragists Lose in Rules Committee," *New York Times* (18 January 1914): 2.

of 1912 was higher than in equal suffrage states. But Helen Thomas Flexner, a national suffrage leader, argued that the population increase, from 1900 to 1910, was "far greater than the rate of increase in the male suffrage states."[2] This increase in population, Flexner claimed, affected the number of voters in the equal suffrage states, "but of this probability no mention is made."[3] Flexner's argument speaks to a greater problem suffragists and antisuffragists made with their rhetoric: grand claims with no contextual information.

Everett P. Wheeler, a member of the New York legislature who helped draft the national as well as the New York Civil Service Act, was an outspoken critic of equal suffrage. Ida Husted Harper, a frequent contributor to the *New York Times*' editorial page, argued that in New York, men of all classes opposed the idea of women in the political arena. California men, however, were more supportive and respectful of politically active women, because of the success that woman's suffrage proved to be. Wheeler strongly disagreed, describing Harper and other suffragists as pessimists, "so absorbed by the contemplation of unquestioned evils that they ignore the progress the world is making."[4] This progress Wheeler referred to was the growing recognition of the influence of wives and mothers. "For our part," he wrote, "we know that the training of character, the formation of right principles, self-restraint, honor, justice, are

[2] Helen Thomas Flexner, "The Suffrage States," *New York Times* (28 January 1914): 8.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Everett P. Wheeler, "In Reply to Mrs. Harper," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (19 September 1915): I4.

treasures that the mother can implant in the heart of her child."[5] Treating the wife and mother with the utmost respect was how the men of New York honored their women.

Suffragists and antisuffragists employed grandiose claims to counter the claims of the opposition in all available media. Newspapers proved most effective because they reached broader audiences than pamphlets, periodicals, or even Congressional testimony. Through letters to the editors of various newspapers, both suffragists and antisuffragists made their respective arguments and, at times, defended them. Some identified themselves and others preferred anonymity, but they all had a clear agenda.

One woman, identifying herself only as M.W.K., argued that among her acquaintances, she had found "three classes of motives for seeking suffrage – one good motive and two bad ones."[6] Of the "bad" motives, one was, as she described, "a childish desire for something that is withheld." Other women wanted the notoriety and associated themselves with movement leaders. None of these women had real interest in woman suffrage. They would not care about the cause after four or five years, she wrote. But the third class of women – the women with the good motive – genuinely wanted and worked for equal suffrage. "I hope," M.W.K wrote, "they will watch closely affairs in…California during the next four

[5] Ibid.

[6] R.W.K., "Overrate Power of Vote," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (14 February 1915): XX5.

years." Watching that third class of women exercising their right to vote would be enough to change critics' minds.

San Franciscan Frona E.W. Colburn wrote to the *New York Times*, arguing that not only had suffrage ruined the state of California – it literally ruined women. Local suffrage workers were easily distinguishable because of their "visibly haggard and worn expression" as well as their "aggressive dictatorial manner."[7] Echoing antisuffragists claims of political pressure, Colburn claimed that a majority of the California public did not want the suffrage passed. The suffrage would force women to serve jury duty, she feared, and a majority of California's women would avoid voter registration to escape jury duty. Only the "radical women" were willing to "rub elbows with the riffraff that hangs around these courts." Those women also chose to pursue political careers and promoted questionable legislation, "which have put California in the freak class politically."

Antisuffragists not only wrote letters to newspaper editors; they authored and published essays, exhorting against equal suffrage. Margaret C. Robinson, in an essay entitled "Woman Suffrage a Menace to Social Reform," claimed that California homemakers were indifferent to suffrage and therefore did not vote at all. Robinson said that it was good for these women to refuse to vote. They were not "shirking a fundamental duty of citizenship." Women were, instead, doing the

[7] Frona E.W. Colburn, "Blessings Unappreciated," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (15 October 1915): 10.

honorable thing by not casting ballots "in the cause of dishonesty and corruption."[8]

These claims were strong, but there was one particular antisuffragist that made headlines. Annie Bock, former secretary of the California Equality League and a suffrage advocate for a year, changed her mind about equal suffrage after seeing the effects it had on California. Suffrage was "working havoc" and turning women into "Frankensteins, creators of a political monster that has turned upon the sex with appalling results."[9] Women were disinterested in the vote, Bock – like so many other antisuffragists – claimed. Furthermore, men were previously "generally courteous, now they are rude." California had become a state riddled with crime and corruption, and all because of equal suffrage.

But just as they had in the previous three years of equal suffrage, California women were outspoken about the issue. "I had the pleasure of living in California for nearly a year," Clarence S. Joy wrote to the *New York Times*. The claims that California's experiment would discourage other states from making the same choice were "fanciful and chimerical." Joy continued, "A careful study of the

[8] Margaret C. Robinson, "Woman Suffrage a Menace to Social Reform," In *Anti-Suffrage Essays by Massachusetts Women* (Boston: The Forum Publications of Boston, 1916): 107.

[9] Annie Bock, "Astounded by Evils, Turns on Suffrage: Miss Annie Bock Says Vote is Working Havoc Among the Women Who Have It," (Washington: n.p. 1918).

results of the ballot reveals most clearly a very high intelligent discrimination displayed by the masses, in the main, in arriving at a majority decision."[10]

Florence Howe Hall agreed with Joy and claimed that not only had the women stepped up to the challenge of suffrage, men had also been positively affected. Suffrage did not "coarsen" women, as antisuffragists claimed. Instead, it "refined" men. "The feminine electors," Hall wrote, "are treated with the greatest courtesy, not only because they are women, but also because they are voters."[11] As voters, women possessed and embraced a new power and influence they did not have before. This new political power, according to Hall, changed how elections were conducted.

Suffrage leader and Californian Alice Park wrote to newspapers across the country to testify to the benefits of suffrage. To the editor of *The Leader* in Ohio, Park wrote that suffrage did not simply mean the right to vote. "It means that we are PEOPLE. We used to be governed like children who never grow up."[12] Women no longer had to apologize for their presence before political leaders or ask favors from committees. It was no longer a man's government. It belonged to the women as well.

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[10] Clarence S. Joy, "A California Convert," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times* (14 February 1915): XX6.

[11] Hall, "Just as Able as Men."

[12] Alice Park, Letter to the Editor, *The Leader* (Mariette, OH: 12 August 1912), Alice Park Papers, Box 1, Folder 19. Huntington Library.

Clubwomen became more involved in the political theater, educating themselves and other women on the issues of the day and the candidates running for office. "During the past four years, California women have been quietly studying the political issues on which they have to vote," wrote the president of the California Civic League, Mary Roberts Coolidge.[13] Candidates and elected officials met with women in mass meetings and had to prepare to answer questions from women who publicly questioned them and their motives. "Women are surprisingly quick," Coolidge continued, "perhaps because of their experience with naughty boys, to distrust candidates who try to hypnotize the voters with loud oratory and who dodge straight questions from the floor."[14] Women voters, suffragists believed, brought accountability to American politics.

Everyone – suffragists and antisuffragists – claimed to have conducted careful studies of the effects of equal suffrage. Anti-suffragists spoke of woman's suffrage as if it were a disease, claiming that it had been "rampant" throughout the West and it was the antisuffragists' duty to alert the nation of the failure that it had been. "An appeal must be made," wrote Mrs. William Forse Scott of New York, "to the good judgment and the conscience of the intelligent and moral citizens, who are yet in a large majority."[15] It would be up to these moral leaders to speak out against suffrage in their cities and states. To prove her point that suffrage had

[13] Mary Roberts Coolidge, *What the Women of California Have Done with the Ballot* (San Francisco: California Civic League, 1916).

[14] Ibid.

[15] Mrs. William Forse Scott, "Suffrage a Failure," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 24 Jan 1915, X4.

been a mistake, Scott quoted Colonel John P. Irish who wrote from California saying, "There is an increasing pressure from non-voting women here, reinforced by thinking men, for an initiative measure canceling suffrage out of the Constitution."[16]

In response to Scott's allegations, California resident Marian Griswold Boalt also wrote a letter to the editor. Colonel Irish's claim that "sensible" people had been disgusted by woman's suffrage outraged Boalt. "My own experience may not be considered valuable, but I contend that I am sensible – at least, that I have an average amount of sense and that I am not disgusted."[17] After suffrage had been granted, Boalt joined the Civic League in order to learn more about a citizen's duties to the government. She wanted to be certain that she understood the responsibilities that she was asked to perform as a voting member of society. "To prove that I am possessed of some degree of sense," she added, "I might add that I have been a college professor for ten years."[18]

Boalt was not alone in her response. In 1915, the California State Legislature issued a proclamation announcing their support for nationwide equal suffrage based on their four-year experience with the measure. It had been so successful, they claimed, "that it is generally conceded that were the question to be again voted on by the people of this State, it would be endorsed by an

[16] Scott, "Suffrage a Failure," X4.
[17] Marian Griswold Boalt, "Suffrage in California," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 31 Jan 1915, XX1.
[18] Ibid.

overwhelming majority."[19] Accusations that the measure had ruined California had "no basis in fact." California's political leaders credited woman suffrage for the advancement of California in political, social, and industrial issues.

Successful or not, suffrage cost too much in both time and effort for it to be considered an effective tool for democracy, claimed Mrs. J. Alex Mahon. Suffrage did nothing but destroy the California economy and waste precious resources. Californians, she claimed, paid over $1.5 million for suffrage, a significant increase since 1910. The statistic, though she gave no source for it, should have served as enough proof to discourage other states from implementing suffrage for women, unless they wanted financial ruin. "If a business firm should attempt to run its business on such a principle nothing but bankruptcy would be the result."[20] The government would be better and more efficient if it was based on the principles of good business, and if it did, political leaders would know better than to waste taxpayer money on equal suffrage. In a separate antisuffrage essay, one author wrote that California was an extravagant state that paid higher salaries to its government employees than it could afford. During six years of 'Progressive' rule, the gross cost, net cost and departmental cost of state

[19] "California Speaks: California's Proclamation to the Nation," Concurrent Resolution No. 22, 12 May 1915, Smith Collection, Suffrage Collection, 1851 – 1982, Series I: United States, Box 10, Folder 8, California: 1895, 1907 – 1917, n.d.

[20] Mrs. J. Alex Mahon, "High Cost of Suffrage," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 21 February 1915, XX2.

government doubled. "Government by commission seems to have run mad in California," the writer concluded.[21]

California suffrage was "expensive, but good," declared one journalist for the *New York Times*. The creation of new departments and commissions cost California citizens millions of dollars. Taxes increased by ten million dollars, and by June 30, 1915, the state expenditures increased to $36,529,993 from $18,601,877 in June 30, 1911. But the writer also asserted that women who were now politically active fought against the principles of "taxation without representation" and demanded more accountability of government agencies.[22]

Mrs. James B. Wells of Brownsville, Texas took her argument against suffrage before the Texas state senate, doing so, as she declared in her opening remarks, "with my husband's and my son's permission and God speed." Her goal, she claimed, was to "help save the citadel of the Home" because that was what was being attacked. Post-equal suffrage conditions in California only served as a model for failure. Divorce was on the rise in San Francisco, while nearly fifty million dollars was spent for a population of 2.5 million people. If the destruction of the home and state budget were not enough, "the only results had been to strengthen the Socialist party, and to double the expense of the elections."[23]

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[21] "California Under Woman Suffrage," Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 14, Folder 17, Sophia Smith Collection.

