

Short title:

THE IDEAS OF THE ENGLISH-CANADIAN SUFFRAGISTS,

1877 - 1918





LIBERATION DEFERRED:  
THE IDEAS OF THE ENGLISH-CANADIAN SUFFRAGISTS,  
1877 - 1918

by  
Carol Lee Bacchi

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Department of History  
McGill University  
Montreal.

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## ABSTRACT

Canada had two suffrage movements. The first which operated between 1877 and 1895 was led by a small group of highly educated, professional women who sought complete economic, political and social equality between the sexes, a status symbolized by the political right of enfranchisement. Labelled "Women Rightists" and extremists these first suffragists were unpopular and their societies either disbanded or fell into a lull from which they did not recover until the second decade of the new century.

The second suffrage movement (1906 - 1918), although instigated by the feminist successors of the pioneer suffragists, attracted a different kind of man and woman who were motivated by significantly different drives. It developed as part of a middle-class reform ethos characteristic of the period, a reform ethos committed to surmounting the social disintegration which accompanied urbanization and to reinstating Protestant, middle-class mores. Middle-class reformers in the prohibition, social gospel and the more politically sophisticated secular reform movements (i.e. those in child welfare, public health, pure food, prison and municipal reform, and the "new" education) had begun to infiltrate the first suffrage societies as early as 1880. But, after 1906, owing to industrial and urban growth, the ideas of social reform seemed more urgent and woman suffrage became lost in a new era's preoccupation.

In the hands of the social reform suffragists female enfranchisement



came to mean something very different from the early days of Women's Rights. Because they were intent on re-establishing social order, this more moderate group defended the social status quo, including the traditional allocation of sex roles. The movement lost its socially critical, radical perspective and abandoned the claim to full and equal opportunities for women. Furthermore, by becoming partners in a middle-class reform alliance, the suffragists alienated the women of other classes. What the suffrage movement lost in radical critique it gained in respectability. The approval and support of the middle-class reformers gave the women political influence and ultimately the vote. Genuine liberation, however, was deferred indefinitely.



## ABSTRACT

Le Canada a eu deux mouvements de suffrage. Le premier qui a eu lieu entre 1877 et 1895 a été dirigé par un petit groupe de femmes professionnelles, hautement qualifiées, qui recherchaient une égalité complète, économique, politique et sociale; entre les sexes et un statut apportant l'affranchissement du droit politique. Désigné sous le nom "Women Rightists" et extrémistes, les premières suffragettes n'étaient pas populaires et leur sociétés furent dispersées ou demeurèrent dans un état de léthargie jusqu'à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle.

Le deuxième mouvement de suffrage (1906 - 1918), même s'il était incité par les successeurs féministes de la génération des pionnières suffragettes, a attiré différent sorte de gens qui étaient motivées par des ambitions diverses. Il s'est développé dans la classe moyenne pendant que l'on s'appliquait à réformer les moeurs, caractéristique de cette époque, la réforme de l'éthos qui s'était vouée à surmonter la désintégration sociale causée par l'urbanisation, et à réintégrer les moeurs de la classe moyenne protestante. Les réformistes de la classe moyenne voués à la prohibition, évangile sociale et mouvements de réforme séculiers des plus sophistiqués au point de vue politique (par exemple, le bien-être de l'enfant, la santé publique, l'alimentation naturelle, la réforme des prisons, la réforme municipale, et l'éducation "nouvelle") avaient commencé à s'infiltrer dans les premières sociétés de suffrage



dès 1880. Cependant, après 1906, dû à la croissance industrielle et urbaine, les idées de la réforme sociale semblaient plus urgentes et les suffragettes ont sombré dans cette nouvelle préoccupation de l'ère.

Le vote des femmes, pris en mains par les reformistes sociaux, avait une signification différente du premier mouvement féministe. Parce qu'ils étaient déterminés à rétablir l'ordre social, ce groupe plus modéré demandait statu quo en matières sociales et en ce qui concernait le rôle traditionnel de l'homme et la femme. Le mouvement perdit son sens critique social, sa perspective radicale, et les femmes abandonnèrent l'idée d'égalité entre les sexes. En outre, en devenant associées au mouvement de réforme de la classe moyenne les suffragettes avilissaient les femmes des autres classes de la société. Ce que le mouvement de suffrage perdit dans sa critique radicale, il le gagna en prestige. L'approbation et l'encouragement des réformistes de la classe moyenne donna aux femmes une influence politique et finalement le droit de vote. L'émancipation totale fut ajournée indéfiniment.



## PREFACE

Recently Canadian historians have paid a great deal of attention to the character of late nineteenth and early twentieth century reform movements. Temperance, the social gospel, health and child welfare have each received intensive analysis. These reforms were interrelated and together they constituted a reformist "united appeal" which gave Canada its own, albeit often derivative, progressive movement.

Although female suffrage formed an essential link in the reform coalition, the relationship between it and the other reforms has often been ignored. This thesis attempts to fill that void by explaining why the reformers supported woman suffrage, what role the suffragists played in the larger reform cause, and how the movements affected one another. In particular, it tries to demonstrate how the suffrage affiliation with social reform altered the direction and design of woman suffrage.

The thesis owes much to Catherine Cleverdon's pioneer work on the Canadian suffrage movement, published in 1950, a descriptive narrative of incidents and events at both the federal and provincial levels. This study hopes to go beyond Cleverdon's approach by examining the ideology of the suffragists, why they did what they did - and by placing the movement in the larger context of its times.

To provide this larger background the thesis utilizes several interpretive themes from Canadian and American historians, of which only



the most important may be mentioned here. Richard Hofstadter's Age of Reform and Robert Wiebe's Search for Order explain the "status crisis," the anxiety and expectations which motivated America's middle-class reformers. Joseph Gusfield's Symbolic Crusade suggests the role that temperance played in resolving these anxieties. Several unpublished Canadian theses, notably those by Terrence Morrison, Lionel Orlikow, Howard Palmer, Robert Miles Stamp and John H. Thompson, and several important articles by Michael Bliss, Paul Rutherford and John Weaver support the applicability of these themes to the Canadian scene. In the Social Passion Richard Allen provides an excellent study of the religious motivation behind the reform crusade.

On woman suffrage itself, Aileen Kraditor's division of the American movement into two parts, an earlier, more radical phase eclipsed by a larger but more cautious, defensive one is equally applicable to Canada. Moreover, the thesis has adopted William O'Neill's distinction between a "feminist," a woman dedicated to equal rights and equal opportunities for women, and a "social reform suffragist," the late-comer who placed reform first in her priorities.

I am indebted to a number of people for their assistance but none more so than to Dr Carman Miller, my thesis advisor for the past five years. Dr Miller has given generously of his time to help guide me through the intricacies of Canadian intellectual and social history. I am also grateful to Mrs Ruby Napier of McGill's History Department and to my



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## ABBREVIATIONS

P.A.C.	Public Archives of Canada
W.L.U.A.	Waterloo Lutheran University Archives
C.S.A.	Canadian Suffrage Association
C.W.S.A.	Canadian Woman Suffrage Association
D.W.E.A.	Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association
M.S.A.	Montreal Suffrage Association
N.E.F.U.	National Equal Franchise Union
P.E.F.B.	Provincial Equal Franchise Board (Saskatchewan)
P.E.L.	Political Equality League (Manitoba)
T.W.L.S.	Toronto Women's Literary Society
U.F.W.A.	United Farm Women of Alberta
W.G.G.A.	Women's Grain Growers' Association



# Why Women Need the Vote.

Because no race or class or sex can have its interests properly safeguarded in the Legislature of a country unless it is represented by direct suffrage.

Because women, whose special care is the home and that questions intimately affecting the home are being settled in Parliament, where they are not represented. Such questions include housing, education, the health of infants, vaccination, the employment of children, sweating, the labor of married women, unemployment, the care of the aged, and many other matters.

Because great numbers of women, who have no care of their own homes, are used that of their children, and that the labor that woman is doing is undervalued and protected by men who are working out her own salvation and completely failed.

Because politics and economics go hand in hand, and that the women can get their economic grievances attended to, how women are represented in Parliament are thus compelled to sell their labor cheap and to be exploited and are underest in the labor market and the capitalist class in the market.

Because women are taxed without being represented in the Legislature, and that the women are taxed in tyranny. They have to pay taxes and they have to have a voice in deciding what they pay.

Because the Legislature in the past has been composed of men, and that the women are not represented, and that the women are not represented in the Legislature. Moreover, it is still making laws for the women, and so long as women are not represented in the Legislature, they are not represented in the Legislature.

Because the women and men and women are not represented in the Legislature, and that the women are not represented in the Legislature. Moreover, it is still making laws for the women, and so long as women are not represented in the Legislature, they are not represented in the Legislature.

Because as long as the majority of the women of a country have no voice in politics or in the national life, the children grow up ignorant of the meaning of the struggle for freedom, and lessons learnt in one generation of women experience have to be repeated by succeeding generations.

Because wherever women have become voters, reform has proceeded more rapidly than before.

Because women, equally with men, need interest in the larger human life outside the home, and will be better, freer women when they have a voice in the national life.

Because the responsibility of women as citizens is essential to the maintenance and development of social justice and order and to the wise and efficient government of a nation. For a nation is but a larger home, and the wise woman knows that women's love and judgment and voice are needed in the home.

**Women's Suffrage Headquarters**  
 200 Queen Street  
 Toronto



## INTRODUCTION

The industrial revolution and the rise of the city which characterized late nineteenth, early twentieth century Canada had serious social and psychological repercussions. The nineteenth century concept of the individual suffered a severe shock as everywhere collective bodies, nation states, corporate monopolies, became more important and more powerful. People accustomed to defining their place and worth by community opinion felt lost and insignificant in the large urban monolith.<sup>1</sup>

To compensate for the feeling of individual impotency people began to organize.<sup>2</sup> The "club craze" which became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century is but one example of this collectivist tendency.

Individuals sought identity and strength through union with those with whom they shared common interests. Religion, political allegiance, even sex provided a common denominator for organization.

Owing to an increased specialization of function, occupation became a popular means of identification. Economic, status or ideological insecurity brought together members of the same class or occupational group. Labourers formed unions, farmers founded cooperatives, business and professional men and women established protective societies. Even industry, as Michael Bliss points out, the reputed defender of individualism, the free market and laissez faire, responded to a "protective impulse" and endorsed cooperation and combination over cut-throat competition.<sup>3</sup>



Sometimes groups representing different occupations, cooperated on a broader basis because they shared other common interests or goals. One such combination, the middle-class reform coalition which operated in Canada at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, consisted of three elements: some members of the Protestant clergy, old and new professionals (lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists, social workers) and a few small businessmen. These three groups were held together by class, religion, and ethnicity. Broadly the three may be considered "middle class."<sup>4</sup> Ethnically and religiously they were almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon<sup>5</sup> and Protestant.<sup>6</sup>

The Canadian middle-class reform coalition was born of anxiety created by the socio-economic transformation of late nineteenth century Canadian society. By 1920, after fifty years of gradual but sustained growth, Canada emerged "a nation transformed",<sup>7</sup> economically, socially, ideologically. Despite the quicker economic development after 1895, the whole period from 1870 onwards can be seen as one of general movement towards industrialization, consolidation and social dislocation.<sup>8</sup> During the "depression" of the 1870's and 1880's Canada maintained an annual growth rate of 4%. After 1895, owing to a conjuncture of favourable circumstances, the country sustained a period of rapid economic expansion which made the earlier gains seem meagre. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the discovery of gold, the recovery of world trade and the "closing" of the American frontier made Canada the last, best West and



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established the foundation for a transcontinental trading empire. Massive inflows of foreign capital after 1901, the coming of the wheat boom after 1902, and the beginning of the pulp and paper industry contributed to Canada's economic maturation.

Economic growth was not an unmixed blessing, however. Several attendant developments, principally rapid urbanization and rural depopulation, heavy foreign immigration, the consolidation of industry, and growing labour unrest caused considerable concern among Canada's native middle classes.

The crisis of the Canadian cities constituted a recurring theme in their critique. In 1880 over 75% of Canada's population was rural; by 1900 this had dropped to 62.5%; by 1921 the urban population equalled the rural.<sup>9</sup> Unprepared for the influx, Canadian cities became congested and slums, poverty and disease became social facts of life. Tuberculosis and venereal disease spread quickly in crowded urban quarters and no class remained immune from their contagion. City life encouraged drinking and immorality and undermined religion. Family life lost its significance as well. Statistics showed a positive correlation between city size, a decline in birth and marriage rates, and an increase in crime, delinquency and truancy.<sup>10</sup> The city became the villain in the reformers' social drama.

The consolidation of industry increased the feeling of social insecurity, especially among merchants and small industrialists, many of whom maintained a limited family business. From January 1909 to January



1913 Canada experienced fifty-six industrial mergers or amalgamations which absorbed two hundred and forty-eight individual companies. By 1914, Gustavus Myers estimated, fifty men controlled more than one third of Canada's wealth, expressed in terms of railways, banks, factories, mines, land and other properties and resources.<sup>11</sup>

Size alone constituted a menace as monopolies eliminated free competition among the smaller units. Even more frightening was the suspicion that large corporations exerted influence on and in some instances controlled the federal, provincial and municipal politicians, men who were supposed to be impartial arbiters. For years American social critics had warned about the insidious control corporations exerted over government; Canadians had now to face this menace at home.

Labour unrest exacerbated middle-class apprehension. Although the period from 1900 to 1920 was generally a prosperous one, higher prices reduced the real benefits for Canada's lower classes. Rents increased 60 to 70% between 1900 and 1910 and the number of families living in one room increased 74% in the same period. Real wages over the period 1900 to 1914 fell by 1.9%.<sup>12</sup> Labour had just begun to organize in the late nineteenth century but, always aware of the American precedent, Canadians saw their future in Haymarket, Homestead and Pullman. Canadian trade union membership jumped from 20,000 in 1900 to 143,000 in 1915 to 378,000 in 1919, increasing the fear of industrial strife and confrontation.<sup>13</sup>

The flood of immigrants into Canada, numbering about two and a half million, between 1896 and the First World War created yet another problem.




A large proportion came from eastern, southern and central Europe and were ethnically alien to the Canadian French-British charter groups. Many immigrants settled in already crowded urban quarters, compounding the dismal situation there.

Nativism played an important role in the creation of Canadian reformers. They held a sort of messianic confidence in the place and importance of the Anglo-Saxon race and feared the dilution of their national character by the influx of foreigners. Their programme included reforms such as prohibition and compulsory education which were designed to transform the immigrant into "Christians and Canadians."

Because of the reformers' Protestant background the two, "Christians" and "Canadians," were held to be synonymous. Previously the Church had provided basic moral instruction in Sunday sermons and mission schools and had relieved the most urgent cases of poverty through voluntary charity. But the physical, spiritual and moral needs of the urban masses, native and foreign, could no longer be met by these traditional methods. Canadian Christians had to find alternate means to solve the urban crisis and to bolster their value structure.

The reform coalition advocated a series of interrelated reforms to resolve the problems which most disturbed them. The reform package included temperance, applied Christianity, child welfare, public health and pure food, social work, municipal and education reform and woman suffrage. Some reformers promoted one specific reform more vigorously but each generally endorsed the whole platform. The temperance, child welfare,





woman suffrage and numerous other reform associations frequently had overlapping memberships.

This social programme demanded a political philosophy more appropriate to its needs than the tired old faith in individualism and the limited power of the state. Though far from socialists or even social democrats the reformers were willing to use state machinery to offset the domination of big business, to relieve the most pressing needs of the lower classes and to impose their mores upon both groups. Their interest in the positive power of the state naturally made them more conscious of its defects. They particularly feared the corrupt, corporate control of government and politicians. Political purity became one of their watchwords.

Yet while the reformers distrusted industrial bigness they admired its efficiency. They realized that the corporations possessed their beneficent side. Although they always retained a romantic vision of agrarian life they desired to accommodate the present to the past, not to retreat to an illusory "Golden Age." Their Utopia lay in the future.

The infatuation with industrial efficiency had a deleterious effect on the movement, however. Although the reformers considered themselves humanists and progressives, they consistently placed greater value on order, stability and national strength than on actual relief of suffering. Milton Rokeach described the Canadian reformers when he wrote that, although their programme appeared humanistic in content, because of the desire for businesslike administration, the structure designed to implement it became impersonal and bureaucratic.<sup>14</sup> The confusion between



goals and means produced inner inconsistencies and eventual disillusionment in the mind of many a reformer and contributed to the eclipse of reform in the immediate post-World War I era.

In American history Richard Hofstadter has suggested that the American middle classes suffered from a general loss of societal status due to the appearance of corporate magnates and industrial millionaires.<sup>15</sup> He sees this "status anxiety" as the moving force behind the middle-class reform impulse of the early twentieth century. The Protestant clergy, says Hofstadter, had lost prestige in an increasingly secularized community. Similarly small businessmen felt displaced by large industry. But the professionals present a more complex case. Hofstadter admits that many professional groups, especially doctors, lawyers and teachers, increased their status in this period and he can only explain their presence in the coalition by suggesting that perhaps "certain social-psychological tensions are heightened both in social groups that are rising in the social scale and in those that are falling...."<sup>16</sup> Christopher Lasch disagrees. He feels that the professionals, as members of the intelligensia, felt alienated in an age which gave priority to economic growth and attendant material values and that the "status crisis" is therefore applicable to them also.<sup>17</sup>

Robert Wiebe offers yet another explanation. His reformers are not "a displaced elite seeking to reclaim their slipping social status."<sup>18</sup> Rather he presents them as members of a dynamic and optimistic group who



deliberately attempted to substitute their values for traditional but outmoded American beliefs. The professionals, the most dynamic element, he argues, realized that a complex industrial society required a complex programme of social control. Therefore they promoted a bureaucratic, well-administered, efficient social structure to restore order to a confused and confusing society.

Canada's middle-class reformers fall midway between these interpretations. They seemed both anxious and defensive and yet they managed to construct a rather inclusive, detailed blue-print for a new social order. The two themes are not contradictory, however. It appears logical that groups which felt themselves displaced and dispossessed should attempt to guarantee themselves a position in the future. A glance at their social programme suggests that they wished to establish a need for their particular service in the future and a position of respect in the community. The social gospel promised to make Christianity more relevant. The attack on the trusts and corporations implied a new lease on life for the small businessman. Social welfare, community health programmes, and compulsory education guaranteed many professionals occupational and psychological security. The eager endorsement of industrial bureaucratic models suggests desperation and ideological inconsistency rather than confidence and dynamism.

The reform programme may have been novel but it was hardly revolutionary. The reformers did not want a sharp change in the social structure but they were willing to accept minor modifications in order to



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maintain the essence of that structure. In other words they wished "to reform in order to preserve."

The inclusion of woman suffrage in the programme confirms the reformers' basic conservative and defensive nature. The reformers staunchly upheld the middle-class family. In fact, most of their reforms were attempts to extend to society values and attitudes associated with middle-class family life. The need for secondary instruments of socialization, such as regulated morality, schools and prisons, only indicated their fear that certain social classes had escaped the influence of a good Christian upbringing.

Female enfranchisement, to their mind, represented a means of strengthening the family by doubling its political representation. It promised a second, desirable result since it increased the influence of women in the community. The reformers generally accepted the Victorian image of the asexual, pious female and decided on these grounds that women's votes would do more, in the end, to buttress rather than shatter the social status quo. Temperance men and ministers particularly wished to enlist woman's reputed opposition to drunkenness. Most reformers added to their request for female enfranchisement the need for a property or intelligence qualification. They wanted only the "best" women voting in order to help control the poor and the frequently illiterate immigrants.

In the reform scheme the woman's ballot meant only an "expression of opinion" in the world at large and in no way altered her "divinely" ordained role as "Mother of the Race." The reformers wished to extend the



purifying, maternal role of woman as defender of the home not to weaken that role by advocating alternate, additional occupations. By extending woman's influence, a slight concession, they hoped to conserve the essence of the middle-class family.

Canadian Protestant middle-class women endured the same apprehensions as the men of their class. They shared the feeling of alienation in a secular, materialistic society, the fear of racial dilution by the "stranger within our gates" and of domination by the "interests." The general sensation of helplessness and placelessness differed in no material way from male members of their class. Moreover, industrialization created problems which particularly affected women. If the middle-class male felt oppressed and estranged, the middle-class female felt much more so.

Technological innovations, the typewriter, the telephone, the department store, offered women new employment outside the home. At the same time compulsory universal elementary education created a demand for a large supply of teachers willing to work for less money, a supply middle-class women readily filled. But female opportunities ceased where male interests began. Women who wanted to enter the more prestigious, better-paid professions encountered hostility and derision. Lawyers and doctors, in the process of carving out a protected enclave for themselves, saw no place for women.

For those middle-class women who remained at home, new inventions relieved much of the dull, domestic routine. With children off at school



and canned goods and ready-made clothing near at hand, however, the urban woman felt her usefulness diminished.

For the more wealthy, industrialism posed yet another dilemma. The factories, shops, and department stores drew off the supply of cheap, domestic labour. The servant shortage challenged the well-to-do woman's social position and left her the unpleasant possibility of having to make her own beds and sweep her own floors.

Women responded to these problems in several ways. The proliferation of women's societies towards the end of the nineteenth century indicates that many followed the urge to collectivize to offset the feeling of impotency engendered by industrialism. Philanthropic and social reform clubs, literary and musical societies, women's temperance groups, missionary clubs, parks and playgrounds associations, consumer leagues, all profited from the increased leisure and anxiety of middle-class women. The reform societies proved particularly attractive for they not only provided women with something to occupy their time but they also satisfied the women's desire for a sense of purpose and usefulness.

The first suffrage societies, however, do not belong to this broad amalgam of women's reform associations. The problems of industrialization seemed less urgent in the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's, the years the first suffrage societies appeared. The pioneer Canadian suffragists, those who founded these original societies, were motivated by a "feminist"<sup>19</sup> commitment to equal occupational opportunities for women rather than by class anxieties. They tended to be employed professional women. Many were



doctors, journalists, and teachers. They were the women who had to contend with the restrictions placed on their career ambitions by their dominant male associates.

Their social vision implied a radical overhaul of the existing social structure. They defended woman's rights as an individual. In their eyes men and women were equal partners in a common humanity who ought to be able to undertake any social role which appealed to them. <sup>20</sup> A few even went so far as to reject marriage and the supposed blessings of housework. To these women the vote served only as the symbol, not the substance of the equality they demanded.

These ideas proved too unconventional for most middle-class men and women, which explains the unpopularity of the "Women's Rights" issue in the early days. Under the constant barrage of criticism the feminists soon tired and began to change the emphasis of their argument. They began to underplay the hated equal rights theme and to stress the value of the vote as an end in itself. In doing so, however, they forgot that the legal victory involved no revolution in values.

Meanwhile, as early as 1880, male and female social reformers began to infiltrate the suffrage societies. They had very different reasons for supporting woman suffrage and, as a result, the reform changed in content and purpose. Since they were committed to the goals of the middle-class reform movement these new suffragists supported the social status quo and the traditional allocation of sex roles. They wished to strengthen the



family by doubling its representation, not to see it weakened further by encouraging women to seek occupations outside the home.

As a result the reformers no longer stressed the common humanity of men and women. Rather they drew attention to those characteristics which distinguished women from men, particularly woman's reputed purity, sobriety and religiosity. In this way they enshrined the traditional view of dual spheres, the working world for men and the home for women.

Although many of the female social reform suffragists were professionals, they did not encounter the same resistance and hostility which turned pioneer female professionals into feminists. Moreover, a larger proportion of the reform-oriented suffragists were married middle-class housewives, drawn from the ranks of the idle middle class, who therefore showed little interest in the issues of salary and job discrimination.

But the most important reason for the new approach was the increased anxiety over growing social problems and the consequent relevance of the reform movement's message for the middle-class woman. In a period when the middle classes feared change she could hardly advocate further social innovation. In a period preoccupied with the creation of a great nation she saw no need to advocate extra-familial occupations for the "Mothers of the Race." There was obviously too much to be done at home. Therefore, she promised that woman would remain in her allotted sphere and would use the vote only to assure the passage of legislation to protect her home, community and nation. Social reform became her goal and the vote nothing



more than the means to that end. The history of the English-Canadian suffrage movement is the history of the decline of the "woman-centred" feminist suffragists and the growth of the more moderate, social reform element.

Not every social reformer became a suffragist. For the purposes of this study SUFFRAGISTS ARE ONLY THOSE MEN AND WOMEN WHO BECAME ACTIVE MEMBERS OF CANADIAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATIONS. Many reformers were unable to make this commitment. Some endorsed female suffrage verbally. Some worked for it through other associations, primarily through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Others even opposed the extension of the vote to women on the grounds that they could probably accomplish more without it. This last group feared that entanglement in party politics, the bugbear of many nonpartisan reformers, would reduce the power of organized womanhood.

Sometimes a personal snub, often simply the frustration of working for reforms but being unable to vote for them, drove female reformers into outright suffrage associations. A degree of sex antagonism, however slight, distinguished the female suffragist from the larger body of female social reformers. Their anger generated the raw energy necessary for a potential restructuring of social sexual attitudes. But, for the female social reformer who had turned suffragist, the hostility never became sufficiently severe to cause her to repudiate her class interests; as a result, the revolution in values never took place.