[22] "Expensive but Good," *New York Times* (12 October 1915): 10.

[23] Mrs. James B. Wells, "Why I am Opposed to Woman Suffrage," *Address Before the State Senate*, Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 15, Folder 8, Sophia Smith Collection.

Moreover, women were not using the ballot to support the home and the children as suffragists claimed they would, Wells argued. Referring to previous arguments of how California voters were unable to pass measures for new playgrounds, Wells, like other antisuffragists, placed all the blame on California women. The playgrounds were "the pride of the city" [Pasadena] but because voters would not give the money necessary for new playgrounds, the city and its children would suffer.

Californians, though, argued that women were vital to the success and strength of the state, and by 1915, they were contributing to the success and strength of democracy altogether. In August 1914, the Great War began with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, which set off a series of war declarations. Most of Europe declared war, while the United States maintained its position of neutrality. Women across the country supported this stance, arguing that the war did not require American involvement. Los Angeles women organized quickly, hoping to create a worldwide movement for peace. The Women's Million Club planned marches and carnivals to support peace and neutrality.[24]

Women's clubs throughout the state joined together for the purpose of pursuing peace rather than supporting war. The California Federation of Women's Clubs (CFWC), which represented over thirty-five thousand women, issued a

[24] "Neutrality for the Sake of Humanity," *Los Angeles Times* (2 September 1914): II3.

resolution supporting President Wilson's stance on the war. Uniting across party lines, clubwomen declared that they recognized the complexity of the issues Wilson faced and wanted to "assure him of their sincere and heartfelt sympathy and to pledge their cordial support for his sane and courageous conduct of international affairs."[25] This support, however, was contingent on the hope that the President would "continue to uphold the American ideals of peace."

Women who were politically liberated and given a voice in government could appreciate more than others the need to exercise their opinions and use their newfound political influence to change the course of history. It was a responsibility that only women could truly appreciate and accomplish, according to columnist Agnes Thurman. "In these United States, where women are beginning to be free…" she wrote, "they are beginning to do something real toward the realization of this humanity's grandest world ideal, universal peace." They maintained previous club activities such as working with children, but the with the onset of the war, club goals changed. Indeed, it was now their hope to raise a generation that would avoid any risk of war. "I say women are working patiently and without discouragement, knowing that the result of their work will show in the generation approaching maturity, and perhaps make another great war impossible."[26]

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[25] "Club Women with Wilson," *Los Angeles Times* (18 May 1915): I4.

[26] Agnes Thurnau, "Women's Work, Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times* (27 September 1914): III5.

Indeed, a liberated woman's responsibility was to use her voice to speak for those who could not speak for themselves. She worked in defense of "God's voiceless, helpless" creatures, as she protected them from the threat of tyranny and war. "Pitiful cries have reached ears that hear. The edge of the world is rose-gold. Day dawns, even while battle rages."[27] The woman's role as mother, social conscience, and now voter combined to form a socially aware and politically astute citizen who protected potential victims from the brutalities of war.

As a columnist to the *Los Angeles Times*, Thurnau often wrote about the work of women's organizations throughout the state and commented about the significance of their work for the causes of women and peace. A woman's responsibility during wartime, she argued, was just as important and vital to the effort as a man's. Yet, Thurnau was careful not to overshadow or outdo the peace efforts of men, either. Women served alongside those men who enlisted to serve the world. "And mind you, I say, with those who serve the world for at all times in the history of civilization there have been wonderful men who have served humanity."[28]

President Woodrow Wilson also toed the line of neutrality during the first years of the war, but that would not last. Wilson's reelection campaign slogan, "He Kept Us Out of the War," may have reminded voters of his unwillingness to

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[27] Agnes Thurnaw, "Women's Work Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times* (11 November 1914): II6.

[28] Agnes Thurnau, "Women's Work, Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times* (25 October 1914): III4.

sacrifice American soldiers for the European war, but many Americans had already taken sides in the war, with Socialists siding strongly on the side of pacifism and others opposing the German Kaiser. Wilson tried to maintain neutrality through diplomacy and moral invasion. The Germans first agreed to refrain from use of submarine warfare, but the Germans soon resumed their sinking of American ships, and on April 2, 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. American neutrality officially came to its end.

American participation in the war meant that the cause of suffrage would have to take a backseat to the war effort. "A real desire to protect the interests of their sons and husbands at the front from possible domination by a hostile spirit at home has inflamed them [women] into a new crusade," wrote Carrie Chapman Catt.[29] Radical feminists like Alice Paul did not agree with this strategy, but leaders of the NAWSA agreed that they would not focus all of their attention and energy on the suffrage cause while the country protected its European allies and itself. Indeed, antisuffragists were quick to criticize women who promoted the suffrage cause while Americans were at war. Knowing their every move was under surveillance by antisuffragists and suffrage skeptics, suffragists realized that they had to be careful of how they behaved and what they said. Suffrage leaders understood that if they wanted to succeed, they would not only have to slow the campaign down, they would also have to help the country in the effort. Because

[29] Mary Sumner Boyd, *The Woman Citizen* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1918): 9.

of women's contributions to the war effort, Catt argued, political leaders would "declare that the ballot for women is a measure needed by a world at war as a safeguard for civilization."[30]

Martha McCann, a California suffragist who served as the Chairman of the Publicity Committee during the state's suffrage campaign, argued if suffragists tried to force a suffrage bill through Congress during a time of war, it would be "extremely ill-timed."[31] McCann's support remained strong and loyal to the cause, but McCann, like Catt and other leaders, understood how much damage campaigning during the war would do to the cause. "I believe thoroughly in universal suffrage," McCann declared, "and I think the sooner it comes the better it will be for the nation. However, there is a right time and a wrong time to do everything."[32]

Ida Husted Harper supported women's war efforts but thought it unfair for women to volunteer their time and efforts in the name of patriotism for a country who refused to acknowledge a woman's political rights. In letters written to former President Theodore Roosevelt, Harper demanded that the Republican Party change its platform and support the cause of woman suffrage. Women, she argued, would not support any party that did not support them. "We have no respect for the kind of patriotism that would deny to the women of the United States the

[30] Mary Sumner Boyd, *The Woman Citizen*, 9.
[31] "Drive for Suffrage Ill-Timed, She Says," *New York Times* (11 December 1917): 15.
[32] Ibid.

democracy which we are fighting to obtain for the entire world," she wrote to Roosevelt.[33] Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, was not afraid to support woman's suffrage publicly, and because he did so, women lent their support to the Democratic Party.

Whether they supported the Republicans or Democrats, women throughout the country and across political party lines joined together in the war effort. Each state created state defense councils, which included female members of the community. In April 1917, California governor William Stephens appointed three women to a council of thirty-three citizens entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the state for the war. "In selecting the members of the State Council of Defense," the Governor stated, "I have made an effort to secure persons especially qualified to deal with the problems outlined."[34] These problems included organizing materials and conserving supplies such as crops in order to lend support to the allies.

Stephens urged women to help with the war effort beyond their work on the defense council. While men served in the armed forces, Stephens believed women would conserve food and water for the sake of the American effort. While husbands and fathers were gone, it was up to the women to organize the household

[33] Ida Husted Harper to Theodore Roosevelt, 22 October 1918, Ida Husted Papers, Box IV, Huntington Library.

[34] "Members of California Defense Council Named," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 April 1917, I2.

budget, and if possible, they could use some of their budget to purchase liberty bonds to further the war effort.[35]

Federal and state government officials made certain that women understood the importance of food conservation. "Food will Decide the War," declared a pamphlet created by the Women's Committee of the Councils of National and State Defense. The "Clean Plate" campaign urged women to promise that they would make the effort to conserve food and water for the sake of the war. Indeed, the council insisted that women read and sign a pledge declaring their commitment to conservation as well as to the work of the Food Administration. "I am glad to join the exercise of food conservation for our Nation, and I hereby accept membership in the United States Food Administration, pledging myself to carry out the directions and advice of the Food Administration in the control of my household."[36] Women could sign the pledge and provide such information as the occupation of the home breadwinner and whether or not the home had a garden and what fruits or vegetables grew in the garden.

The Woman's Navy League urged women to make a similar oath, promising to "think, talk and work for patriotism, Americanism and sufficient national defenses to keep the horrors of war far from America's homes and shores forever."[37] This pledge did not restrict women to the domestic sphere, though.

[35] "Stephens Urges Women to Help," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 1917, I4.
[36] "Clean Plates in all Homes," *Los Angeles Times* (29 June 1919): II1.
[37] "Pledge to Support American Ideals," *Los Angeles Times* (2 May 1916): II2.

Rather, it urged women to "awaken" the nation and its lawmakers of the potential threat to the American way of life. Indeed, thinking, talking, and working for patriotism began at the home in a woman's everyday interaction with her children, but it also extended to the city and state leaders, as well as the nation's lawmakers. In order to protect their country, the American woman and her sisters would have to serve as a part of its defense, far from their homes.

Though the suffrage fight had been a chance for California women to prove their ability to participate in public affairs, the war required their services outside of the voting booth. The women of California were "ever ready to respond to the call of their country" according to Governor Stephens. This "call" included specific directions on what foods to conserve and how to "preach 'The Gospel of the Clean Plate.'" Saving wheat, meat, and fats were a priority for Herbert C. Hoover and other food administration officials, but they also implored women to prepare foods grown locally, buy less food, and increase their use of corn, rice, and vegetables.[38]

Women in California came together to create a food army, establishing two headquarters in the state: one in Los Angeles and the other in San Francisco. Modeled after the structure of the U.S. Army, the food army had a signal corps, medical corps, and even a cavalry. Together, they hoped to have a "food conservation soldier behind the firing lines for every soldier at the front, so that

[38] "Clean Plates in all Homes," II1.

every man in his country's service may feel that there is a woman at home who stands ready and willing to do her share in making life in the trenches tolerable."[39] The food army, in addition to conserving food, also had to organize efforts to conserve fuel. Their responsibility was great, and their commitment was true. "The women will lend their aid to all patriotic movements" and were even willing to march in parades displaying their patriotism.

In addition to the food army, women formed the Women's Land Army of America to help cultivate the land. Thousands of men, including farm laborers volunteered to serve in the war, leaving thousands of acres of southern California land untilled. Moreover, after one cannery in Los Angeles struggled to keep up with demand after its laborers had left, local women organized and worked to help the company can fruits for consumers. They tilled the land, picked fruit and tomatoes, and canned food, just like the men did before the war. Individual ranchers and canners negotiated wages and expenses with the women working for them, but journalists insisted that the women's sole focus was on their patriotic duty.[40]

As effective as the Land Army had been, some critics believed that it had its faults. Alma Whitaker claimed that no one had any regrets about recruiting women to take the place of men, however, board members had become so

[39] "Women Form Big Food Army Just Like Men's," *Los Angeles Times* (3 October 1917): II1.