Ideology has been defined as "a system of ideas and judgments,



explicitly stated and organized to describe, explain, justify a collectivity's situation and destiny."<sup>21</sup> The collectivity may be either a social class, a political party, a nation, a social movement, or a sex. The difficulty in studying the ideas of the suffragists is that the women belonged to several collectivities. They owed allegiance to their sex, their class, and their nation. As members of a nationalistic middle class, they were insecure, anxious and consequently their ideology tended to be moderately reformist. As women they were frustrated and potentially aggressive and hence capable of revolutionary initiative.<sup>22</sup> This conflict between anxiety and aggression, between reform and revolution created tension and division in the ranks of the suffragists. The majority traded their sex for their class and nation. This decision made the more moderate ideology dominant, thereby transforming the movement from a critic to a defender of the social status quo.

According to sociological definition, when the suffragists adopted the petition method, their status changed from social movement to pressure group.<sup>23</sup> The success of a pressure group depends upon the influence it exerts on those in power which, in turn, depends upon the group's numerical, monetary and organizational strength and upon the social status of its members.

At the height of the movement in 1916, Canada had some 10,000 male and female suffragists, or less than .2% of the total population over age fourteen.<sup>24</sup> Clearly the movement represented no ground-swell of popular



support. The suffrage societies were scattered and weak. The so-called "national" associations represented only Toronto and vicinity. Yet, within forty years, Canadian suffragists achieved their political goal.

Two factors contributed to their success. First, by underplaying the theme of "Woman's Rights" and by declaring their commitment to the virtues of domesticity and family life the social reform suffragists won the movement respectability. This enabled high-ranking men like the education reformer, James Hughes, and women like Lady Grace Drummond, the wife of a Montreal Senator, to join the movement.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, their coalition with the larger middle-class reform movement gave the suffragists the added numerical, monetary, and organizational strength of their allies.

Victory, however, has two sides. Women received the vote but the euphoria of success obscured the more fundamental question of woman's role, a question raised, if only briefly, by the feminists. In the years following female enfranchisement, women continued to fill the poorer paid, less prestigious occupations and to regard the maternal as their most natural, most rewarding sphere. Women today who look back to the suffrage movement and claim it as the predecessor of the modern women's protest, have difficulty explaining the dearth of progress after 1920. The reason is now clear. The suffrage movement fell into the hands of male and female reformers who did not share the feminists' critical social perspective, who used the movement to further their class objectives and who, as a result, limited the movement's potential for real, meaningful change for women.



The present study, of course, cannot claim to speak for the rank and file of the movement. The nature of the available research material dictated the scope of the study and limited it to an examination of the suffrage elite, the Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and most active members. The study of an elite is quite compatible, however, with the study of the ideology of a movement as the elite usually formulates and propagates that ideology and usually understands the movement better than those distant from the central organizations. "Elites create, activate, and symbolize social movements"<sup>26</sup> and therefore provide the best raw material for the study of the assumptions of those movements.

Membership lists, minutes of suffrage meetings, association reports, and newspaper articles on suffrage gatherings revealed the names of 200 active Canadian suffragists, 156 women and 44 men.<sup>27</sup> Of these, approximately two-thirds have been identified, including ironically a much larger proportion of the men. The reason for this apparent anomaly is that women seldom attracted enough notoriety in their own right to justify inclusion in Canadian biographical collections. Nonetheless, this probably constitutes a sample sufficient to make generalizations about the composition of the suffrage elite.

Ethnically the suffrage leaders were mostly native or British born. Among 28 male executive members, 16 were born in Canada (12 in Ontario, 2 in Quebec, 1 in Nova Scotia, and 1 in the North West Territories), 8 came from Britain and 1 from the United States. No place of birth could be ascertained for 3.<sup>28</sup> The high preponderance of Ontario men is not



surprising as Ontario remained the centre of suffrage activity from the very beginning. Of 114 female executive members, 41 were Canadian-born (21 in Ontario, 14 in Quebec, 4 in Nova Scotia, 1 in New Brunswick, and 1 in Newfoundland), 9 were British, 8 came from the United States, and one from Iceland.<sup>29</sup> For the 42 active but non-executive female members, the proportions are roughly the same.<sup>30</sup> The names of most members, even of those for whom no birth place could be discovered, are Anglo-Saxon.

The movement contained a broad-based Protestant representation. The majority were either Presbyterians, Methodists, or Anglicans, which is not surprising given these denominations' relative numerical status in the general Canadian population.<sup>31</sup> Although past historians have considered Methodism the reform pace-setter in Canada, the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches are very well represented in the suffrage societies. Understandably, due to the English domination of the movement in this period, the number of Roman Catholics is disproportionately low.

An occupational analysis of the male suffrage members reveals a preponderance of educators, journalists, civil servants, politicians, clergymen and even a few businessmen. In short it constitutes a good cross-section of each of the three middle-class groups who formed the reform coalition.<sup>32</sup> The employed suffragists were mainly professionals, doctors, authors, and educators. Both business and the ministry proved intractable to female infiltration.<sup>33</sup> A glance at the husbands' occupations of married suffragists confirms the movement's monolithic middle-class character. Most were professionals or disaffected businessmen.<sup>34</sup>



## CHART I

## RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF THE SUFFRAGE ELITE BY PERCENTAGE

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	CAN. <sup>1</sup>
SAMPLE	44	156	200	7,206,643
METHODIST	13.6	14.1	13.8	14.9
PRESBYTERIAN	22.7	8.3	15.5	15.5
BAPTIST	6.8	3.2	5	5.3
ANGLICAN	6.8	10.9	8.5	14.5
CONGREGATIONAL	9	.6	4.8	.5
UNITARIAN	2.3	1.9	2.1	
PROTESTANT		1.9	.9	
ROMAN CATHOLIC		1.9	.9	39.3
AGNOSTIC	2.3	1.3	1.8	
QUAKER		1.3	.6	
FREE CHURCH		.6	.3	
UNKNOWN	36.4	53.8	45.1	
OTHER				10

<sup>1</sup> Based on 1911 Census.



CHART II  
OCCUPATIONS OF SUFFRAGE LEADERS

	NUMBERS		PERCENTAGES	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
MINISTERS	12		27.3	
JOURNALISTS, AUTHORS	4	39	9	25
LAWYERS	3	1	6.8	.6
DOCTORS		19		12.2
CIVIL SERVANTS, M.P.'s	7	7	15.9	4.5
EDUCATORS	7	23	15.9	14.7
BUSINESSMEN	2	4	4.5	2.6
PHILANTHROPISTS	1	2	2.3	1.3
LABOUR REP.	1		2.3	
UNION ORGANIZER		1		.6
LECTURERS		2		1.3
AGRICULTURALISTS		2		1.3
MUSICIAN		1		.6
ARTIST		2		1.3
UNKNOWN	7	53	15.9	33.9
TOTAL	44	156	100	100



CHART III  
OCCUPATIONS OF HUSBANDS OF MARRIED SUFFRAGISTS

	NUMBERS	PERCENTAGES
MEDICINE, PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS	12	11
LAWYERS	7	6
EDUCATORS	8	7
JOURNALISTS, PUBLISHERS	4	3.6
PUBLIC SERVANTS, M.P.'s	11	10
BUSINESSMEN	19	17
MINISTERS	6	5.4
UNKNOWN	43	39
TOTAL	110	100



Statistical comparisons between the suffragists and the population as a whole are difficult to make owing to the imprecise occupational categories used in the censuses. Still one is struck by the all but complete absence of blue collar workers who represented approximately 34% of the labour force in 1911, and by the disproportionately high number of managers and professionals.

The level of education attained by the majority of male and female suffragists confirms the hypothesis that the movement was "well-led." Among the 28 male leaders, 14 held University degrees, 2 graduated from Normal School, 3 were educated privately while only 1 attended English National Schools. Of the 156 female suffrage leaders, 33 held an M.A. or better, 17 a B.A., 13 attended Normal School, 12 graduated from Ladies' Colleges and Collegiate Institutes, and 5 were educated privately.<sup>35</sup>

The female suffragists included both professionals and homemakers. Approximately 65% held jobs, a rather exceptional number given the fact that of the total female population over age ten in 1911, only 14.3% and in 1921 only 15.2% were gainfully employed. Even more unusual, most of the employed suffragists (62.1%) were professionals at a time when female professionals constituted only 15.9% (1921 - 24.2%) of the total Canadian female work force.<sup>36</sup> Approximately 42% of the suffragists who held jobs were single. This is not surprising as these women probably had to become self-supporting. Nevertheless the 58.4% married working suffragists were an unusual phenomena in a period when the idea of a married woman working was generally unacceptable. Of course, several of the employed married



suffragists might have been widowed or divorced and therefore forced to support themselves; unfortunately the title "Mrs." says nothing about the health or whereabouts of the husband.

The suffragists also included a more conventional group. The housewives probably constituted some 35.3% of the leadership. Although it is difficult to provide exact statistical evidence, it seems that the second suffrage movement contained a higher proportion of nonprofessional women.<sup>37</sup>

The nature of biographical material, particularly the paucity of information on the lower classes, may have prejudiced this study's findings. It is possible but improbable, given the middle-class prejudices of the suffragists and their paternalistic attitude towards labour,<sup>38</sup> that those men and women who could not be identified through traditional biographical sources belonged to the working class.

Yet the limitations of statistics should be recognized. While it is valuable to make generalizations the following examples suggest the importance of exceptions. Although the majority of female suffragists were well-educated professionals, Helena Gutteridge of the B.C. Political Equality League was a union organizer, a member of the Garment Workers' Union and of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. Although most suffragists were self-professed Protestants, Flora Macdonald Denison, President of the Canadian Suffrage Association in 1909, believed in spiritualism and proclaimed herself an agnostic. A member of the Canadian Woman Suffrage Society in 1883, T. Phillips Thompson, well known for his



radical religious and political views, believed in Theosophy and edited a labour newspaper, the Labour Advocate. On one level, the movement is straight-forward, both in ideology and in composition; on another, it is extremely complex.

Historical literature on the Canadian suffrage movement is very limited. Catherine Cleverdon's pioneer work, published in 1950 and recently reprinted by University of Toronto Press with an excellent introduction by Ramsay Cook, remains the single classic on the subject. As Cook points out, however, the Cleverdon work suffers from a lack of ideological and socio-economic analysis.<sup>39</sup>

General Canadian history books tend to neglect the suffragists completely. Volumes obsessed by political developments fail to mention the major electoral change affected by the 1920 Franchise Act.<sup>40</sup> Thanks to the popularity of woman's history today, this omission is being corrected, a fact illustrated by the number of theses in progress on the subject and the availability of valuable biographical aids for serious students.<sup>41</sup>

A few historians have noted the link between the suffragists and other reformers. W. L. Morton, in an introductory chapter to the Progressive Party in Canada, suggests a direct connection between woman suffrage and the temperance campaign.<sup>42</sup> Roger Graham in his essay in the Canadians, 1867 - 1967 offers a valuable insight into the woman's movement which he associates with a spirit of "moral uplift and reform."<sup>43</sup> Most



recently, Terrence Morrison included a chapter on the Woman's Rights movement in his study of child welfare in late nineteenth-century Ontario, revealing the interdependency of the two campaigns.<sup>44</sup>

Primary material on the subject is also scarce. Only a few collections of suffragists' papers are available, notably Nellie McClung's, Flora Macdonald Denison's, and the Emily Stowe and Augusta Stowe-Gullen Scrapbooks.<sup>45</sup> None of the suffrage societies kept extensive minutes which makes those which exist of even greater value. These include the Montreal Suffrage Association (M.S.A.) Minute Books for 1915 - 1919, the Manitoba Political Equality League (P.E.L.) Minutes for 1912 - 1916, the Saskatchewan Provincial Equal Franchise Board\* (P.E.F.B.) Minutes for 1915 - 1918.

Several suffragists were journalists and their columns provide a rich source of information. Francis Marion Beynon, Lillian Beynon Thomas, and Flora Macdonald Denison edited Women's Pages in important daily and weekly newspapers.<sup>46</sup> Suffragists also published special editions of the Montreal Herald and the Vancouver Sun.<sup>47</sup>

In 1895, education reformer, James L. Hughes, wrote the single large piece of Canadian suffrage propaganda, a sixty-page pamphlet entitled "Equal Rights," printed and distributed by the Canadian Suffrage Association (C.S.A.). The C.S.A. also published a few similar, but smaller leaflets. Three suffragists wrote semi-autobiographical novels: Alice Chown, The Stairway, Francis Marion Beynon, Aleta Dey, Flora Macdonald Denison, Mary Melville, the Psychic.<sup>48</sup> Nellie McClung's twelve



novels and two-volume autobiography are also invaluable.<sup>48</sup>

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first, which might seem unnecessarily repetitive of the Cleverdon work, attempts to provide important new information. It also introduces many new personalities and tries to place the movement in a larger interpretive framework.

Section II, the main body of the thesis, examines the political, social and religious ideas which transformed respectable middle-class reformers, male and female, into suffragists. It suggests at the same time the limitations these ideas imposed on the suffrage movement's social message for women. Section III explains the motivation behind labour and farmer support for female suffrage. It also examines the conflict between the middle-class suffragists and the women of the labour and agricultural classes who also wanted a vote but who found it impossible to work through the "official" suffrage societies because of their obvious middle-class bias.

This study suggests that the social reformers and the majority of the suffragists shared a common Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle-class heritage and a common desire to restore order to a society in transition. Both groups wished to find a position of respect and usefulness for themselves in the community. Both wanted to protect their way of life from the "foreign hordes," the "restless masses," and "Big Business." Since female enfranchisement promised to advance the power of woman, the authority of the family and the political representation of their race and class, it became a part of the reformers' general programme.



### Notes

1. Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877 - 1920, London, 1967, 44.
2. Louis Galambros, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," Business History Review, 1970, 280 ff.
3. Michael Bliss, "A living profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883 - 1911," Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1972, Introduction.
4. The sole defining characteristic of middle class, according to Robert Wiebe, is "consciousness of unique skills and functions." He therefore includes in this category specialists in business, in labour, and in agriculture, together of course with the professionals. While this typology has some validity, it ignores the tensions within this broad amalgam, for example, between farmers and professionals, between farmers and businessmen and between labour and the other two groups. Although members of each group cooperated in several joint reform ventures (frequently farmers and labour executives found their way onto Social and Moral Reform Councils), small businessmen and professionals forged a much closer working alliance, oftentimes in open conflict with organized labour and the organized farmer. Section III will show how these conflicts affected the suffrage movement. Wiebe, op. cit., 112.
5. A functional designation used to indicate British birth, Britain including Scotland and Ireland, or descendants of those of British birth. A. H. Murray, ed., New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Oxford, 1933.
6. "In general language applied to any Western Christian or members of a Christian Church outside the Roman communion." By this definition, Protestant includes Anglicans. Oxford English Dictionary.
7. R. C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada, 1896 - 1921: A Nation Transformed, Toronto, 1974.
8. Bliss, "A living profit," op. cit.
9. J. M. S. Careless, ed., The Canadians, 1867 - 1967, Vol. I, Toronto, 1967, 150-210.
10. Terrence R. Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario, 1875 - 1900," Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1970, Table 2, 27, 28.



11. Gustavus Myers, History of Canadian Wealth, Vol. I, Chicago, 1914, xxi.
12. Tom Naylor, The History of Canadian Business, 1867 - 1914, Toronto, 1976, 14.
13. Cook and Brown, op. cit., 309.
14. Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind, New York, 1960, 127.
15. Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, New York, 1956, 92 ff.
16. Ibid., 153.
17. Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America: The Intellectual as a Social Type (1889 - 1963), New York, 1965, 64 ff.
18. Wiebe, op. cit., Forward.
19. "Feminism is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes." Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, U.S.A., 1967.
20. Kraditor, op. cit., 38-64.
21. Guy Rocher, A General Introduction to Sociology, Toronto, 1972, 103.
22. Ibid., 395, 396.
23. Ibid., 450.
24. Estimate based on membership lists and newspaper reports.
25. Lady Grace Julia Drummond, wife of Montreal Senator, George A. Drummond, became the Honorary President of the National Equal Franchise Union in 1914; James Hughes, Toronto's Public School Inspector, became a suffragist in the 1890's.
26. Rocher, op. cit., 452.
27. Of the 156 women 114 were executive members and 42 were active, non-executive members. Of the 44 men, 28 belonged to the executive while 16 were simply active members.
28. For the 16 non-executive male members there was insufficient information on place of birth to include them in this analysis.
29. No birth place could be found for 55 executive female members.



30. 14 born in Canada, 4 in Britain, 5 in the United States, 1 in Switzerland, 18 unknown.
31. For a religious breakdown of the suffrage leaders and a percentage analysis of the status of the different religious sects in Canada, see Chart I, p.19.
32. See Chart II, p.20.
33. Several American suffragists became ministers in Nonconformist sects, for example, Antionette Brown. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle, New York, 1973, 81.
34. See Chart III, p.21.
35. The educations of 8 men and 73 women are unknown. A few women fall into rather unusual categories: one was trained in a convent, one had only a high school education, one took a course preparatory to becoming a Sanitary Inspector.
36. Census of Canada, 1929, 139.
37. The founders of the original suffrage societies, as will be seen in Chapter 2, were nearly all professionals. Unfortunately, insufficient information exists about the other members in these societies to allow a statistical comparison with the second suffrage movement.
38. These attitudes will be discussed in Chapter 9.
39. Catherine Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto, 1974, vi.
40. A. R. M. Lower, Colony to Nation, Toronto, 1946.  
Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada, England, 1969.  
J. M. S. Careless, Canada: A Story of Challenge, Toronto, 1953.  
Donald G. Creighton, Dominion of the North, Boston, 1944.
41. V. J. Strong-Boag, "National Council of Women in Canada," Ph.D., University of Toronto, in progress.  
Wendy L. Mitchenson, "Canadian Women in Reform," Ph.D., York University, in progress.  
V. J. Strong-Boag, "Cousin Cinderella: A Guide to Historical Literature Pertaining to Women in Canada," in Marylee Stephenson, ed., Women in Canada, Toronto, 1973.
42. W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, Toronto, 1950, 30.



43. Careless, ed., The Canadians, op. cit., 197 - 201.
44. Morrison, op. cit., 215 - 273.
45. See bibliography for locations. Other private collections containing pertinent information are the Violet MacNaughton, the Zoa Haight, and the Elizabeth Smith-Shortt Papers.
46. Francis Beynon, The Grain Growers' Guide, 1912 - 1916.  
Lillian Thomas, The Winnipeg Free Press, 1913 - 1916.  
Flora Denison, The Toronto World, 1909 - 1912.
47. Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913.  
Vancouver Sun: March 19, 1913.
48. See bibliography.



## SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATION

### Introduction

The Canadian suffrage movement can, for the purpose of analysis, be divided into two phases which followed closely the American pattern described in Aileen Kraditor's Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement.<sup>1</sup>

The first phase which spanned the years 1877 to 1895 can be characterized as a period of initiation and serious social criticism. The second which developed between the years 1906 and 1918 followed a more moderate and conciliatory course.

The character of the first phase owed a great deal to American influence, so it is not surprising that the two shared a similar orientation. Several of Canada's pioneer suffrage leaders, notably Dr Emily Stowe and Dr Amelia Yeomans, received their education in the United States. Nascent Canadian societies requested and received pamphlets and literature from better organized American associations, chiefly the New York suffrage league.<sup>2</sup> American associations sponsored Canadian lecture tours by such well-known American suffragists as Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone and Anna Howard Shaw.<sup>3</sup>

The wider international climate influenced Canada in these early years also. Suffrage literature possessed a world audience. Canadian women read and discussed John Stuart Mills' On the Subjection of Women, Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women and



Olive Schreiner's Women and Labour. British emissaries, two members of the British Suffrage Association, visited Canada as early as 1884.<sup>4</sup>

The feminist phase of Canadian suffrage history ended before the turn of the century. The early suffragists' radical rhetoric and unorthodox proposals doomed the issue. At the very same time as it was faltering, however, the infiltration by the social reformers who were to lead the movement to "victory" had already begun.

Although it is possible to talk about two suffrage movements, it would be an error to make the two completely separate and distinct. The first contained the seeds of the second. The social reformers made a bid for power during the first phase, and a few feminists managed to continue their struggle well into the twentieth century.

Between the years 1895 and 1906 woman suffrage attracted little attention or debate. The energy of the original suffragists had spent itself and new leaders had yet to arise. The reformers who joined the suffrage movement had other battles to fight and had neither the time nor the commitment to campaign whole-heartedly for woman suffrage.

In 1906 a small group of women, the immediate successors to the early feminists, renewed the campaign. International factors, particularly the publicity attracted by the militant suffragettes in Britain, contributed to the rebirth in interest and activity. The aggressiveness of the early years re-surfaced only briefly, however. The reformers quickly dominated the movement numerically and ideologically and in 1914 they ousted the tiny, stalwart, feminist leadership.



In the reformers' scheme woman suffrage represented an attempt to strengthen the family by extending woman's influence. The feminists' demands for woman's unfettered individual development and free choice of vocation and occupation were abandoned and replaced by a glorification of the maternal role. As a result woman suffrage lost its frightening overtones and became inoffensive and respectable.

Once legislators became convinced that female enfranchisement meant a strengthening rather than a questioning of social norms, women had not long to wait for a ballot. In 1918, forty-one years after the formation of Canada's first suffrage society in Toronto in 1877, Canadian women received a federal vote. The real reason for the remarkably easy victory lay in the meekness of the reform suffragists' message and the power and influence of their allies.



Notes

1. Kraditor, op. cit.
2. There are innumerable examples of Canadian suffragists recommending the use of American literature. In 1890, for example, Cynthia Putney, head of the Franchise Department for the Quebec W.C.T.U., endorsed the publications of the American Woman's Suffrage Association. Quebec W.C.T.U. Reports, 1890, 55. All the public papers of Canadian suffragists contain leaflets and fliers printed by the New York or some other American Association.
3. In 1890, for example, Anthony and Shaw attended the reorganization of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in Toronto. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Emily Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, undated newspaper clipping, circa 1890.
4. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, S. B. Anthony, M. J. Gage, eds., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. III, New York, 1886, 1034.



## CHAPTER 1

## THE ROOTS OF SUFFRAGE IDEOLOGY

The suffrage issue constituted only one element in a much larger "woman's movement" which in its most general sense called for increased female participation in activities outside the home. Several developments drew women into the wider sphere. Demographic circumstances, primarily the growing preponderance of women over men in urban environs, made it necessary for many women to become self-supporting. Economic changes, tied directly to industrialization, opened up new job opportunities for women. A few even managed to infiltrate male-dominated, high status occupations, principally the professions.

Industrialization also created a leisured female middle class who looked to philanthropy to give their lives a new definition. These women found a useful role in the many reform and other types of organizations which multiplied during this period.

New female educational opportunities provided another avenue to the world outside the limited domestic domain. Universities and colleges drew women into a stimulating intellectual environment which predictably broadened their horizons and expectations.

These social changes created the environment necessary for the evolution of the suffrage movement. Many suffragists were professionals,



aroused to action either by pay discrimination or restrictions on their career ambitions. Almost every suffragist received a sound liberal education which brought her into contact with current social and political issues. The majority were involved in some aspect of social reform.

According to Guy Rocher ideas both reflect and stimulate social change.<sup>1</sup> The function of this chapter is to investigate the background and nature of those social changes which led women to endorse woman suffrage.

# I

As a result of Canada's immigrant past women were at a premium throughout the period under investigation. In 1881 there were 2,126,415 women aged ten and over to 2,179,703 men; in 1901 2,603,170 to 2,715,436; and in 1921 4,253,341 to 4,522,512.<sup>2</sup> Because of their scarcity most women were able to find husbands and only a small proportion had to support themselves. In 1891 approximately 11% of the female population over age ten worked. The percentage crept up by 1% in 1901, another 2% in 1911 and by 1921 15.27% were employed.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of the "female supernumerary" or surplus women which had plagued Britain since the beginning of the nineteenth century<sup>4</sup> seemed irrelevant in Canada. One suffragist, Isabel Skelton, argued in 1913 that the lower number of women in Canada explained the degree of female indifference to the suffrage issue. "Canadian women," she claimed, "feel few positive disabilities and hardships.... they are not crowded and forced into public and business life as their English sisters are." She



used statistics to support her theory:

For every hundred males there are in Canada only 88 females where in England there are 107. This makes in England and Wales a surplus of one million two hundred thousand females and enormously increases the proportion of women who must be wage earners.... 25% of all English women work for wages and only 16% of Canada's female population...<sup>5</sup>

A more detailed demographic breakdown shows that Canadian cities had begun to follow the British pattern. Women congregated in the cities. Even in the west, where the proportion of men over women was generally far greater,<sup>6</sup> the cities achieved a near balance between the sexes. In most of the major Eastern cities women actually outnumbered men.<sup>7</sup> The ratio of female to male workers is invariably higher in the more urbanized, industrialized provinces.<sup>8</sup> The greater degree of economic competition in the cities and the consequent rise in sexual antagonism offers one reason why the suffrage societies were strictly an urban phenomenon.