[40] "Women to Till Thousands of Southern California's Acres," *Los Angeles Times* (14 April 1918): II1.

comfortable with the success and efficiency of the Land Army, they also felt comfortable enough to bicker with one another and be distracted by bureaucracy. The all-woman committee members were capable individuals, Whitaker wrote, but they spent much of their time at meetings complaining. Whitaker had her own solution. "Now I want to see that board reorganized, preferably with a couple of brainy men on it."[41] The women who spent eight hours a day to work in the fields, sowing, tilling, and reaping fruits and vegetables, had been a great asset to the war efforts, but, according to one reporter's description, their all-female leaders' bickering and inefficiencies were overshadowing the organization's great success.

Not all of California's women were eager to demonstrate their patriotism in the war effort. Socialists throughout the country maintained a staunchly anti-war sentiment, and rather than show their support for the troops, they decided to campaign to end all wars. Socialist women proposed that women, instead of helping soldiers on the frontlines, should stop having children, claiming that "if there are no more babies, there will be no more men. And if there are no more men, there will be no more war."[42] The cause for war lay squarely on the shoulders of men, and the women who supported the war effort only promoted and perpetuated war itself. Journalists at the *Los Angeles Times* mocked the Socialist women for their ideas and called upon "all loyal women to help in any way they can."

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[41] Alma Whitaker, "Woman's Land Army," *Los Angeles Times* (27 July 1918): II4.
[42] "Ban on Babies as War Remedy," *Los Angeles Times* (7 July 1917): II3.

There was no need to make such a call, however, as the "loyal" women had already responded to the needs of the country. "We are proud of our women," declared one writer, and of the "'temperate will' which has inspired them to shoulder the responsibilities and burdens of a nation in war time" with "'endurance, foresight, strength, and skill.'"[43] In Southern California, there were at least one hundred forty women's organizations, with a total of 70,000 members who were dedicated to contribute to the war effort. By the thousands, women volunteered to work for the Red Cross. "Thousands of them, who had never previously been called upon for sustained effort, devote nine hours a day six days a week to this work."[44] Some trained to be nurses while others made pillows, clothes, and other supplies which were sent to Washington in bulk shipments.

The federal government called for twenty-five thousand women across the country to heed the call to join the United States Nurse Reserve to train for service. Leaders searched for "intelligent, responsible women of good education" who were willing to become nurses and work in the war zone. Their terms of service would last from two to three years, and they would tend not only to injured veterans of the war, but to the sick and diseased as well. The Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense joined with the nursing division of the Red Cross to enroll women in the training schools hosted by army and civilian

[43] "Women and War Work," *Los Angeles Times* (28 October 1917): II4.
[44] Ibid.

hospitals. Of the twenty-five thousand women nationwide, California hoped to recruit at least one thousand.[45]

In just seven days, three hundred fifty women from the Los Angeles area alone responded to the call for more nurses. Applicants had to be a minimum of twenty-one years old, high school graduates, and white. If a woman wanted army training, she would also have to either be single or widowed. Most of the women who applied requested army training, so much so that the government requested more women volunteer to work in the civilian hospitals. The fact remained, though, that whenever and wherever there was a need, California women heeded and responded in numbers that assured Californians of women's capabilities, patriotism, and potential.

Indeed, the "loyal women" rose to the occasion under the leadership of the California Defense Council, but some wondered if – even with their good intentions – women would be able to adequately fill in the gaps left behind by the men now fighting in the war. "Can a gentle young thing who has been brought up on chocolate eclaires [sic] learn to juggle a beam of structural steel while standing…200 feet in the air?" asked one *Los Angeles Times* editor.[46] Despite all of their efforts to organize and lead the food conservation movement, women still had to prove they could competently step into the roles men left behind. Such critics believed that no matter what women said or did to demonstrate their

[45] "Young Women Sought for Nurse Reserve," *Los Angeles Times* (28 July 1918): II3.
[46] "Pants for Women," *Los Angeles Times* (15 August 1917): II4.

patriotism, it did not substantiate feminist claims that women could substitute for men in all walks of life. Still, women, by the thousands, replaced men within various industries, including the railroads, and worked at other jobs that required manual labor. What concerned the writer, though, was how the new pant-wearing trend had spread across the country to the East coast. "If they once get 'em on they'll never take 'em off."[47]

Fashion changes or not, California women proved themselves equal to the task of working outside of the home. Their roles in the food conservation army proved they could hold positions of influence and leadership, and their experience in the workforce demonstrated their ability to balance home and work responsibilities. The added duty of suffrage increased their political authority and opened doors for them to hold positions in political office. Antisuffragists warned of the dangers of women in political office, arguing that women politicians chose to neglect their husbands and children for the sake of power and greed, but suffragists maintained that the government required a woman's presence in political office as much as it did in the voting booth.

Progressive women in California, emboldened by the success of women working in the positions vacated by men, urged other women to take on men's work, including manual labor. Local feminist Katherine Phillips Edson argued that women should not only take men's places in the fields, but in industrial plants

[47] "Pants for Women," II4.

as well. During a speech given to the CFWC, Edson declared, "With all our young men going to war someone will have to fill their places. Who is there left but the women?"[48] Mary Roberts Coolidge took it a step further and encouraged women to run for office. "What we need is women judges, women in Congress and in the Senate," she claimed. But Coolidge understood that if a woman were elected to public office, she would have to be superior to the previous office holder. She would have to prove to all Americans that women were up to the challenge of political office.

Edson was a significant figure in the California women's movement, leading the Political Equality League in southern California. She was political advisor to Hiram Johnson who served as California's governor from 1911 until 1917. As a result, Edson held political appointments, including a position at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Her work on the bureau led to the formation of California's Industrial Welfare Commission, created in 1913 and lasting until World War I.[49] The commission's purpose was to develop a government agency that balanced the interests of labor and management, while honoring the capitalistic principles of a democracy. The commission had the power to fix wages for women to give them the power to afford the cost of living, establish a minimum wage and maximum working hours. Edson also led efforts to regulate food, including the dairy industry, and she lobbied the state legislature for various

[48] "Do Man's Work, Women Urged," *Los Angeles Times* (28 March 1918): I3.

[49] Jacqueline Braitman, *Katherine Philips Edson: A Progressive-Feminist in California's Era of Reform*, Dissertation, UCLA, 1988, 195.

laws calling for the protection of women in the workplace. After working for more than a decade as a state commissioner, an industrial mediator, and a Republican Party activist, Edson became the executive director of the California Division of Industrial Welfare, the first woman to hold a major administrative post in state government.[50]

Governor Hiram Johnson was a progressive governor who supported women's suffrage and their roles within the political arena. He encouraged women like Edson to take on leadership positions, and California women supported Johnson in the voting booth. Describing Johnson's administration as "fat with patronage" and renaming California "Johnsoniana," critics claimed Johnson used women to gain full control of the state. They also accused Johnson of taking advantage of recall and referendum measures and going beyond the limits of his gubernatorial power. [51]

The critics were not entirely wrong in their assessment of Johnson and his desire for power and control of the state. Most progressive reforms were pushed through between the years of 1910 and 1915, and Johnson, a Republican, was not only the leader of the state Republicans but of all Progressives throughout the state. But Johnson's political ambitions extended to the national level. In 1912, Johnson helped establish the Progressive Party, making a name for himself across the

[50] Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 295.

[51] "The Setback of Perfection in California," *New York Times* (29 October 1915): 12.

country. Theodore Roosevelt, noticing Johnson's leadership and impassioned following, asked Johnson to join the presidential ticket as the vice-presidential nominee. Though they lost the election, Johnson's name was still well known throughout the country's political sphere. In 1916, Johnson won a seat in the United States Senate, but the Republican candidate for President, New York's Charles Hughes, failed to defeat Woodrow Wilson. Writers of the *Los Angeles Times* blamed Johnson for Hughes' loss:

> Governor Johnson and his political machine received everything that the Republican party [sic] had to give. In return, they treacherously betrayed Mr. Hughes, traded their support for votes to perpetuate their control over the State finances by securing a majority in the State Legislature, and, now that their treachery has been exposed to the world, they are crying that those who were not permitted to have any active part in the campaign, but whose loyalty to Mr. Hughes has never been questioned, were responsible for his defeat.[52]

Women, the *New York Times* claimed, hurt Hughes's chances as well. Captivated by Wilson's campaign slogan of "He Kept Us Out of the War," California women joined the ranks of the Democratic ticket to support the Wilson campaign and urge other women voters to do the same.[53] Although Hughes also had supporters among women, California women resented how Eastern women campaigned for Hughes. Women from Eastern states arrived in California with the express purpose of instructing California women on how to use the vote, despite not having the vote in the East. There was a disconnect between women of

[52] "Johnson's Wail of Hypocrisy," *Los Angeles Times* (12 November 1916): I2.
[53] "Says Women's Train Bowled Hughes Out," *New York Times* (20 November 1916): 8.

the East and the West, and it harmed Republican chances for the Presidential election in 1916.

Johnson's political ambitions got the best of him and hurt his reputation in California and among women. Between the 1913 Socialist loss of the Los Angeles mayoral election and the presidential election of 1916, the Progressive movement in California slowly came to an end. But in the meantime, women remained active on all levels of politics throughout the state, including as office holders.

Western suffragists boldly spoke of their experiences as office holders. In November 1914, Estelle L. Lindsay became the first woman elected to the California state legislature, and other women were appointed as members of various commissions, including Katherine Edson.[54] Dr. Katharine Davis of California, Commissioner of Corrections, spoke to a crowd of suffrage supporters in Brooklyn, New York, and argued that it would be a natural extension of responsibilities for women to take on positions of power. "Why should we not have a woman Police Commissioner?" she began. "It has always been part of woman's household duties to do the spanking; why not extend the function from the household to the community?"[55]

As anti-suffragists predicted, women were taking over the jobs typically given to men. But the point of suffrage was not to overthrow men from their

[54] Frances M. Bjorkman and Annie G. Porritt, ed, *Woman: Suffrage: History, Argument, and Results* (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing, 1915): 91.

[55] "Miss Davis Favors Women for Offices," *New York Times* (17 April 1914): 6.

positions of power, as the antis had feared. "The ballot is merely the means of getting things done and getting them done quickly," claimed Mary Austin.[56] A California suffragist, Austin argued that it had not been enough to simply wield influence over men. Rather than telling men how to vote and why, Austin argued that woman suffrage was more efficient. The vote had become the woman's voice and influence over politics, without the need of grand gestures. By her own admission, there were state problems that women did not understand and therefore did not know how to solve. However, there were many issues that men did not understand. Very few people – men and women, alike – understood all of the issues, she said, and "it is not necessary for everybody to vote on everything."[57]

Moreover, according to local suffrage leaders, most women did not want to be politicians. "At the State election of 1914, out of 700 candidates for office only twenty were women and fourteen of these were on the Prohibition and Socialists tickets," Mary Coolidge wrote.[58] Women served as school superintendents, school board members, and commission members, "where they are conspicuously efficient as unpaid members and as salaried executives." Despite what Coolidge claimed, some women were indeed interested in serving in official positions and did so successfully.