This is not to suggest that the suffrage societies attracted working-class women. Those suffragists who worked were almost exclusively members of the professional class. The working class constituted the largest portion of the female labour force. In 1911 37.6% of Canadian women were engaged in domestic service and another 27.5% worked in manufacturing.<sup>9</sup> Working conditions were notoriously bad and women consistently received the lowest wages.<sup>10</sup> But these were not the women who formed the avant-garde of the suffrage movement. Most working-class women had to contend with the more immediate problem of subsistence. Moreover, the economic distance separating them from the middle-class suffragists made it



CHART IV  
IMMIGRATION TO CANADA BY SEX\*

	MALE	FEMALE
1904	55,803	18,426
1908	48,822	24,007
1911	122,001	57,883
1913	181,202	72,282

\* Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 25



## CHART V

PROPORTION OF MALES TO FEMALES IN POPULATION OVER 15  
(number of males for every 100 females)\*

	1911	1921
CANADA	118.6	108.8
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	98.8	102
NOVA SCOTIA	104.6	103.6
NEW BRUNSWICK	105.3	104.3
QUEBEC	103.1	99.8
ONTARIO	107.5	101.9
MANITOBA	132.8	115.8
SASKATCHEWAN	174.4	133.4
ALBERTA	177	135.5
BRITISH COLUMBIA	213.8	138.9

\* Census of Canada, 1921, 122



## CHART VI

## NUMBER OF MALES TO 100 FEMALES IN MAJOR CANADIAN CITIES\*

	1871	1891	1911	1921
MONTREAL	88.6	90.5	100.4	94.7
TORONTO	96.2	94	98.1	92.6
WINNIPEG	-	109.5	120.7	100.5
VANCOUVER	-	187.5	149.9	113.1
OTTAWA	93	91	92	87
CALGARY	-	124	155	101
LONDON	100	91	89	91
EDMONTON	-	-	127	101
HALIFAX	86	89	92	94
ST. JOHN	92	88	90	90
VICTORIA	141	152	151	107
REGINA	-	-	189	107
BRANTFORD	99	92	106	95
SASKATOON	-	-	150	100

\* Census of Canada, 1921, 340



## CHART VII

RATIO OF FEMALES TO MALES - 10 YEARS AND OVER - GAINFULLY EMPLOYED  
(number of females to every 1000 male workers)\*

	1891	1901	1911	1921
CANADA	139	154	155	183
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	127	116	141	150
NOVA SCOTIA	168	134	164	184
NEW BRUNSWICK	143	141	160	176
QUEBEC	134	178	183	215
ONTARIO	149	168	185	211
MANITOBA	85	111	142	171
SASKATCHEWAN )			68	103
ALBERTA )	48	66		
			80	108
BRITISH COLUMBIA	68	62	88	131

\* Census of Canada, 1921, xiv



## CHART VIII

## OCCUPATIONS OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED FEMALES IN CANADA BY PERCENTAGE\*

	1891	1901	1911	1921
AGRICULTURE	6.2	3.8	4.4	3.7
BUILDING	-	-	-	.1
DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL SERVICE	51.9	46.7	38.1	27.5
CIVIL AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT	.4	.4	1.1	2.6
MANUFACTURE	26.7	25.3	27.0	21.7
PROFESSIONAL	10.2	16.1	15.9	24.2
TRADE AND MERCHANDIZING	4.0	7.2	11.6	15.9
TRANSPORTATION	.5	.5	1.9	4.3

\* Census of Canada, 1921, xvi



difficult for them to see that they faced a common problem.

The economic pressures of the city did create suffragists, however. Some middle-class women who had to support themselves because of the absence of adequate numbers of male partners became outraged at the prejudice and ridicule they had to contend with. Their anger spawned the original suffrage societies.

Middle-class women faced a peculiar predicament for, in early Victorian England and the attitude held true in Canada, a woman suffered an irretrievable loss of class if she worked for money. Even the governess, the single "decent" occupation available to middle-class girls, commanded no respect.<sup>11</sup>

Technological innovations alleviated this situation somewhat since alternatives to the factory now became available. The typewriter and the telephone opened the field of office work to women. The new department stores created a demand for upskilled sales personnel which women readily filled. The female white collar sector grew considerably in the decade 1911 to 1921. "Trade and Merchandizing," which included saleswomen, jumped from 11.6 to 15.9%. "Transportation," which included a new corps of office personnel, advanced from 1.9 to 4.3%. The proportion of professionals also made a dramatic leap in this period from 15.9 to 24.2%. But the advance is deceptive as the category "professional" included teachers, nurses and the office employees of professionals. In 1911 these three occupations account for 85% of all female professionals.<sup>12</sup>

Prestige professions, lawyers, doctors, journalists, and professors,



continued to be male-dominated. A few women who tried to demolish the sex bar confronted serious opposition. It was this small group which spearheaded the drive for female suffrage in Canada. A few examples will suggest their importance to the suffrage movement. Canada's best-known suffragist was Dr ~~Emily~~ Stowe, the founder of the original Toronto suffrage association and the woman responsible for the opening of medical schools in Canada to women. Her daughter, Dr Augusta Stowe-Gullen, the first woman to receive her medical education entirely in Canada, revived the suffrage movement in 1906. Amelia Yeomans, another female doctor who was compelled to take her medical education in the United States, founded the first suffrage group in Manitoba in 1894. Ontario's first female lawyer, Clara Brett Martin, who after a long battle began her career in 1892, was also an outspoken suffragist. A Quebec suffragist, Annie Langstaff, demanded recognition from the Quebec Bar after completing her legal studies but she failed; Quebec recognized female lawyers only in 1941.<sup>13</sup>

Women had a much easier time gaining admission to two particular professions, teaching and nursing. Both seemed respectable occupations for young single women. At marriage, of course, they were expected to give up their jobs, to resume work only should some sad fate befall their husbands.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, neither nursing nor teaching involved a radical departure from woman's accepted role as helpmate, comforter and instructor of the young. Finally, economic considerations made the employment of women in these fields, especially teaching, very attractive.

Universal compulsory education created a need for a large supply of



teachers. School Boards on limited budgets discovered that women could be paid less than men in good conscience since it was assumed that they were single and had no one but themselves to support. Women flooded into the Normal Schools and soon dominated elementary and even secondary education.<sup>15</sup>

Women who succeeded in winning "respectable" employment had then to confront the problem of wage discrimination. Women teachers soon became aware of the discriminatory wage scale which gave men higher salaries for the same work. Because of their growing numbers in the profession they quickly dominated the teachers' associations and congregated to discuss their grievances. Several teachers became suffragists over this issue. Two teachers' associations, in London and Toronto, formed independent Teachers' Suffrage Societies which ran on a programme of equal voting privileges and equal pay for equal work.

## II

Not every professional suffragist came into the movement because she felt discriminated against. A large proportion were probably quite content with their success. Different motives, usually associated with the social reform theme, made many professionals into suffragists.

Furthermore, not every suffragist worked. Approximately 35% were unemployed or underemployed housewives. Their reasons for becoming suffragists had little or nothing to do with economic competition or sexual antagonism.

Industrialism revolutionized the urban homemaker's life.



CHART IX  
NUMERICAL BREAKDOWN OF FEMALE PROFESSIONALS\*

	1901	1911
ART, MUSIC, DRAMA	3,127	4,653
ACTORS	105	432
ARCHITECTS	1	-
DESIGNERS, SCULPTORS, AND DRAUGHTSMEN	15	5
MUSICIANS AND TEACHERS OF MUSIC	2,575	3,574
PAINTERS AND ARTISTS	288	340
EDUCATIONAL		
PROFESSORS	47	307
TEACHERS	30,863	34,063
OTHER	41	7
ENGINEERS	-	-
LAWYERS AND NOTARIES	10	9
MEDICAL		
DENTISTS	23	167
NURSES	280	5,476
PHYSICIANS	54	196
RELIGIOUS WORKERS	170	656
ACCOUNTANTS	62	97
JOURNALISTS, EDITORS AND REPORTERS	52	69
LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC	15	48
OFFICE EMPLOYEES IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE	3,440	11,902

\* Census of Canada, 1915, 92 - 99



## CHART X

## NUMBER ENROLLED IN NORMAL SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS' COLLEGES\*

	MALE	FEMALE
1870	319	393
1875	312	561
1905	297	1,610
1910	458	3,537
1915	714	5,231
1920	636	4,972

## TEACHERS BY SEX

	MALE	FEMALE
1910	7,396	30,678
1915	9,244	38,802
1920	8,852	45,839

\* Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 594



Technological innovations, like the power washing machine, the vacuum cleaner, and the gasoline stove, lessened her work load and increased her leisure time. Collective concerns such as grocery stores, bakeries and department stores had a similar effect, eliminating the need to can her own fruits and vegetables, bake her own bread, or make her family's clothing.

Now that machines had taken over much of the housework, housewives had difficulty justifying their role in life. An idealistic philosophy which demanded that each individual somehow contribute to the progress of the race dominated the late nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The idealism of the era moved women as well as men and some women revolted against the frivolity and purposelessness of the domestic routine. Dr Elizabeth Smith-Shortt, a late convert to the Ottawa Equal Suffrage Club, for example, revealed in her diary a deep discontent with her shallow life. She was preoccupied with becoming "a woman with a purpose." She bemoaned the shameless activity of "husband hunting" and "of dallying in the primrose path of fat idleness" and sought nobler things than the "creature comforts" and the "inactivity which nonentity brings."<sup>17</sup> Cousin Kitty, in Agnes Maule Machar's novel Roland Graeme : Knight, overcomes her feeling of uselessness by becoming a nurse.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to the euphemistic image of women as "Queens in their homes," women discovered that the occupation "housewife" possessed no official recognition in the census, required no special training and received no remuneration. A woman might work all day at her "calling" only to have



to request pocket money from her husband at night.<sup>19</sup> One British Columbia suffragist condemned housekeeping as "dull, unpleasant drudgery."<sup>20</sup> Another, in Montreal, argued that a man would rather be dead than be tied to a "pack of kids" and a kitchen.<sup>21</sup>

The suffrage movement profited from this discontent since it seemed to promise women a new usefulness and the dignity of a political voice. Status seems to have been the real issue, however. Rather than suggest that women find new satisfying occupations outside the home, the majority of suffragists recommended raising housekeeping to the level of a profession. This they hoped to accomplish through the establishment of Domestic Science schools and domestic science classes in high school. They rebelled not against homemaking itself but against the status accorded it.

The promotion of domestic science had another purpose, the creation of a large supply of well-trained efficient domestics. The proportion of domestics declined steadily from 51.9% in 1891 to 38.1% in 1911 to 27.5% in 1921.<sup>22</sup> In large part industrialism created the problem since working-class girls now had alternate employment in the factories, the shops and the offices. Due to the acute shortage, domestic servants were able to become more demanding. A Calgary Housekeepers' Association in 1916 defined as its object "to secure a better recognition of the dignity of the position of housekeeper; to obtain a standard wage and a maximum day." The Association's Manifesto declared that "the employer will speak of me as her 'Housekeeper' and shall address me as 'Miss'."<sup>23</sup>

No cause attracted so much attention among Canada's middle-class women



as the "Domestic Problem" or the "Servant Problem." They tried to increase the supply in several ways: setting up societies to encourage domestics from the Old Country to immigrate and promoting Domestic Science Schools to train help.

The obsession of Canadian suffragists with the servant shortage reflects the class bias of the movement. Those who worked needed someone to take care of their household; those who stayed at home considered housework demeaning. Sonia Leathes of the National Equal Franchise Union wrote Elizabeth Smith-Shortt about her unfortunate friend, "Lady B. of Manchester," who had not been able to get a housemaid for weeks. "Everywhere," she complained, "the problem is the same." In her diary Shortt herself mentioned almost daily her own inability to find efficient help.<sup>24</sup>

Suffragists may have believed housework beneath them but they were quite prepared to conscript other women to do it. Besides, servants carried a certain social prestige. As part of a class undergoing a status crisis, the suffragists clung to the visible signs of position. They were willing to go to great lengths to preserve the institution of domestic service. Some offered higher wages, better hours, and more freedom; others promised to treat the servant with greater respect. In 1901 Mrs James L. Hughes, a long-standing member of the C.S.A., proposed increasing the housekeeper's status:

The servant question is fundamentally a sociological question and until the conditions of the home are so changed as to give the servant a dignified position instead of a menial one, matters will improve very little.<sup>25</sup>



Since the shortage resulted from the competition of corporate concerns such as restaurants, department stores and factories, Sonia Leathes recommended "Collective Housekeeping" as a solution. "This is the age of the specialist," she explained, "of social service versus private and individual service" and, therefore, why not in housekeeping as in other enterprises.<sup>26</sup> In her scheme women graduates trained in Household Science Institutes working in conjunction with supply farms run by women in Housekeeping Centres would become the nation's housekeepers.

The idea of "cooperative housekeeping" had radical implications since, once housework became the domain of independent professionals, the housewife would be free to enter any career to which she felt inclined. The few feminists in the suffrage movement insisted that the constant presence of the wife in the home became absurd once every industry, "meal-getting along with the rest," was taken out of the home.<sup>27</sup> The social reform suffragists, the majority in the movement, however, refused to advocate any reform which might rock an already shaky social structure. They defended the concept of the family and insisted that women retain their primary function as wives and mothers. They were content simply to raise the status of housekeeping and to do their best to relieve themselves of the monotony and drudgery of housework by hiring others to do it.