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[56] "Why Women Want to Vote," *New York Times* (3 December 1914): 20.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Coolidge, *What the Women of California Have Done with the Ballot* (San Francisco: California Civic League, 1916).

According to the CFWC, surveys indicated women who served in political offices were "more conscientious than men, more careful of details, more faithful and…do not dabble in petty politics as men do."[59] Women across the state were appointed to positions of leadership. They would also serve on committees for public welfare, civil service, housing, and social services. They worked alongside men in organizations and political campaigns; they gave speeches; and they motivated citizens to vote. Women, therefore – at least, according to clubwomen – not only voted, but they were involved on every level about the political process.

Not all clubwomen wholeheartedly supported women serving in political office. Mrs. Calvin Hartwell, a member of the State Executive Board of the CFWC, proposed a by-law that prohibited officers within the federation from taking an active role in politics.[60] The measure was overwhelmingly defeated, as a majority of the women involved in the CFWC saw no conflict of interest between club and political activity. Rather, they hoped that politicians would view their thirty-five thousand members as political assets, so leaders of the WCFC encouraged women to take part in politics and to educate themselves of political and social issues.

Just as they always had, women's clubs educated women on a variety of domestic subject and issues, but with the achievement of suffrage, these groups

[59] Mrs. Seward A. Simons, "A Survey of the Results of Woman Suffrage in California," (California Federation of Women's Clubs, May 1917): 2.

[60] "Women's Work and Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times* (21 March 1915): II9.

also assumed responsibility for leading discussions on American government and politics. At a CFWC convention in 1915, chairwomen of different committees within the Federation taught civics classes such as "Applied Politics" and "Rural Co-operation." Other sessions offered opportunities for attendees to learn more about the peace movement, as well as civil service. This was also in conjunction with home economics classes.[61] Women, therefore, maintained their domestic personas, while creating political identities for themselves outside of marriage and the home.

But women who sought roles outside of the home and were typically described as "radicals" or "feminists" by antisuffragists. These "radicals" not only urged women to take their places in political positions – they openly mocked and jeered anyone who stood as obstacles to the suffrage movement. At a suffrage debate entitled, "What Men Think About Woman Suffrage," in New York, while Everett P. Wheeler and Charles L. Underhill argued the pitfalls of woman suffrage, pro-suffrage members of the audience hissed at them, interrupting their presentations. The jeering was so loud and distracting, Dr. Elgin L. Gould, the moderator, asked the audience to be respectful of all of the speakers. "I must demand that this unruly conduct cease. I appeal to your courtesy to show due respect to our invited guests," Gould requested.[62]

[61] "Women's Work and Women's Clubs," II9.
[62] "Suffragists Hiss Opposing Debaters," *New York Times* (27 January 1914): 1.

The story was so outrageous, it made the front page of the *New York Times* and served as the perfect example of what happened to women after they had given in to the feminist ideology. The incident, in fact, hindered the suffrage cause. Colorado senator and former Governor Charles Thompson and Congressman William Kent from California defended women's suffrage and praised its success, but the article did not address either side's argument. Rather, the author focused on the behavior of the suffragists who did not conduct themselves as the submissive, pious beings women were expected to be.

But Mrs. Beatrice Forbes-Robertson Hale, speaking at the Brooklyn Academy of Music at a mass suffrage meeting, directed her condemnation toward antisuffragists and other suffrage critics who tried to disparage both the feminist and suffrage movements. "Feminism," Hale said, "is only the woman's movement under another name – the movement for equal opportunity."[63] The purpose of both the suffrage and feminist movements was to afford women equal rights and prospects. Suffragists and feminists did not, as antisuffragists suggested, intend to threaten the position or power of men.

Helen Todd, a leader in the California suffrage movement, declared that by granting suffrage in California, men in the state demonstrated that women's rights were not a threat. It was "the most beautiful" aspect of the suffrage success. This

[63] "Miss Davis Favors Women for Offices," *New York Times* (17 April 1914): 6.

experience shaped Todd's message to men across the country. "Those who had known the right sort of women could not honestly refuse to give them the vote."[64]

Todd, who served as the Chairman of the San Francisco Civic Centre of the California Women's Civic League, continued to travel the country, making speeches and headlines as she spoke of the benefits of woman's suffrage. It occurred to her, she said, that the most effective suffrage speeches were made to audiences of men, rather than to other suffrage associations. After all, it had been up to men to actually vote and pass the measure. Todd concluded that if she had found a way to relate arguments of femininity and suffrage to men, they would be able to better understand why suffrage had been so necessary. "They feel that there are sides of life that women touch more directly than they, and they think – 'well, perhaps, the women might help us, and it might be worth trying."[65] What men were really interested in was not the "abstract arguments" of suffrage, as she described. Instead, they would rather hear of what actually took place in California.

According to Todd, there were three types of men who opposed suffrage for women: men who worked for "vice interests" such as for the liquor business, men who treated their wives as slaves, and "the silk stocking man, who wants his wife to sit on a throne apart from all the interests of the world."[66] Todd was able

[64] Ibid.
[65] "Suffragist Addresses Men Only," *New York Times* (8 August 1915): 54.
[66] Ibid.

to point out that those men who understood that women would be a beneficial influence in politics were "good men," just as women who wanted their moral influence to extend into government were good women.

While Todd spent her time traveling the country speaking of the benefits of suffrage, Ida Husted Harper felt obligated to respond to a *Times* editorial which suggested that there had been nothing to gain from woman's suffrage. Harper spent the summer of 1915 in California to see these benefits for herself. Though she had lived in California for years before, her summer there had shown an improved difference from prior visits. Wherever she visited and in the people she encountered, she wrote, "I noticed a marked advance in independence, in knowledge of public men and measures, in consciousness of power."[67] With the right to vote, California women became more independent, more knowledgeable, and more self-confident as citizens of the state and the country. They had more to contribute and, therefore, were obliged to exercise their influence as moral leaders over their communities. Because of women's votes, laws concerning social and moral issues were no longer simply on the books; they were finally enforced. The existing laws were not strong enough "because there is not a strong enough public sentiment demanding it."[68]

[67] Harper, "What Women Have Gained by Suffrage," *New York Times*, 15 September 1915, 8.

[68] Ibid.

There was one social issue that women – particularly, suffragists – stood firmly on: temperance. However, California women took a peculiar position on the issue of temperance, when the question of prohibition appeared on the ballot. Mrs. Lloyd Osbourne, a local suffrage leader, claimed that women were not as eager to reform the state as others thought. "It would have ruined the saloonkeepers," she argued, "and we did not wish them ruined by having a measure that would go into effect so quickly."[69] It would go into effect just days after being passed, and some women voters did not see the need for this level of immediacy. Osbourne justified the bill's failure by arguing that women would not be easily swayed into supporting reform only because it was described as "reform."

Antisuffragists were quick to criticize and question California suffragists for the efficiency and effectiveness of the vote. Alice Hill Chittenden, President of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, declared that woman suffrage and temperance were not one and the same. Some states already voted supporting prohibition, and they did so without equal suffrage. Kansas, twenty years before granting women the vote, was a "dry" state. Chittenden also declared that Nevada – which had only granted equal suffrage in 1914, just a few months prior to her speech – were the "wettest" states, while California voted down prohibition. Her point was not without merit. With the support of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, suffragists made significant strides in the

[69] "Says Women Voters Cannot Be Fooled," *New York Times* (16 April 1915): 7.

West, but when given the opportunity to strike down liquor interests, California resisted. Some may argue that by the time the issue arose on the ballot, the women voters were not as supportive of the issue, but it can also be suggested that liquor interests still maintained a powerful influence in the state.

Mrs. J.W. Crumpacker, a representative of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, argued that suffrage had actually harmed the temperance movement in California. According to Crumpacker, Pasadena, California "had practically been a dry city, throughout its entire history, but soon after women were enfranchised, the sale of liquor was legalized."[70] Suffrage, therefore, had the opposite effect of its campaign promise. A woman's influence as a wife and mother not only accomplished what the vote could; it did much more. Antisuffragists claimed they were able to accomplish the goals of prohibition without having to affiliate with the temperance movement as suffragists had.

By July 1917, the issue of prohibition appeared again, thanks to the efforts of the California Dry Federation. The organization presented a petition that called for an ordinance that eliminated all forms of liquor in Los Angeles. Four thousand people, a majority of them women, signed the petition and supported the measure. The California Dry Federation only presented the petition and debated the issue before the City Council of Los Angeles for an hour, but they knew that they faced a strong opposition. While the federation had at least four thousand supporters,

[70] Mrs. J.W. Crumpacker, Letter to the Editor, *The Woman's Protest* 7:4 (August 1915): 11.

the pro-liquor interests had their own petition, with over thirty-five thousand signatures.[71] To ascribe blame for the failure of prohibition in 1915 to equal suffrage was unfair. Temperance advocates – despite equal suffrage measures – still faced significant challenges from liquor interests in the state.

Both temperance advocates and liquor interests had men and women advocating their positions. "I assert that I am just as clean morally," one bartender's wife declared before the City Council, "and just as good in every other respect as any representative of these women's clubs or the W.C.T.U."[72] In addition, liquor advocates argued that six thousand men would be out of work if prohibition were enacted. Temperance advocates, however, argued that it was in the best interest of the war effort if liquor was eliminated. There was no evidence that prohibition would contribute to the war effort, but prohibitionists were hoping to stir up more support for their cause. Just a few months later, prohibition interests argued that measures calling for a "bone dry" state should not be included on the November ballot. Instead, they hoped that by supporting politicians who campaigned on the "dry" platform would push the cause and lead to prohibition in the state.[73]

Despite their failure to pass prohibition measures, women enjoyed legislative success with other issues. Californian Mary Roberts responded to

[71] "Liquor Forces are Consoled," *Los Angeles Times* (4 July 1917): II8.
[72] Ibid.
[73] "California Anti-Liquor Forces to War for Legislature Committed to National Administration," *Los Angeles Times* (6 February 1918): I2.

accusations that suffrage had corrupted and financially bankrupted the state. Rather, suffrage helped to correct the political inefficiencies and dishonesty. Moreover, adding women to the voting population pressured political candidates and parties to be more accountable for the positions and decisions. "The greatest single contribution of women to better citizenship is probably the non-partisan forum for the discussion of public questions and the hearing of candidates for political office."[74]

Roberts also pointed out that out of seven hundred candidates for public office in 1914, only twenty were women, demonstrating that "women in California evidently do not much care to hold office."[75] Even as voters and activists, though, voting women carried influence and power in politics. The Women's Legislative Council, for example, endorsed measures that provided protection for child laborers, created education requirements, and established laws that allowed teachers to go into homes to teach English and citizenship, among other subjects.

On some issues, social reforms were not as easily accomplished for women, as suffragists claimed they would be. Lewis W. Hine, Director of Exhibits for the National Child Labor Committee, criticized California women for not being fully aware of the working conditions for some of the state's children. While some California citizens boldly claimed to Hine that California had never had child labor problems, Hine disagreed and pointed to records in 1910 that found over

[74] "California Women Profit by Ballot," *New York Times* (11 July 1920): E14.
[75] Ibid.

eleven thousand children from ten to fifteen years of age were working for wages. But by 1914 the number of working children decreased to roughly two thousand children. Progress was made, but there was still work to do. There were still "certain forms of child labor which do exist under unfavorable conditions and to which the public seems not thoroughly awakened, even in California."[76]

California women were not the only ones to testify of the success of woman suffrage in the state. Governor William Stephens, in a telegram to Governor H.A. Robert of Tennessee, declared that suffrage had been just as suffragists claimed it would be. "Politics are cleaner," he wrote, "government better administered and the moral welfare of the people far more intelligently and effectively promoted…because of woman suffrage."[77] If the issue of suffrage were on the ballot again, he claimed, the citizens of California would overwhelmingly support it.

Quick to defend and support women's suffrage, Stephens adopted suffragist rhetoric to make his point. California women argued that they had taken a greater interest in politics and as a result, they held politicians to a higher standard and introduced legislation that cleaned up politics. Voting women gained more respect in the home and outside of it. While anti-suffragists argued that women were too ignorant to be effective voters, California women educated themselves on the

[76] Lewis W. Hine, "Some Local Child Labor Problems in California," *Child Labor Bulletin* 4:2 (August 1915): 115.

[77] "Praises Women's Vote," *New York Times* (11 July 1920): 5.

issues of the day. "Thinking women vote independently and conscientiously according to their convictions after careful investigations and consideration."[78] Moreover, voting was not the burden that anti-suffragists claimed it would be. Instead, it was "a responsibility to which they (California women) have responded."[79] Woman's suffrage was so successful that they wanted to "extend the hand of fellowship and the hope their un-enfranchised sisters may soon enter the political life of the country."[80]

In the years leading up to and during World War I, California women were in an especially prominent position as politically active women who were also expected to protect the homefront while the country's men were away at war. Thousands of women volunteered to serve as nurses or organize supplies. Their diligence and discipline – despite socialist distractions – proved their loyalty as well as their capabilities. Through their agricultural work and voluntary efforts, California women demonstrated that it was indeed possible to take care of the domestic sphere and the political sphere simultaneously.

Furthermore, when given the opportunity to serve in public office, women such as Katherine Phillips Edson became leaders of both men and women throughout the state. While the anti-suffragists argued that women were too naïve

[78] Committee of Political Science, *A Survey of the Results of Woman Suffrage in California* (California: California Federation of Women's Clubs), May 1917, Suffrage Collection, Series I, Box 10, Folder 8, Sophia Smith Collection.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

to handle the pressures of political office, Edson and others like her proved otherwise. Women in California rose to the challenges of suffrage, world war, and public office, proving to women across the country that suffrage opened more opportunities to change and lead the country. Consequently, World War I did nothing to spur on support for the anti-suffragist movement; rather, it forced anti-suffragists to alter their strategy in order to maintain their authority.

Chapter 5 –

Anti-Suffragists as 'America's Conscience-Keepers':

Oklahoma (1918 – 1920)

By 1918, several states – mostly in the West and even New York where the headquarters of the National Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage was located – had already granted women the right to vote. Still, Oklahoma was a significant gain for the suffrage movement, despite its relatively small population, because it represented the final phase of suffrage in the West. Oklahoma's history of populism, progressivism, and socialism seemed to make the passage of equal suffrage inevitable, but when Oklahomans passed equal suffrage in 1918, it was not due to the state's experimentation with third party politics. Rather, equal suffrage in Oklahoma was a result of a shift of the local suffrage movement towards more conservative tactics while distancing themselves from links to radical policies espoused by socialists and feminists. Women's involvement in wartime efforts and their willingness to set aside suffrage goals for the good of the country had convinced Oklahoma men that the women were worthy of the vote.

This ideological shift reflected a change in political policy with anti-suffragists as well. Realizing that it was only a matter of time before suffrage laws were passed across the country, anti-suffragists knew that in order to remain relevant in national politics, they would have to change their strategy as it

pertained to equal suffrage. If women across the country would indeed have the right to vote, anti-suffragists would only alienate female support by claiming that voting violated a woman's natural role as defined by Victorian ideology. Instead, anti-suffragists followed the example of the equal suffrage movement. Just as mainstream suffragists attempted to appeal to conservative Americans by claiming that women would use suffrage to bring morality into politics and protect the American family, anti-suffragists argued that if women were going to vote, it was their duty to ensure that the "good" women would eliminate the threat of feminists, socialists, Bolsheviks, and all other threats to American democracy.

There are two Oklahoma women who became political influences in the state and best represent this new strategy. Alice Robertson and Edith Johnson were both prominent women who did not support equal suffrage. In fact, they campaigned against the measure, declaring that women were unfit for the responsibility and that it would be too great a burden to bear. However, once suffrage was granted, they adopted the new anti-suffragist strategy: "good" voting women could save the country.

Prior to equal suffrage, Oklahoma – as both a territory and a state – had a rich history of socially active women. Both national women's organizations as well as local women participated in Oklahoma social and political circles, and they possessed significant influence in the establishment of the territory and the formation of the state. Hoping to build on their momentum in the West that had

already won the vote for women in Wyoming and Colorado, suffragists worked to organize women in both Oklahoma and Indian Territories to create local support for equal suffrage.

Just as in Colorado and California, the WCTU had played a significant role in promoting women's political rights, encouraging women to unite so that they would influence the greater society. By the late nineteenth century, the WCTU hoped to produce local leaders amongst the women in Oklahoma Territory. In 1895, in the wake of their success in Colorado, NAWSA sent workers to Oklahoma to gather support for the local suffrage movement. They had hoped that Oklahoma legislators would be willing to pass a suffrage measure, but it failed. Perhaps legislators were not convinced of suffrage's necessity or success. The movement lost momentum for the foreseeable future.

It was not until the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention of 1907 that suffrage had regained momentum in the now state of Oklahoma. Suffragists had hoped to convince the seemingly progressive leaders writing the constitution that woman's suffrage would benefit Oklahoma, as it had for the other Western states where it was practiced. But state leaders had two major reservations that prevented them from passing the measure. First, they feared that equal suffrage would also enfranchise black women, leading to racial equality. Southerners who migrated to Oklahoma were unwilling to take that risk. Secondly, anti-suffragists feared that once women had the vote, they would align themselves with the

Socialist Party, an already significant influence among farmers and workers in the State.[1] This was especially threatening to Oklahoma Democrats who had until then enjoyed complete control over the local political climate. These arguments proved impossible for Oklahoma's political leaders to ignore; equal suffrage would have to wait.

The first few years of statehood were marred by an economic depression. Farmers' prices and workers' wages spiraled downward across the country, and, Oklahomans blamed the Democrats in power. The economic downturn did not mean bad news for everyone, however. The Socialist Party in particular enjoyed a great success on the national level, but most especially within the state of Oklahoma. From statehood in 1907 until the beginning of World War I in 1914, the Socialist vote doubled in the state. By the time the war began, one out of every five Oklahomans voted for socialist candidates. Socialists gained positions within the state legislature and to dozens of county and local offices.[2]

Just as it had in other states, however, World War I slowed socialists' progress made in Oklahoma. Because they opposed the war and, in some cases, openly spoke against war efforts, their political rivals took advantage of the opportunity to accuse socialists of being unpatriotic and treasonous. In one

[1] Suzanne Schrems, *Who's Rocking the Cradle?: Women Pioneers of Oklahoma Politics from Socialism to the KKK,1900 – 1930* (Norman, Oklahoma: Horse Creek Publications, 2004): 1.

[2] W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008): 346.

particularly famous anti-war demonstration, a group of local farmers from the Canadian River valley organized the Green Corn Rebellion, a movement organized to march to Washington, protesting the war. The so-called Rebellion was poorly organized, and only a few farmers were able to go beyond their own counties. Local authorities easily stopped the movement, and as more Oklahomans supported the war, they lost interest in socialism. State authorities shut down socialist newspapers and arrested socialist leaders, whether they were linked to the so-called rebellion or not.[3] By the end of the war, Oklahoma socialists had lost the influence they had once enjoyed in state politics, as Oklahoma became more conservative and less willing to experiment with leftist ideas.

Despite the distraction from the suffrage debate that the war provided, antisuffragists refused to take any chance of a suffragist victory in Oklahoma. Learning from their mistakes in Colorado and in light of the suffragist threat from within and outside of Oklahoma, antisuffragists organized their own local association. According to the national antisuffragist organ *The Woman Patriot*, the "most prominent men and women" in the state led the Oklahoma Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Motivated by the recent victories of the antisuffragist campaigns in West Virginia and Iowa, Oklahoma's antisuffrage movement had been "aroused," and they were prepared to defeat equal suffrage

[3] Baird and Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma*, 348.

"with vigor, system and success." Both national and local antis had understood the potential threat that suffrage had posed against Oklahoma especially. "The Socialist menace," the author wrote, "is peculiarly acute in Oklahoma. Its 80,000 Socialist votes will go solid for woman suffrage; and the problem of the patriotic men and women of the State is to arouse the patriotic voters to a realization of the dual menace of Feminism and Socialism."[4] To antisuffragists, the link was obvious. All Socialists and feminists were suffragists, and both movements threatened to destabilize the American democracy, the very one for which thousands of American soldiers were risking their lives in the Great War. "With 900,000 men who cannot vote over there," *The Woman Patriot* asked, "are YOU willing to double the Bolshevist…Socialist…Pro-German…and Underworld vote and the expense of elections over here?"[5]

Editors of *The Woman's Journal* believed their anti-suffrage efforts would be rewarded when Oklahoma's men voted on the suffrage issue in November 1918. Confident that the men would pass the measure, one author wrote, "Oklahoma men are finding it difficult to resist the logic and appeal of the suffrage argument that is being presented to them in rhythmic form by the suffrage workers in that State."[6] Though the men failed to grant women suffrage when statehood had been granted in 1907, Oklahoma women proved themselves to be politically vital

[4] "Oklahoma 'Antis' Start Big Campaign," *The Woman Patriot*, 1, 10 (29 June 1918): 1.
[5] Ibid.
[6] "Oklahoma Men are for Women," *The Woman's Journal*, 20, 3 (12 October 1918): 393.

serving on school boards and as elected county officials. Mothers and wives had stepped up as social and political activists, campaigning for temperance and volunteering for such war aid organizations as the state defense council and the Red Cross. Even President Wilson voiced his support for the local suffrage cause. In a letter to the chairman of the state's Democratic committee, Wilson wrote, "I beg that they [Oklahoma voters] will permit me to express to them, as I did to the Congress of the United States, my deliberate judgment that the adoption of woman suffrage is a necessary part of the program of justice and reconstruction which the war has convinced the nations of the world that they should undertake in the interest of justice and peace."[7] In the end, equal suffrage triumphed in Oklahoma by just over 23,000 votes.[8]

World War I for Oklahoma suffragists – like their suffragist sisters across the country – provided an opportunity to participate in wartime efforts by serving as Red Cross volunteers and working on the local state defense councils. They soon recognized that cooperating with what was deemed "radical" organizations, such as the Socialist Party, only hurt efforts to attain equal suffrage. By temporarily setting aside their political agenda and coming together to support American forces to preserve and protect democracy, suffragists demonstrated their understanding of the importance and priority of national emergencies in the face of personal politics. Because Oklahoma women proved their potential during the war

[7] "President Helping Suffrage in Oklahoma," *The Suffragist*, 41, 6 (2 November 1918): 3.