## III

Education seems to have been the single most important factor which converted women to suffragism. It provides a common denominator for the entire membership. The vast majority, early and late, were well-educated. Of those identified over 57% had attended a regular university while another 30% graduated from Normal Schools or Ladies' Colleges and 6% were educated privately.<sup>28</sup>

Paradoxically, the initial expansion of educational opportunities for women was not intended to produce dissent. In fact, it was to have had quite the reverse effect. Many clergy and well-to-do citizens promoted a higher education for women because they feared that the existing schools encouraged young women to be flighty and frivolous. Moved by the impulse to re-establish a strict moral order, they became convinced that the mothers of the next generation needed greater "mental discipline" in order to handle capably the moral instruction of the young. Moreover, it had become obvious that many young women, unable to find suitable mates, had to support themselves or be forced to resort to less honourable means. For both these reasons, higher education for women became a very respectable cause in late nineteenth century Canada.

New academies were opened, many of which were simply finishing schools while some provided a more challenging curriculum.<sup>29</sup> A second innovation, Women's Education Associations, offered college-level courses, in conjunction with a leading university, to well-to-do young ladies.<sup>30</sup> While these Associations promoted "general culture" rather than



"professional education" for women, they at least made it acceptable for women to display some evidence of intelligence.

The next logical development, the opening of colleges to women, took one of three forms in the English-speaking world. The United States promoted the all-female college of the Vassar or the Sophia Smith variety; Britain on the other hand favoured the Coordinate College, a separate institution with separate facilities, but directly associated with a male university.<sup>31</sup> A third alternative, popular for economic reasons in Britain and America, allowed women to take their courses side by side with the men in coeducational institutions. Most Canadian universities chose the third option and permitted women to enrol alongside the men. The Maritime Provinces lowered the sex barrier first, Mount Allison admitting women in 1862, Acadia in 1880, and Dalhousie in 1881. In Ontario, Queen's University accepted women in 1872 and Victoria College of Toronto in 1877.<sup>32</sup>

Where economically viable, however, Canadian educators preferred the British Coordinate College. In 1883 Donald Smith created an endowment for the construction of a Woman's College adjacent to McGill, dependent upon the "maintenance of separate classes for women." Despite the opposition of McGill's redoubtable Professor of Philosophy, John Clark Murray, a champion of equal educational opportunities for women, the policy of "separate but equal" stood and Royal Victoria College opened its doors to Montreal women in 1901.<sup>33</sup>

In Ontario in 1884 the Principal of the University of Toronto, Sir Daniel Wilson, responding to pressure that he admit women to the



University, wrote the Minister of Education, requesting a separate college for women. The Ontario Legislature, however, had no Smith endowment to fall back upon and therefore reluctantly granted women permission to study alongside the men.

While the quality of women's education improved, the curriculum remained tailored to produce wives and mothers. Women could study Moral Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and Languages, subjects designed to broaden their minds; but courses which trained them to become self-supporting, thereby encouraging them to abandon the home, were considered both wrongminded and dangerous. Higher education for women aimed at strengthening not undermining the family. Even Clark Murray himself argued that the importance of woman's role within the family necessitated her education:

Those who had most at heart the importance and sacredness of the family as the centre of all that was best in humanity felt most strongly that no education was too high for her whose influence in the family was most potent....<sup>34</sup>

As a result of these attitudes access to professional education came much more slowly. Teaching, of course, remained the exception. Canada's first doctors had to take their degrees in American universities.<sup>35</sup>

Eventually, under pressure, Women's Medical Colleges were established in 1883 in Kingston and Toronto. The idea of a "Women's" Medical College seemed more respectable to Victorian prudes who felt it indiscreet for men and women to study the body, particularly the male body, together.

But economics and low enrolment made segregation impractical and in 1906



the University of Toronto absorbed the women's section. Smaller institutions such as Dalhousie had admitted women to its Medical Faculty from its founding in 1881.

Admission to professional training counted only one step in the road to professional equality, however. Hospitals in Montreal, for example, refused to allow women to practice in their clinics, forcing Bishop's College to close its doors to female medical students in 1900. The same applied to law. Although few universities objected to women taking legal studies, the Bars refused them the right to practice.

Educators who had intended that more advanced studies only develop a woman's mental discipline, fitting her better for her maternal duty, underestimated the effects of education. Many intelligent women, after attending college, became restless and sought more fulfilling work than the traditional domestic routine. Higher education began an irreversible process which led women to demand access to the world outside the home. Many women who took their first training in Normal Schools aspired after more education and more challenging career opportunities. Several suffragists who began their lives as teachers went on to become doctors or journalists.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the type of education the women received produced an activist frame of mind. In Moral Philosophy and in Literature they were introduced to the great social ideas of the age. The McGill curriculum, for example, included readings on William Morris' Social Theories, the reports of Toynbee Hall, and Benjamin Kidd's Social Evolution. The spirit



of social reform infected the classroom. According to one historian, practical idealism replaced religion as the creed of late nineteenth century man.<sup>37</sup> The humanists, T. H. Huxley, T. H. Green and Kidd, men who attempted to civilize the Darwinian struggle for existence, came into vogue. The message of the era was "'Usefulness', 'social reform', the bettering of daily life for the many...."<sup>38</sup>

Women could no more read Charles Booth's Life and Labour of the People in London or Seebohm Rowntree's Poverty: A Study of Town Life and remain unmoved than could their husbands, brothers, and fathers. Many revolted against the complacent, inactive, useless life of traditional middle-class wifedom and demanded an arena for action. In the words of Carrie Derick, a prominent Montreal suffragist, they wanted "to do," to put what they had learned into practice. In the first glow of their political awakening, in 1891, the McGill Women's Alumnae opened a Girls' Club and Lunchroom, the forerunner of the McGill University Settlement.<sup>39</sup>

Political consciousness followed closely upon an awareness of social issues. Women quickly realized the limitations upon their effectiveness as reformers and many turned to the suffrage cause as a result.

In an even more direct manner, college life introduced women to the woman's movement. Following the male example, female students formed debating and alumnae societies. At their meetings the women naturally discussed topics of current public and political interest, touching inevitably on the so-called "woman's question." In 1896 the McGill Alumnae staged debates on "The Present Course for Women at McGill,"



"The Advisability of Women Working for Money," and "Woman's Duty in Municipal Matters."<sup>40</sup> Encouraged by the progress women had made, impressed particularly by their own promotion into the intelligensia, it is not surprising that many decided that they ought to possess a vote.

#### IV

Other types of women's organizations also increased women's awareness of one another and educated them socially and politically. Numerous women's clubs proliferated in Canada towards the end of the nineteenth century. In part these clubs, like the male societies they paralleled, were a reaction to the feeling of individual insecurity which accompanied rapid industrial growth.<sup>41</sup> In part, they provided an outlet for the middle-class educated woman's boredom and frustration. The clubs ranged from artistic, literary, patriotic and Church groups to societies especially dedicated to some aspect of social reform.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union, one of the largest and most influential reform societies, started in Canada in 1873 by Mrs Letitia Youmans of Picton, Ontario, campaigned primarily for prohibition. By the turn of the century Canada had locals in most major cities and towns, Provincial organizations in Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, the North West Territories, and a membership of over six thousand. Most W.C.T.U. locals had a Franchise Department dedicated specifically to the goal of woman suffrage. The frustration of campaigning annually for prohibition and being unable to do anything to



see it enforced convinced some W.C.T.U. members to join outright suffrage societies. Moreover, many temperance men became suffragists because they believed that the majority of women would vote in favour of prohibition.<sup>42</sup>

The National Council of Women of Canada, inaugurated in 1893 under the presidency of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, the wife of Canada's Governor-General, acted as a clearing house for the social and moral issues of the day. In an attempt to appeal to all Canadian women, the Council decided to disassociate itself from potentially divisive topics such as temperance and woman suffrage. The structure of the Council,<sup>43</sup> however, allowed the suffragists to infiltrate and slowly to whittle away the prejudice against their cause. At the same time many National Council members became disgruntled at their inability to help create the legislation they favoured. In 1910 the N.C.W., finally and reluctantly, by a vote of 71 to 51, passed a resolution endorsing female enfranchisement.<sup>44</sup>

Frequently, women's organizations from other countries, particularly from the United States, played a role in the political awakening of Canadian women. Both the W.C.T.U. and the N.C.W. had their origins in the United States and were brought to Canada by women who attended American meetings. Sometimes Canada played host to visitors from the United States and overseas. On two occasions, for example, an American group, the Association for the Advancement of Women, staged conventions on Canadian soil, one in 1890 in Toronto, the second in 1896 in St John, New Brunswick. Both meetings received wide and favourable press coverage. American suffrage notables, Julia Ward Howe, Dr Maria Mitchell, Mrs Mary F. Eastman,



Mrs Lucy Stone, Mrs Martha Strickland, and Miss Alice Stone Blackwell, spoke at the Toronto gathering and undoubtedly inspired some members of the audience, which on this occasion included at least three active Canadian suffragists, Mrs James L. Hughes, Dr Susanna Boyle, and Dr Emily Stowe.<sup>45</sup>

Reform associations also functioned at the local level. The Montreal Women's Club, founded in 1891 by a prominent Montreal woman, Mrs Robert Reid, and modelled on the Chicago Women's Club, is but one example. This society also served as a political educator. The members discussed numerous women's and more general social problems, including women's legal position in Quebec, the status of women in the academic professions, prison reform, and new methods of education.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, several members later became Montreal's leading suffragists - Dr Grace Ritchie, Carrie Derick, Helen R. Y. Reid, Margaret Polson Clark Murray, and Henrietta Muir Edwards.<sup>47</sup>

Patriotic associations like the Women's Canadian Club and the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire strengthened women's nationalist commitment. Business associations such as the Canadian Business Women's Club, the Canadian Women's Press Club and the many Teachers' Associations provided a forum where common grievances could be discussed. Civic clubs, social science clubs and consumer protection leagues emphasized current social problems and the need for greater state interference. Religious societies brought women into touch with the new social gospel. Each, whether overtly political or not, served essentially the same function,



drawing women out of the confines of their homes and encouraging them to think, to discuss, and to question.

The suffrage movement profited from the opportunities made available to women in the late nineteenth century. In fact, it could not have emerged but for these developments. The sex ratio in the city and the new jobs made available by technological change drew women into the labour market. It became necessary and acceptable for women to work. Independent-minded women naturally began to question the restrictions placed on the type of work available to them.

Those who remained housewives took advantage of the leisure created by new domestic innovations to participate in extra-familial activities. Urban congestion and the new industrialism evoked a reform movement which touched both men and women. Women encountered the new social ideas in college and in reform associations. The heavy emphasis on individual activism and government intervention led many to seek the franchise.

The whole idea of a liberated womanhood emerged as a consequence of industrialization and its social repercussions. Women may have felt stifled by the restraints of the nuclear family and dull, domestic routine in pre-industrial times<sup>48</sup> but industrialism compounded the sensation of uselessness and powerlessness at the same time as it offered women opportunities to break out of the routine by either taking a job, going to school, or joining some society.



Notes

1. Rocher, op. cit., 407.
2. M. C. Urquhart and K. A. H. Buckley, eds., Historical Statistics of Canada, Toronto, 1965, 17. See Chart IV, p.38, for the effects of immigration on the sex ratio.
3. Census of Canada, 1921, Table IV, xiv.
4. Britain's population; number of females to every 1000 males:  
1801 - 1,057; 1851 - 1,042; 1871 - 1,054; 1891 - 1,063;  
1911 - 1,068.
5. Isabel Skelton, "Canadian Women and the Suffrage," Canadian Magazine, Vol. 41, 1913, 153.
6. See Chart V, p.39.
7. See Chart VI, p.40.
8. See Chart VII, p.41.
9. See Chart VIII, p.42.
10. In 1911 in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick female cotton spinners received 9¢ an hour compared to 18¢ an hour for men. In Quebec women received 13¢ an hour to 20¢ for the men.  
Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 91.
11. M. Jeanne Paterson, "The Victorian Governess," in Martha Vicinus, ed., Suffer and Be Still, U.S.A., 1972, passim.
12. See Chart IX, p.46, for a numerical breakdown of female professionals in 1901 and 1911.
13. Women lawyers were recognized in New Brunswick in 1906, in British Columbia and Manitoba in 1912, and in Nova Scotia in 1917.
14. The idea of married women working was generally unacceptable in the nineteenth century. In 1890 only 4.5% of the female labour force in Canada was married with husbands present. Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 72. Over 58% of the suffragists who worked were married, which seems exceptional for the period. Unfortunately, since it is impossible to discover how many of these were widows or divorcees, no definite conclusion can be reached.