[8] "News of Oklahoma," *The Oklahoman* (14 November 1918): 13.

and since other states had enjoyed the benefits of equal suffrage, Oklahoma legislators finally passed equal suffrage in October 1918.

In the ensuing years until the passage of the national suffrage amendment, Oklahoma women performed in the political arena just as their sisters throughout the West had. Though little has been written about the overall population, the stories of individual women who participated in politics, regardless of their prior stance on suffrage, reveal a complicated and important history.

One such woman is anti-suffragist Edith Cherry Johnson, a columnist for the state's newspaper, *The Oklahoman*, who was known for her opinions on women's roles in the family and greater American society. She, like many other Americans who subscribed to Victorian ideals, believed women were morally superior, and she argued that it had been up to women to make the world a better place in which to live. She supported club activities and promoted them often, but she was not as readily supportive of women's suffrage. Towing the anti-suffragist line, Johnson feared that suffrage would take women out of the home.

Johnson argued that women did not need the vote as they already had tremendous influence in society as the moral leaders. "Women have now a broad latitude in which to exert their abilities, and this is something for which they

should be profoundly grateful."[9] With more temptation to expand their roles, women could feel more "rebellious" and would exert the energy they would have spent on the home and use it instead for "politics and trade." Her intentions and motivation soon became clear. Johnson did not fear the suffrage movement; she feared the equal rights movement.

During the war, Johnson, like antisuffragists and pro-war activists, was quick to accuse national and local suffragists of being selfish by promoting their cause and continuing their campaigns for the vote during a time of war. After members of the Oklahoma State Suffrage Association voted to raise $25,000 for their campaign, Johnson suggested that even with the best of intentions, suffragists were "misguided in their zeal to plan an expenditure of any substantial sum of money other than for war work."[10] Suffrage was not the biggest issue of the day; it was war. Protecting American interests and values should have been the foremost thought on every American's mind. "One cause and one only must claim our minds, our service and our dollars," she concluded, "the cause of victory for the allied arms."[11]

Despite her efforts, suffragists won their fight, but Johnson still felt compelled to write her editorials. Now addressing woman voters, her essays on

[9] Edith Cherry Johnson, "Women's Privileges and Men's Rights," *The Oklahoman*, (9 January 1917): 6, Edith Cherry Johnson Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

[10] Johnson, "Is Suffrage the Biggest War Work," *The Oklahoman* (25 January 1918): 6.

[11] Ibid.

the roles of women in the home and in the community questioned whether women would step up to their new political responsibilities. Now she wrote as if it were her responsibility to remind all Oklahoma women of the importance of their new political duty. "It is a political and social obligation," she wrote, "not to be lightly discharged, not to be cast at the dictates of partisan prejudice, not the tool of a spoils system in politics, but an opportunity to cleanse life of sorrow, suffering and oppression, and to make it better, healthier, and happier than it is for many today."[12] If woman had been the moral compass for American politics as she had been for the family and society, then it would be up to her to clean up all that politicians had done to corrupt the country. "If women are genuinely and sincerely interested in the betterment of other women and children – they now have an opportunity to demonstrate that fact."[13]

But it would not be until July 1919, eight months after suffrage was granted, that Oklahoma women were first put to the test. Suffrage advocates maintained that male voters had grown apathetic and therefore politicians were able to pass whatever measures they had wanted, regardless of how inappropriate or ineffective. It was this particular argument that led Johnson to question whether women would take interest and participate in the political arena. "Will they do their duty as citizens, or will they plead hot weather and a thousand other excuses?" Johnson asked. After speaking to some women and asking them if and how they

[12] Edith Cherry Johnson, "Will Oklahoma's Women Abolish 'Living Hells'?," *The Oklahoman* (29 January 1919): 6.

[13] Ibid.

would vote, Johnson wrote that many of them had claimed to be too busy to be concerned with "public questions" and therefore did not know how they felt about the political issues of the day. But Johnson made it clear that regardless of the suffrage debate, after all the effort exerted to ensure that women had the right to vote, there was no excuse that would justify political inactivity. "There is no use to mince words about it – every woman who can vote, and doesn't, is a slacker. The responsibility may have been 'wished on her.' That, however, will not absolve her from going to the polls today and to the best of her knowledge and judgment, casting her vote."[14]

But if Johnson had been paying attention to local politics, she would have known that Oklahoma women had a long a history with state and local politics before gaining the right to vote. For example, Lamar Looney was a landowner, served as a county treasurer, and campaigned as a suffragist. Widowed and left with five children, Looney took it upon herself to learn about land ownership and its implications. She educated herself and understood that in order to affect change, she would also have to educate herself in the ways of politics.

Beginning in 1903, Looney worked tirelessly for the Democratic Party on the campaign trail and helped to register voters throughout the state. Her years of work increased her visibility and influence in the party, and party leaders appointed Looney as a delegate for state and local conventions. Her political work,

[14] Johnson, "Woman's Sacred Duty: Will She Perform It?".

however, was not limited to party politics. Looney also worked as an outspoken advocate for women's equality. In 1918, Looney was the chairwoman of the Woman's Suffrage Committee.[18] She, alongside other local suffragists, went from door to door, asking Oklahoma men to sign petitions for equal suffrage. Years later, Looney would serve as a state representative in the Oklahoma legislature.

There were women like Looney throughout the state, and because of these women, Oklahomans were familiar with the concept of politicized women. Women's participation went beyond the club and social activities that antisuffragists had claimed were enough for women's social influence. Oklahoma's history of progressivism had been more far-reaching with or without the war. Although World War I had ushered in a more conservative political climate, women's involvement in politics remained a mainstream idea. Thanks to the efforts and experiences of women in the West, it became a part of the American political arena.

Yet, Johnson, like other conservatives, insisted that there were risks involved if women chose political activity. Entering a world of corruption and greed would surely defile the purity and piety of women, so much so that there was the possibility that women could become just as corrupt as men. Questioning if women were more "deadly" than men in politics, Johnson wrote that it was healthy for women to come together and discuss politics; it showed that they had

[18] *Hollis (Oklahoma) Post-Herald*, 22 January 1920.

taken an interest in government and were trying to educate themselves on the issues that the country was facing. However, she, too, worried that before long women would become as vicious as politically active men. "If women expect to 'purify politics,'" Johnson wrote, "they must take into it a spirit of calm and thoughtful consideration and womanly gentleness."[19] Johnson – who once espoused antisuffragist rhetoric to prevent equal suffrage measures from passing in Oklahoma – was now using suffragist ideal to encourage the woman vote. To "indulge in turbulence" would "only fan the old flames of partisan hatred and malice."[20]

As vice-president of the Oklahoma Anti-Suffrage League, Alice Mary Robertson argued that there was no need for women to prove their equality to men. Women, she believed, demonstrated their importance to society through their daily responsibilities, and suffrage would only add to the woman's burden. Her fight against the vote ended in defeat, and Robertson suddenly saw it as an obligation, burdensome as it was, to participate. Comparing political activity to chores she performed as a child for her family's survival, Robertson claimed, "I didn't think it was work for a woman to do. But it was my duty – the nearest one."[21]

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[19] Edith Cherry Johnson, "Is Female More Deadly Than Male in Politics?" *The Oklahoman* (26 October 1920): 6.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Linda Reese, *Women of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997): 228.

Rather than encourage women to vote like Johnson did, Robertson chose to test the limits of political activity. "The men have thrust the vote on us and now I am going to see whether they mean it," she proclaimed in 1918.[22] Robertson promised she had no desire to enter the US House of Representatives and challenge men's authority. Instead, she claimed that she would be the "conscience keeper" of America just as women were "the conscience keepers and conscience quickeners" for their families.[23] Oklahomans knew her to be generous and endearing. She spent the years of World War I developing close bonds with soldiers by giving them food from her own restaurant and volunteering with the Red Cross. With the support of local veterans and the help of friends, antisuffragist Alice Robertson became the first woman elected to Congress from the state of Oklahoma.

As the only woman elected to Congress that year, it was only natural that the public compared Robertson to other politically active women. The most obvious comparison would be with the first woman who ever held a seat in the Congress, Jeannette Rankin of Montana.[24] Edith C. Johnson, a columnist for *The Oklahoman*, criticized Rankin for being a "much made-over and flattered

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[22] Louise B. James, "Alice Mary Robertson – Anti-Feminist Congresswoman," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 55 (Winter 1977 – 1978): 457.

[23] Johnson, "Will Alice Robertson Succeed Where Jeannette Rankin Failed?" *Oklahoman* (10 January 1921), 6.

[24] Elected in 1918, Rankin was the first woman to serve in the US House of Representatives and lost her re-election bid in 1920. For a completely biography, see Hanna Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin, First Lady in Congress: A Biography* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974).

woman."[25] Rankin, Johnson believed, was too concerned with being a young woman among many men, wearing fancy clothes and "getting her hand kissed." Robertson, though, would not be concerned with such things. Robertson was at an age when "passions have cooled," Johnson claimed, and it would "bring to her work pure reason, a heart whose interests will be undivided and a nature undisturbed by romantic excitement."[26] Others agreed with Johnson and believed that Robertson had the opportunity to be better and greater than Rankin was. Jeannette Rankin squandered her opportunity, they argued, and proved that she was unpatriotic by voting against the war. Robertson, on the other hand, had the chance to demonstrate what the ideal woman could do in politics. She could use her role as a congresswoman to "show what she can do or just what she is capable of doing for humanity."[27]

Robertson pledged to represent farmers, help Indians, be a friend to soldiers, and take care of the responsibilities of women. This should not, however, imply that Robertson's victory was a victory for women's autonomy. Historian Linda William Reese writes, "Robertson's election did not signal a victory for women as independent political beings. Rather, many perceived it as the triumph of the 'right kind of woman' over the selfish and divisive suffragette minority."[28] Robertson in

[25] Edith C. Johnson, "Will Robertson Succeed Where Rankin Failed?"

[26] Ibid.

[27] Letter from John H. Dill to AR, 9 November 1920, Alice Robertson Collection, Series II, Box 2, Folder 12, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

[28] Reese, *Women of Oklahoma*, 229.

no way intended to challenge the power or authority of men; she refused to even establish herself as a political equal. In fact, she chose Benjamin E. Cook, a Muskogee war veteran, as her secretary, because "men like to talk things over with a man."[29] Just as the woman was to serve as the moral leader of her home, Alice Robertson chose to be the moral compass in the House of Representatives.