15. See Chart X, p.47.
16. Melvin Richter, The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and his Age, London, 29.
17. University of Waterloo, Elizabeth Smith-Shortt Papers, Diary, Vol. II.
18. Agnes Maule Machar, Roland Graeme : Knight, Montreal, 1892, 35.
19. A complaint by Francis Marion Beynon. Grain Growers' Guide: Sept. 3, 1913.
20. B. C. Federationist: January 16, 1914.
21. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov.23, 1913, 4.
22. See Chart VIII, p.42.
23. The Alberta Club Woman's Blue Book, Calgary Branch of Canadian Woman's Press Club, 1917, 37.
24. University of Waterloo, Elizabeth Smith-Shortt Papers, Sonia Leathes to Elizabeth Shortt, Dec. 20, 1913.
25. National Council of Women of Canada, Report, 1901, 117. In the thesis the question of which form of a woman's name to use, whether her married or maiden name or a hyphenate, posed quite a problem. As a general rule and according to a reputable guide, names are given as the bearers themselves used them. J. Barzum and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher, New York, 1970, 85.
26. Leathes to Shortt, op. cit.
27. Toronto World: Oct. 19, 1913. Quote from Flora Macdonald Denison.
28. Of a sample of 156 women, educational information was available for 83.
29. For example, Dundas Ladies' College in Hamilton, 1857; the Wesleyan Ladies' College, Hamilton, 1859; the Ontario Ladies' College, Whitby, 1874; Alexandra College, Belleville, 1871; Presbyterian Ladies' College, Brantford; Stanstead Wesleyan College, Quebec; Bishop Strachan School; Havergal College, and many others. "Methodist Educational Institutions," Methodist Magazine, May, 1879, 399.
30. The Montreal Ladies' Education Association, linked to McGill, existed from 1871 to 1882; the Toronto Association operated from 1869 to 1877.



31. Girton and Newnham in Cambridge; Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford.
32. Suze Woolf, "Women at McGill: The Ladies' Education Association of Montreal," unpublished History Paper, McGill University, 1971, 2.
33. McGill University Archives, J. W. Dawson Papers, correspondence with J. Clark Murray re. Higher Education of Women, Annual University Lecture, 1880 - 1881.
34. McGill University Archives, John Clark Murray Papers, Montreal Witness: May 1, 1888.
35. Carlotta Hacker, The Indomitable Lady Doctors, Toronto, 1974, passim.
36. For example, Emily Stowe first worked as a teacher. Nine suffragists of 156 attended Normal School first and then proceeded to study for a University degree.
37. Richter, op. cit., 29 ff.
38. Ibid.
39. Carrie Derick, "In the 80's," Old McGill, 1927, 350.
40. Carrie Derick, "Address to the Delta Sigma Society," McGill Fortnightly, Feb. 10, 1896, 1190.
41. Rocher, op. cit., 483.
42. Approximately 25% of Canadian male and female suffragists came into the movement through the W.C.T.U. and other temperance societies. The relationship between the W.C.T.U. and the suffrage movement is treated in depth in Chapter 6.
43. At the local, the provincial, and the federal level, the Council was composed of two delegates from every existing woman's society, including the suffrage associations. The representatives were asked to forget their partisan interests but somehow the issue of woman suffrage came up for frequent discussion.
44. National Council of Women of Canada, Reports of Annual Meetings, 1910, 100.
45. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Emily Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, untitled, undated newspaper clipping, c.1890.



46. Montreal Women's Club, Annual Reports, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1901.
47. Mrs Edwards moved West and joined the Manitoba suffrage movement; Helen R. Y. Reid was the daughter of the founder, Mrs Robert Reid; Margaret Polson Clark Murray, the wife of McGill professor, John Clark Murray, founded the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire; Dr Grace Ritchie became Dr Ritchie-England after her marriage to Dr Frank England.
48. William O'Neill, Everyone was Brave, Chicago, 1961, Chapter 1, passim.



## CHAPTER 2

## SUFFRAGE ORGANIZATION IN CANADA; THE FIRST WAVE, 1877 - 1895

Given the urban character of Canada's suffrage movement, it is not surprising that the first suffrage society appeared in Toronto, Canada's largest English-speaking metropolis. This society, the Toronto Women's Literary Society, founded in 1877 by Dr Emily Stowe, remained active under different names until the federal franchise victory in 1918. Small though it was, the T.W.L.S. reveals several important features of the early suffrage campaign, principally the strength of the American influence and the feminist nature of its programme. Consequently, both the society and the women who organized it deserve detailed study.

## I

Emily Stowe, the mother of the suffrage movement, was born Emily Howard Jennings in 1832 in Norwich, Ontario. She received her early education from her mother, Hannah Howard, a Quaker from Rhode Island. The Quakers, of course, were well known for their egalitarian ideas towards women.<sup>1</sup> The eldest of six girls, Emily began teaching at age fifteen in a country school. She graduated from the Normal School for Upper Canada College in 1853 and became at twenty, Canada's first woman principal at Brantford Public School. Four years later she married a carriage maker,



John Stowe, and left her job to assume the traditional role of wife and mother. The Stowes had three children, two sons, John and Frank, and a daughter, Augusta. In 1864 her husband developed tuberculosis and Emily returned to work. She was now the family's chief breadwinner.<sup>2</sup>

Following the example of two younger sisters, Emily decided to become a doctor. She encountered first hand the existing opposition to women in medicine. First she was rejected by the University of Toronto Medical Faculty. Undeterred, she enrolled in the New York Medical College for Women. Here she met several American feminists, notably Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, the founders of the first American suffrage association.<sup>3</sup> Emily returned to Canada in 1868 a doctor and a feminist.<sup>4</sup> Immediately she initiated a series of lectures on the subject of "Woman's Sphere," sponsored by the Mechanics' Institutes in Toronto, Oshawa, Whitby, and Brantford. Then, in 1877, she attended a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Women which prompted her to found the Toronto Women's Literary Society (T.W.L.S.). Ostensibly a society for the advancement of women's intellectual development, the Toronto group was really a front for suffrage activity. Six years later the T.W.L.S. dropped its disguise and proclaimed itself Canada's first national suffrage association.

A brief glance at the T.W.L.S.'s membership reveals a diversity of backgrounds and of political and religious creeds. Miss Helen Archibald, a personal friend of Dr Stowe's, helped organize the Society but she died in 1880, leaving no record of her other interests. More information is



available on a third member, Mrs Sarah A. Curzon.<sup>5</sup> Born in England in 1832 and educated privately there, she arrived in Canada in 1862 with her husband, Robert Curzon of Norfolk. A part-time author and playwright, she actively pursued a career in drama after her husband's death in 1878. In 1887 she published her principal work, the story of Laura Secord, one of Canada's pioneer heroines. Mrs Curzon, on behalf of the Literary Society, contributed a column to the Canada Citizen, Canada's first prohibitionist paper, thereby establishing an early link between prohibition and suffrage. In religion, an Anglican, in politics, a Conservative, she defended protection and imperialism. Several women's associations occupied her spare time: the National Council of Women, the York Pioneer History Society, the Women's Art Association, and the Women's Canadian Historical Society.

A fourth member, Mrs Jessie McEwen, whose personal background is unknown, became a member of the Committee to form the Women's Medical College in Toronto in 1883. That same year she became President of the Canadian Woman Suffrage Society, the successor to the T.W.L.S. Shortly thereafter she set out for the West where she became Provincial Vice-President of the N.C.W. for Manitoba.

Mrs Mary McDonnell, a fifth member of the Literary Society, the wife of Donald Aeneas McDonnell, soldier, politician, and public servant,<sup>6</sup> was elected first Provisional Vice-President of the N.C.W. in 1893. A member of the incorporating committee of the Toronto W.C.T.U. in 1888, she headed the Dominion W.C.T.U. for several years. Her political views are unknown;



her religious attitudes were unorthodox: "a deep student of philosophy and comparative religion, she outgrew the musty creeds and superstitions of the past, forming a philosophy of life based on the science of the mind."<sup>7</sup>

Politically the women were scarcely a monolith. According to Sarah Curzon, a Conservative, the early suffrage movement contained too many "Grits." She objected to the Grit pretensions to being "the only and original party of progress" and tried to conscript Sir John Macdonald and his wife to the suffrage cause to increase the Conservative representation. The Conservative press proved difficult to convert however, and even refused to print Mrs Curzon's letters on the subject.<sup>8</sup>

Dr Stowe stood farthest to the left politically. Influenced by her sister, Dr Hannah A. Kimball of Chicago, a devotee of the American reformer, Edward Bellamy,<sup>9</sup> Dr Stowe often spoke under the auspices of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation and the Anti-Poverty Association. She publicly endorsed Henry George's Single Tax, approved Labour Exchanges on the principle that money should be a mere representative or symbol of value, and had a vague conception of something she called a "Justice Alliance," a body of workers which could select its own council to conduct the cases of its applicants in civil and criminal courts.<sup>10</sup> She also wrote on socio-economic issues. According to one reviewer, her book, Socio-Economic Myths and Myth Makers, attacked the institution of rent, criticized the myth of the "republicanism of the great republic" (the United States), and advocated "Fraternal socialism."<sup>11</sup>



No political, religious, or reform affiliation cemented these early suffragists. Dr Stowe was a Methodist of Quaker origin; Mrs Curzon, an Anglican; Mrs McDonnell, a Theosophist. Only Mrs McDonnell had an active interest in temperance.

The women shared one common cause, a desire to end discrimination against women and to remove all restrictions upon their activities. Their single-minded devotion to women's rights subsumed diffuse political and religious affiliations.

The scope of their programme justifies the title "feminist" since they desired sociological as well as political change. Helen Archibald stated the feminist case clearly and we can only regret that more information about her is not available:

Women's battle is not so much with the written as with the unwritten laws of the country. When we consider what a vast amount of wrong-thinking there is in regard to woman's work and woman's sphere, we may well stand appalled; our legal and political disabilities seem trifling in comparison.<sup>12</sup>

The Society demanded higher educational opportunities for women which in itself was not a radical request in the late nineteenth century. The women were not content with a few token university courses, however, and demanded complete coeducation and the right to study for the professions. Mrs Curzon and Mrs McEwen, the one a devout Conservative, the other a true "Grit," buried their political hatchet in order to campaign for the admission of women to the University of Toronto. Emily Stowe criticized the traditional female education and defended woman's right to a solid and thorough training "in the more vigorous branches of



classical and mathematical science,"<sup>13</sup>

Logically professional education meant professional employment. The Society considered the "home circle" too narrow and too confining to absorb all of a woman's capabilities and insisted instead that every field of activity be opened to women. Dr Stowe argued that a woman ought to be free to elect for herself the employment best suited to her. She put her belief into practice, dedicating her life to opening the study of medicine to Canadian women. She campaigned for and helped establish the Toronto Women's Medical College in 1883. That same year she enjoyed a sweet revenge as her daughter, Augusta Stowe-Gullen, graduated from Victoria University, the first woman to receive her medical education entirely in Canada.

In the economic realm, the Literary Society led the contest for equal property rights for married women. English Common Law, which applied in every province except Quebec, reduced a married woman to a legal nonentity: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage."<sup>14</sup> At marriage, a woman's property became her husband's, as did any money she earned or received after marriage. Nor could a woman sue or be sued or make a will in her own name.

The Literary Society considered the situation unjust and an insult to women. In 1883 they initiated a campaign for legislation giving women control over their own property. Within a year, Ontario introduced a Married Woman's Property Act, modelled on the 1882 British Consolidating



Act, which removed all the most objectionable disabilities.

Although the intentions of the Literary Society are quite clear, the ease with which the property rights were conceded raises speculation about the nature of the legislation. In Canada's other Provinces, Property Acts passed completely unsolicited,<sup>15</sup> in several instances years before the Ontario legislation. Further study suggests that interests other than women's rights speeded their implementation.

Prior to the Property Acts, for example, a husband could be held responsible for his wife's ante- and post-nuptial debts; after 1884 (in Ontario) a married woman could be sued in her own name and damages would be taken out of her private property. The Acts also provided security for men in business who wished to make over the house and other property to their wives in case of bankruptcy.<sup>16</sup> Very practical motives accelerated the introduction of a legal reform traditionally considered a political triumph for the woman's movement.

The idea that woman's position within the home needed strengthening against the villainous male guaranteed the property victory. The real pressure for the law seems to have come from wealthy fathers who wished to leave property to their married daughters and to secure it against spend-thrift husbands without the legal complication of placing it in trust.