Robertson began her career as a Congresswoman in 1921, naïve of what lay ahead. She enjoyed the attention paid her as the only woman in Congress as well as the first woman elected after the suffrage amendment passed. In addition to invitations to various banquets and other such professional courtesies, Robertson was also appointed to various House committees: the Indian Affairs Committee, Department of Interior Expenditures Committee, and, ironically, the Woman Suffrage Committee. Though the attention, honors, and dinners were numerous and enticing, what waited for her in the chamber of the House of Representatives, however, displayed the ugliness of American politics.

After voting against the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Bill,[30] Robertson lost what little support from women she had. Although the purpose of the bill was to reduce infant and maternal mortality, as well as curry favor with female constituents, Robertson and other critics believed that the bill was designed to create a loophole for women who did not want the responsibility of motherhood.

[29] Johnson, "Will Robertson Succeed?"

[30] Texas Senator Morris Sheppard and Iowa Congressman Horace Towner sponsored the bill in July 1921.

Robertson believed feminists were attempting to take women out of their homes and away from their responsibilities as wives and, more importantly, mothers. Although women criticized her vote, Robertson was not concerned because "the women did not vote for me before and I was elected."[31] She was right; her core support came from veterans and other members of the military.

But Robertson managed to alienate her core supporters as well after she voted against the Bonus Bill.[32] Robertson claimed that veterans who demanded the bonus were putting a price on their patriotism. Comparing World War I veterans to the veterans of previous American wars, Robertson argued that if those veterans did not require bonuses, neither did the veterans of the Great War. Unfortunately for Robertson, word of her comments spread across the country, angering the members of the American Legion in Oklahoma.

Ultimately, her battles with women and veterans would haunt her as she decided to campaign for reelection. Though she was not afraid of losing the support of women, she underestimated the impact her vote against the Bonus Bill would have on her core bloc of supporters, soldiers and veterans. Robertson assumed her political supporters and allies would see her as a mother figure and respect Robertson's reasons for her votes. "I went to congress determined to be guided entirely by my conscience and I have faithfully performed my duties,"

[31] Undated article, ARC, Series II, Box 3, Folder 4.

[32] The Adjusted Compensation Bill, introduced in the beginning of 1922, proposed that each soldier be paid $1.25 for each day of foreign service, as well as other monetary benefits for veterans.

Robertson said after her defeat."[33] Her conscience won the congressional seat, but she lacked the political savvy to keep it. Having done very little, as they saw it, for the groups she had promised to help, her constituents decided that they had had enough of the Honorable Miss Alice in Washington.

Some writers for *The Oklahoman* were conflicted on the benefits and the perils that equal suffrage posed. One writer parroted some of the arguments of national and local antisuffragists. Women, they argued, had always been effective influences through their church involvement and civic organizations, but as voters, they had been a disappointment. "The states where women have voted longest are not noted for political purity, nor do they lead their sister states in progressive or humanitarian legislation," the author wrote.[34] Still, the author admitted, voting had not degraded the women nor did it destroy the home, as antisuffragists had insisted.

Just as in other equal suffrage states, women were expected to take action on behalf of the weakest and most vulnerable, particularly children. In 1918, the National Child Labor Committee reported that many children in rural Oklahoma were not attending school because their work on farms and in their homes took priority over their education. "When one sees the children robbed not only of their schooling, but also of their right to normal childhood, where play has its legitimate part," wrote Charles E. Gibbons, "it is then he recognizes the injustice of a system

[33] "Miss Alice is Not Bitter at Loss of Seat," *The Oklahoman*, 9 November 1922, 1.
[34] "Suffrage Gains," *The Oklahoman*, (27 May 1919): 6.

that makes their exploitation necessary in order that the family may live."[35] By the next year, acting upon recommendations from the National Child Labor Committee, a Children's Code Commission had been established to standardize child welfare laws.

When Oklahoma granted equal suffrage, suffragists across the country were campaigning for ratification of the suffrage amendment – named the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in honor the now deceased suffrage leader – but faced obstacles along the way. There had been debates over whether the federal government had the authority to enforce a law over the entire country or if it should be left up to the states. In light of the debate, suffragists from across the country gathered in San Francisco in 1920 – just a few months prior to the passing of the national amendment – to participate in the Democratic National Convention, hoping that suffrage would become a part of the party platform. According to *The Oklahoman*, the men at the convention were not entirely thrilled about the woman suffrage plank, but allowed the women to speak their peace. They not only addressed woman suffrage, but the prohibition of child labor and full representation of women on all commissions dealing with all women's work or women's interests, in addition to many other issues.[36] Suffragists insisted even by

[35] Charles E. Gibbons, "Farm Children in Oklahoma," *Child Labor Bulletin* 7, 1 (May 1918): 45.

[36] Winifred Black, "Women Took Step Forward Through Courtesy of Men At Democratic Convention," *The Oklahoman* (5 July 1920): 3.

the end of the suffrage fight that women were best able to deal with issues concerning women and children.

After Oklahoma passed an equal suffrage amendment, national suffrage leaders had declared that Oklahoma's victory had been a tremendous achievement for the movement. "Never was a victory so victorious as in Oklahoma!" one suffragist declared.[37] Oklahoma men should be proud of their decision argued Mrs. Frank J. Shuler – a national leader who had spent months campaigning for suffrage in the state. Not only had they listened to the voices of 60,000 women who had petitioned for the vote, but they had also made Oklahoma the first state in the South to grant equal suffrage. When asked what she believed women would do with the vote, Shuler replied, "The women in Oklahoma will do exactly what the women in the other fourteen full suffrage states have done – they will vote for the good men and for what makes the best in government."[38]

Her confidence, though inspiring, did not necessarily reflect what had actually taken place within Oklahoma. A margin of 23,000 votes separated a suffrage victory from defeat – a significant victory margin, especially when considering how the narrow victory California suffragists enjoyed in 1911. In February 1919, national suffrage leaders, hoping for equal suffrage across the country, called on the US Senate to pass a national suffrage amendment. All but one state had done so: Oklahoma. Rather than believe that Oklahomans did not

[37] "Oklahoma's Victory," *The Woman's Journal*, 27, 3(30 November 1918): 545.
[38] "Mrs. Shuler to Attend Meeting," *The Oklahoman* (15 November 1918): 19.

support suffrage after all, suffragist writers of *The Woman's Journal* blamed state leaders such as W. C. McAllister, chairman of the Committee on Privileges and Elections. After a measure to make a public statement endorsing women's suffrage had passed the state house, it had been sent to the state senate, directly to McAllister's committee. One writer accused McAllister, who was hostile to the idea of equal suffrage, of trying to manipulate the results of the election back in November and was once again doing his part to prevent women's suffrage from succeeding, but this time on the national level.[39] Yet, the hesitation on the part of the state senate had signified something more fearsome than mere political tactics; national suffrage leaders did not educate themselves on the power of local political ideology.

Despite the enthusiastic support and participation of Oklahoma women, there was hesitation to support a national suffrage amendment. According to *The Oklahoman*, the referendum petition supporting a national amendment was withdrawn after the United States Supreme Court declared that Ohio, which had similar referendum laws to Oklahoma's, could not allow popular vote to determine the ratification of a law. The ruling stated "that even those states which have referendum provisions in their constitutions cannot have a popular vote on the issue as to whether or not a legislative ratification of a national constitutional amendment shall be sustained."[40] Oklahoma women, including members of the

[39] "What's the Matter with Oklahoma?" *Woman's Journal* (15 February 1919): 776.
[40] "Suffrage Referendum," *The Oklahoman* (6 June 1920): 10.

Oklahoma Woman Suffrage Association, did not believe it necessary to supersede states' rights for an amendment their state already passed. Though there was no doubt that Oklahomans supported equal suffrage, "the referendum petition was believed by many to be brought forward merely as a means of postponing the time when the women of the country should have the vote."[41]

Oklahoma's leaders were also facing turmoil that complicated ratification support as well. After World War I, the largely Democratic state, for the first time in its history, supported a Republican presidential candidate in Warren Harding, voted for Republican Alice Robertson, and elected a Republican majority in the state legislature. After the state house impeached Democratic Lieutenant Governor Martin Trapp, Governor James B. A. Robertson hesitated to call a special session to vote on the ratification of the national suffrage amendment, fearful that he, too, would be impeached. Still, Governor Robertson supported the equal suffrage amendment and would call a special session but only "if…state officials do not get busy and help to build up rather than tear down the democratic party, I feel justified in convening the legislature in the very near future."[42] It worked out for the governor in both instances, having escaped formal impeachment charges by a single vote and leading a state that did not see the need to ratify a national amendment.

[41] "Suffrage Referendum," *The Oklahoman* (6 June 1920): 10.
[42] "Governor to Help Women if Necessary," *The Oklahoman* (31 January 1920): 1.

Still, when the pressure of ratification lay on Tennessee, writers for the *Daily Oklahoman* encouraged Tennessee leaders to ratify. "It would be a good political stroke on Governor Roberts' part to call a special session of the legislature to consider the federal suffrage amendment," editors wrote.[43] In August 1920, Tennessee was the thirty-sixth state to ratify equal suffrage, passing a national suffrage amendment. The seventy-two year suffrage fight finally came to a victorious end.

The national suffrage amendment seemingly put a period to the end of the suffrage movement, but the debate continued. Suffrage advocates, though, were quick to answer critics. "Those who have any regrets," wrote editors for *The Oklahoman*, "should keep their mouths shut and watch the experiment work out to the advantage of the United States."[44] Still, critics cautioned and urged women to take their – in some cases, new – responsibility seriously. "If women actually are capable of thinking clearly, intelligently, constructively," Edith Johnson wrote, "they can render a great service to their country at a time in her history when she demands the utmost of intelligence and wisdom from her citizenship."[45] But they would have to prove themselves to be up to the challenge of suffrage and all that it required.

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[43] "Tennessee in the Limelight," *The Oklahoman* (25 June 1920): 6.
[44] "Bravo Tennessee!," *The Oklahoman* (19 August 1920): 6.
[45] Edith Johnson, "The Only Way for Women to 'Save Civilization,'" *The Oklahoman* (20 August 1920): 6.

With or without ratification, Oklahoma women demonstrated their ability to exercise political autonomy without allowing socialism or feminism to steer them away from the democratic agenda they were expected to uphold. Thus, fears of feminism overpowering femininity or socialism upending democracy had not been enough to stop the progress of suffrage. Instead, Oklahoma women's conservatism justified the need for their political voice.

Once given the vote, Oklahoma women, just as their Colorado and California counterparts, readily accepted responsibilities as political participants and leaders. Women served as county superintendent of schools and other county positions throughout the state, just as Lamar Looney had in the early 1900s. These women understood their duties and what had been expected of them as women in positions previously occupied by men. And as Oklahoma had represented the final phase of the suffrage movement, it slowed the anti-suffrage movement to a stall, an indication that the country was ready for the woman's influence in politics. Though there were still several states that had not granted equal suffrage, many had allowed women to vote in local and school board elections.

These experiences led to a new strategy for anti-suffragists – one that kept them relevant in an increasingly suffragist environment. By shifting the focus from anti-suffrage to pro-"good woman"-suffrage, the antis appeared as if they were supporting the same cause as their rivals. The suffragist strategy had been so effective that it inspired anti-suffragists to join the effort, but in their own way and

with their own logic. They reminded voters of the possibility – however remote it was – that socialism and feminism would overturn the American democracy. Therefore, it was a "good" woman's responsibility to protect her country and family by voting to preserve the United States. Anti-suffragists redefined women's responsibilities to include political activity and continued their roles as wives and mothers without any interruption. Thus, with the help of anti-suffragists, the New Woman emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in conjunction with woman's suffrage.

Conclusion:

"Our Fight Has Just Begun"

When the 19th Amendment was finally ratified in 1920, the anti-suffragist cause seemingly came to its end. Their fears of a national mandate on women's political voice came to pass and there was nothing left to say, or so it seemed. According to anti-suffragists, their fight had "just begun."[1] Indeed, they did not consider losing the suffrage battle as a loss for the movement; it was a loss for the country. Suffragists had "brought us toward the stage of squaw rights reached five thousand years ago by the Hittites just before their annihilation," wrote one anti-suffragist, "and by every other decaying civilization from the Canaanites and Jews to the Poles whose partition came down in an era of feminism."[2] Feminism, therefore, was the path to the end of civilization as they knew it.

Feminism supposedly brought out the worst in women, making them selfish creatures who pursued their own interests above others'. This was especially problematic for anti-suffragists who still believed in the ideology of True Womanhood, where women sacrificed their own interests for the sake of their husbands and their children. Suffragists, anti-suffragists argued, encouraged women to abandon their responsibilities at home for the selfish pursuit of political equality. But suffragists claimed that a woman's self-development was necessary

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[1] "Our Fight has Just Begun," *The Woman Patriot* 4: 34 (21 August 1920): 4.
[2] Ibid.

for the health of the family and the country. This dichotomy of self-sacrifice and self-development was further developed in Carol Gilligan's famed work *In a Different Voice*.

Gilligan argues that the women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries challenged the ideals of self-sacrifice as advocated by True Womanhood and instead promoted ideas of women's education and enlightenment.[3] The True Woman sacrificed her needs and wants for the good of her husband and her children. While True Womanhood proponents believed that a woman who did not sacrifice her interests were selfish, women's rights advocates argued that a life of self-sacrifice was equal to slavery. Furthermore, they encouraged women's self-development, claiming that as intelligent beings, women's voices should be included in changing the practices that were harmful to the family and the country.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's claims that "self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice" did little to help the suffrage cause. Ironically, what helped the equal suffrage cause in the United States was adherence to True Womanhood rhetoric while advocating the cause of women's suffrage.[4] Suffragists promoted self-development for a cause that involved self-sacrifice. Voting was another responsibility for women to carry and another opportunity to protect their family

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[3] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Harvard University Press, 1982).

[4] Ibid., 129.

and country. Colorado's Helen Ring Robinson personified this strategy. Arguing that she intended to be the homemaker and housekeeper of the Colorado state senate, she also argued that she would not vote as her male counterparts did for business interests but rather for the interests of Coloradoans. Thus, in order to become the New Woman, suffragists had to use some of the principles of True Womanhood.

The principles of True Womanhood clearly outlined the purpose and duties of women as wives and mothers. None of these principles explicitly addressed women's activity in politics, and women who strictly adhered to this ideology refused to believe that any issue or problem required women's direct input via the vote. But suffragists argued that those very principles justified the necessity of women in the political arena. As the pure and pious leaders of society, women had an obligation to rectify the political mistakes men had made. Politics had corrupted men; women's moral influence would redirect their cities, states, and country on the correct path.

Anti-suffragists did not intend to become involved in politics. As women with Victorian ideals, they knew their place was within the home working as wives and mothers. But suffragists forced such women to take up a new cause. Anti-suffragists had to prove that their influence within the home was sufficient to have an effect on life outside of the home. Thus, the battle over women's roles in society began.

In order to effectively promote their cause, anti-suffragists understood immediately that they needed only to refer to women's influence in male-suffrage states. These states passed laws protecting children and other laws against red-light districts, without any need of woman suffrage. Women used their roles as wives and mothers to persuade their husbands, fathers, and other male relatives or friends to pass laws that were in the best interests of the family and the nation. Moreover, they were raising their children – particularly their sons – the values by which good citizens abided. Thus, a woman's authority within the home not only assured good laws in the present; it was an investment in the nation's future. Male-only politics had proven successful; woman suffrage was unnecessary and expensive, anti-suffragists argued.

Suffragists, on the other hand, would have to prove that there was a need for women to be directly involved in politics. They promoted their cause on the basis of equality and necessity, and as their campaign continued, they adopted rhetoric that echoed the values of True Womanhood. Suffragists used women's roles as wives and mothers to explain the necessity of the vote. To preserve the morality of the country, the country's moral leaders – women – needed to have direct input in politics, suffragists argued. Ironically, suffragists employed a strategy similar to that of anti-suffragists; they both used women's virtue and morality as the cornerstone for their opposing arguments.

For months prior to ratification, the anti-suffragists predicted the "collapse" of "western races" because of the power of feminism. Civilizations such as the Hittites, the ruling people of Palestine, who "gave their women political 'equality' with men and the Poles whose 'men grew decadent' as the women 'grew virile,' were all destroyed because of political equality between the sexes.[5] Still, though they would not admit it, anti-suffragists knew that in order to remain relevant after dealing with major political losses, they would have to redefine their purpose. Initially, however, anti-suffragists hoped that their arguments would be enough to stop equal suffrage momentum.

As states in the west granted equal suffrage, both suffragists and anti-suffragists realized that the key to the success of the suffrage movement was in the American West. Coloradoans and Californians spoke highly of their experiences with suffrage, and this led to the gradual spread of equal suffrage throughout the west. With more states in the west under the suffrage column, anti-suffragists recognized that the fight for the vote, thanks to the American west, had gained too much momentum to stop. Western women, therefore, were at the forefront of the suffrage movement.

Though they backed a lost cause, anti-suffragists were right about one thing: their fight had, indeed, just begun. For Edith Cherry Johnson, the fight

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[5] "Western Races on Verge of Collapse Through Feminism," *The Woman Patriot* 4: 33 (14 August 1920): 3.

against suffrage and feminism continued. In 1921, two years after equal suffrage passed in Oklahoma, Johnson still argued that women's suffrage was "a minority rule." While one woman may have wanted the vote, she wrote, "Ten more did not want it or were frankly indifferent."[6]

Johnson's real struggle, however, would be with her own life and its inconsistency with her rhetoric. Despite the advice she so freely gave to her readers on the proper roles of the sexes, she lived in quite the opposite way. Johnson did not marry, nor did she have children. Her fifty-year tenure at *The Oklahoman* ensured her economic independence. Never becoming the true woman she always praised, Johnson mourned that she was to "live vicariously in and through thousands of other people's marriages" and would have to use her potential as a mother to "comfort and console" others.[7]

Though she would have to live vicariously through other "true" women and continued to criticize political women, Johnson remained active in politics when she deemed it necessary. After John C. Walton announced his candidacy for the Senate in 1924, Johnson wrote a series of articles imploring women voters to defeat the impeached former governor. Walton suffered an embarrassing defeat, and Johnson credited "true" women. Women were "determined to preserve the ideals of the home which are the strength of the home. Women uphold

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[6] Johnson, "Will Women Be Drafted for the Next Big War?" *Daily Oklahoman* (15 April 1921): 6.

[7] Johnson, *Story of My Life*, (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1940), 2.

Christianity, their churches, and their religious leaders."[8] Thus, Johnson attempted to justify her lifestyle with the virtues of True Womanhood while avoiding the title of "feminist." She was an independent and working woman who was determined to uphold the values that defined the "true" woman.

In addition to Edith Johnson's mission to redefine feminism, the antisuffragist movement took up other causes. Their stand against equal suffrage spurred on future movements against women's rights, including the more successful campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The amendment, written by feminist Alice Paul, declared, "Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex." Initially proposed in 1923, Congress did not pass the measure until 1972, when it was sent to the states for ratification and long after antisuffragists had fought their unsuccessful campaign. But by then, Phyllis Schlafly, an unsuccessful Republican candidate for Congress, established the STOP-ERA organization.[9] Schlafly argued that the ERA threatened the structure of the family, required women to serve in combat, and would create unisex bathrooms.

Just as anti-suffragists feared the cultural upheaval that suffrage could create, Schlafly argued that ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment "threatened

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[8] Johnson, "Women's Power in Politics," *Daily Oklahoman* (7 November 1924): 6.
[9] The acronym STOP stood for "Stop Taking Our Privileges."

conventional culture, established institutions, and customary social roles."[10] The greatest threat was against the institution of the family. In her most notable critique of the ERA, "What's Wrong with Equal Rights for Women?," Schlafly argued that the American woman was "the most privileged. We have the most rights and rewards, and the fewest duties." These rights and rewards, which coincide with the acknowledgement that the family is "the basic unit of society," are based on a fact of life: "women have babies and men don't."[11]

This fact, Schlafly claimed, created a society in which women would bear children and "men must be required to bear the other consequences and pay in other ways."[12] Just as anti-suffragists argued that equal suffrage would be detrimental to a woman's status in American society, Schlafly essentially suggested that the Equal Rights Amendment would disrupt and destroy the heart of American society as well as the modern chivalry that Judeo-Christian beliefs created in its legislation.

Schlafly's claims directly opposed Betty Friedan's argument that women were pressured into becoming wives and mothers, and such pressure prevented women from achieving self-fulfillment. After the social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, Friedan's statements reverberated with many American women. However, Schlafly understood what her anti-suffragist predecessors did not: the real

[10] Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 214.

[11] Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

[12] Ibid.

strength of the movement would have to come from local communities. Just as suffragists depended on grassroots activism to propel their movement forward, Schlafly launched a "grassroots movement in churches and local communities that eventually became a major player in the Republican party."[13]

Herein lies the key to the success of the national suffrage movement. The national leaders played an important role by bringing attention to the cause, but local women, clubs, and suffrage associations were central to the suffrage movement's victory. Were it not for the congressional testimonies, essays, articles, and letters, Americans in the east would only hear the debate rhetoric rather than the personal experiences of suffrage. As they stepped out of their Victorian roles and into the political arena, these Western women challenged the national anti-suffrage movement in a way that the national suffrage movement could not. It was widely accepted that equal suffrage was not perfect, but perfection was not necessary. Their testimonies demonstrated that the American democracy could handle and survive a new voting bloc, no matter how ignorant or over-burdened anti-suffragists claimed women would be.

As states and territories in the American West one by one passed equal suffrage, anti-suffragists knew their cause was lost. Their failure to realize the suffrage movement's momentum and understand the power of grassroots-level movements all but guaranteed their loss. However, it was not the end of

[13] Critchlow, 4.

conservative women's movements, nor did it foreshadow their failure, as Schlafly's STOP-ERA demonstrates. And although the suffrage amendment did eventually pass, anti-suffrage efforts prolonged the debate so that the fight for suffrage lasted for nearly eighty years. Most significant, however, is that anti-suffragists were able to redefine their movement and their purpose while still remaining true to the ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood.

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