The early suffragists tried to put women's interests first but they found it difficult to escape the bourgeois values of their class. Even



the first suffrage movement showed a marked middle-class bias. For example, despite their use of democratic arguments in defence of woman's right to vote, none advocated universal manhood suffrage. Suffrage was a right of property holders or, preferably, of an educated elite. At first the T.W.L.S. endorsed the basic principle of British conservatism, that only property ought to be represented. By 1880, influenced by the liberal thinkers of the day, primarily by John Stuart Mill, the Association ruled that many intelligent votes were being lost through the defects of the property qualification and that the true basis of the franchise ought, therefore, to rest in knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

These first suffragists who were themselves members of the intelligensia generally subscribed to the middle-class Victorian faith in education. They envisioned a society ruled by an intelligent meritocracy or, in Mill's words, a "national clerisy or clergy...."<sup>18</sup> This belief imposed strict limitations on their democracy. They felt that liberty could be trusted to the masses only in certain circumstances and that, in general, an intelligent elite would have to "lead the less disciplined and the less instructed to want discipline and knowledge for themselves."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps Agnes Maule Machar's hero, Roland, captured the suffragists' idea when he declared that labour needed someone intelligent to "prevent them from becoming wrong headed."<sup>20</sup>

Formal education alone did not make a man a leader. Victorian liberals distrusted the purely rational and placed their faith in a rather vague concept of moral character. Mill defended plural voting, the number



of votes a man received depending on his character.<sup>21</sup> But, since Mill conceived of morality as a learning process, he assumed that it would arise naturally out of a spread of knowledge; hence, the equation between education and right to rule. On this basis, given the new educational opportunities available to women, their exclusion from the ruling class seemed completely unreasonable.

The T.W.L.S. claimed to speak on behalf of working-class women as well but their programme reveals the limitations of this commitment. During the period under study, the Literary Society passed only one resolution to improve factory conditions and that was "for separate W.C.'s for each sex" which spoke more of Victorian sensibilities and a sense of decorum than of genuine concern.<sup>22</sup> Their support of higher wages for working women also had a "respectable" ulterior motive, as they believed that better paid shop girls would be less susceptible to "the lure of the streets" or prostitution.<sup>23</sup>

The first suffragists, therefore, were no more democratic, no freer from class bias, than the social reform suffragists who soon dominated the movement. They were distinguished from their successors chiefly by the priority they placed on women's interests. They retained the same respect for property, education, and legal rights, that trinity of nineteenth century liberal dogmas but challenged the sexual identification of occupations and the stereotyping of women as passive, subservient and maternal. The implications of this view were far-reaching since it threatened the continuation of the traditional Victorian family and set



the rights of the individual against those of the collectivity. The next generation of suffragists who were resolved to preserve the conventional social structure, founded upon the family, saw things very differently.

## II

In 1883 the Literary Society launched a drive for the municipal enfranchisement of propertied widows and spinsters. Based on an 1869 British precedent,<sup>24</sup> the women hoped to use the municipal vote as the opening edge of the wedge, leading eventually to provincial and federal rights. In 1884 the Ontario Legislature granted this privilege with little debate or opposition. Right across the country Canadian legislatures followed suit, readily conceding the municipal franchise to propertied widows and spinsters.<sup>25</sup> Their motives, as in the case of the Property Acts, are open to question. Independent, that is, unmarried, women property owners received the municipal vote for two reasons, both fundamentally conservative: the common belief that all property should be represented and the growing conviction that the female middle classes would bolster the social order.

The same reasons also explain Sir John A. Macdonald's unexpected appeal for the federal enfranchisement of propertied widows and spinsters, a clause he attached to his 1883 Franchise Bill. Suffrage activity in Canada had only just begun and not a single suffrage petition had yet reached the Prime Minister. Macdonald seemed to be running well ahead of public opinion. Moreover, the fact that Macdonald, a Conservative,



could support female enfranchisement, a supposedly liberal, if not radical reform suggests a whole other side to the woman suffrage question.

The question of property was all important. Macdonald, a true conservative who consistently defended the right of all property to representation,<sup>26</sup> was even willing to extend this right to women. No doubt he also believed that the votes of propertied women, like those of propertied men, would help keep him in power. Macdonald feared the influence of the new working class and wished to compensate by enlisting an untapped reservoir of Conservative support. At one stage he even suggested giving propertied, married women a vote as well on the grounds that it would double the representation of the family, again with predictable conservative results. Macdonald believed that in general women were social conservatives who could, therefore, help stabilize the social structure and "strengthen the defenses against the eruption of an unbridled democracy."<sup>27</sup>

Macdonald, of course, anticipated no radical role change for women, not even their election to the legislature.<sup>28</sup> He simply wished to give a second voice to woman's traditional sphere, the home, and garner more Conservative votes.

As early as 1883, therefore, some Canadian politicians recognized women's potential usefulness as defenders of the status quo. As the nineteenth century advanced and industrialization and urbanization presented even graver challenges to the traditional social structure, more and more men and women came around to Macdonald's point of view. This



argument eventually won women the vote.

While it is difficult to judge the sincerity of Macdonald's professed faith in woman suffrage, the evidence indicates that he had become a genuine convert. In public statements and private letters he never once renounced his stand.<sup>29</sup> Macdonald, first and foremost the politician, however, soon discovered that neither the majority in his party nor the majority in the House supported his position. Those opposed feared that woman suffrage would open the floodgates, radically changing the family and the allocation of roles within the family. To use the words of one member: "I believe rather in domestic economy than in political economy for females. That is their domain...."<sup>30</sup> Another member waxed poetic and explained in verse how political action would corrupt the female character. He depicted the traditional, paternalistic image of the long-suffering, docile woman:

She matches meekness with his might  
And patience with his power to act -  
His judgment with her quicker sight,  
And wins by subtlety and tact  
The battles he can only fight.

And she who strives to take the van  
In conflict, or the common way,  
Does outrage to the heavenly plan,  
And outrage to the finer clay  
That makes her beautiful to man.<sup>31</sup>

In retrospect Macdonald was correct and his opponents had little to fear. for woman suffrage produced no radical role reversal or personality transformation in women.

Some contemporary observers suggested that, after Macdonald became



aware of the resistance to his plan, he and his party reached an agreement about the fate of the Act. According to one report, Sir John promised his supporters in caucus that the woman's clause would be thrown over to satisfy Quebec, the most vigorous opponent of votes for women.<sup>32</sup> Another commentator pointed out that the Conservatives stood behind Sir John as a unit and, if he had really wished the measure to pass, he could easily have done so. Sir John, he suggested, actually put up one of his own supporters from Nova Scotia to move the amendment excluding women from the operation of the Act.<sup>33</sup>

If any of this were true, what could Macdonald have hoped to gain from introducing the measure in the first place? One thing is certain - the real issue was not woman suffrage. The new Franchise Act touched another, more sensitive nerve. It proposed giving the federal government the power to appoint revising officers for electoral lists, thereby removing them from the jurisdiction of the provincial county councils. The Act then divided Liberals and Conservatives on the traditional issue of provincial versus federal rights. It is possible that Macdonald left the woman's clause in the bill "as a buffer," to allow the Opposition to expend their force on a minor point and to draw fire from the "real gist" of the bill, the appointment of revising officers.

And what of the Liberals? Most of the debate in favour of the clause came from the Opposition side of the House. The Liberals probably suspected Macdonald's tactics and hoped to see them backfire, further adding to his embarrassment by helping the bill pass despite the



opposition of his own party. The lengthy debate was, in fact, a Liberal tactic, designed to protract and defeat and perhaps to get a favourable compromise on the section giving the government power to appoint electoral revisors.

The debate lasted twenty-six hours, as members recited every traditional argument for and against woman suffrage. In the end, very few proved genuine devotees. The amendment to strike out the provision giving the vote to women finally carried, 78 in favour to 51 opposed.<sup>34</sup>

Judged by this political incident, the woman's movement demonstrated surprising strength, particularly given the weak, almost inaudible appeal for the franchise in 1885. The history of the Franchise Act forecast the future of the suffrage movement in several ways. One, the question of women's rights became increasingly a political and legal issue, rather than a social cause. Little genuine opposition existed to the actual political right but politicians were willing to endorse it only once they realized it would further their partisan ends. And second, woman suffrage finally passed because of woman's conservative nature. While a few men and women might have hoped it would lead to a social revolution, many more realized, like Macdonald, that the vast majority of women were cautious and fearful of change both in their own role and in society as a whole.

### III

By 1883 the T.W.L.S. could boast several triumphs, accomplished in short time and with relatively little fight. Women now attended the city's



leading university. A woman's medical college was on the drawing board. Married women had a Property Act and unmarried, propertied women could vote in municipal elections. But, in reality, little had changed. The Property Act and the municipal vote rested on sound conservative principles. College education for women became popular because the middle and upper classes wanted to train their daughters to become better, more intelligent wives and mothers, and not because women had won the right to extra-familial occupations. Even the medical education of women had a Victorian motive, to prepare women to tend the personal problems of their own sex.

Many women understandably mistook these concessions for victories. Dr Stowe herself on February 1, 1883, moved that the Literary Society had filled its purpose and that the time had arrived to emerge as a full-fledged suffrage association. Her fellow members agreed. On March 5, the society submitted a communication to the Toronto City Council asking for incorporation as the Canadian Woman Suffrage Association. The following evening, Toronto's Mayor, Arthur Radcliffe Boswell and a few aldermen and journalists attended the inauguration of the C.W.S.A., Canada's first overt suffrage society.

This move, the organization of a suffrage society, proved premature. Respectable society still mistrusted the suffragists. In an attempt to win public approval, the C.W.S.A. began to underplay the sex equality theme and to concentrate almost single-mindedly on the political dimension of feminism, the ballot. It also altered its methods and admitted men for the



first time. The T.W.L.S. had confined its membership to women. But the C.W.S.A. contained forty-six male and forty-nine female members, and had seven men and twelve women at the executive level.

Despite its new face, the C.W.S.A. failed to maintain public interest. In fact, between 1884 and 1889, it initiated no new campaigns. It apparently preferred to bask in the effortless victories of the previous year. Emily Stowe blamed the men for the lull in activity:

The truth of the matter is we admitted the opposite sex as members and the effect was demoralizing. That old idea of female dependence crept in and the ladies began to rely upon the gentlemen rather than upon their own efforts.<sup>35</sup>

In part, she was correct. Moreover, the diffuse reform interests of the men who joined the movement, for example, prohibition, social gospel, and education reform, diluted the suffrage issue, making it a broad umbrella covering many areas of reform.<sup>36</sup>

In 1889 Emily Stowe and her daughter, August Stowe-Gullen, attempted to revitalize the movement, using the ploy of a name change to revive interest. The C.W.S.A. became the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association (D.W.E.A.). To inaugurate the new society Stowe brought to Toronto a select group of American suffragists, Dr Anna Howard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony, and Mrs May S. Howell of New York. The latter became a paid organizer for the D.W.E.A.<sup>37</sup>

The new Enfranchisement Association had some organizational and electoral successes. It established branch societies in nearby communities and as far afield as St. John, New Brunswick. On its



recommendation, Toronto's Mayor, Edward Frederick Clarke, invited the American Association for the Advancement of Women to hold its Eighteenth Annual Congress in the city. Three D.W.E.A. members, Dr Stowe-Gullen, Mrs. McDonnell, and Mrs A. Vance, contested seats on the Toronto School Board in 1892 and both Stowe-Gullen and McDonnell were elected.<sup>38</sup> In 1896, the D.W.E.A. staged a Mock Parliament, the first of its kind in Canada, involving over fifty women.

Despite these efforts, the suffrage movement languished: it never really regained the vitality of the early eighties. The founders of the Literary Society, Dr Stowe, Mrs Curzon, and Mrs McDonnell, were aging and Mrs McEwen had left Toronto for the West in 1883. Dr Stowe tried vainly to regain the leadership of the movement for women, but the final defeat of her efforts came in 1891 with the appointment of a male, Dr James L. Hughes, to the presidency of the Central Toronto club.<sup>39</sup> Many male reformers had attended the 1889 organizational meeting of the D.W.E.A., continuing the dilution of the suffrage movement.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, in the 1880's, temperance women began to infiltrate the suffrage societies. And it was they who began to change the social composition and reform priorities of the female membership.

The temperance women soon made themselves conspicuous in the D.W.E.A. At the 1889 D.W.E.A. meeting, Mrs Jacob Spence, mother of the veteran prohibitionist, F. S. Spence, Mrs Annie Parker, Superintendent of the W.C.T.U. in 1891, and Mrs D. V. Lucas, the wife of Rev. Daniel Vannorman Lucas, an active prohibitionist in Australia and in Ontario, dominated



the platform party. In the 1896 Mock Parliament, Annie O. Rutherford, W.C.T.U. President for many years, held the honoured position of Speaker.

Other well-known temperance women occupied seats on both sides of the House.<sup>41</sup> These women made their purpose plain in the ensuing debate. They wanted the franchise primarily in order to bring in prohibition. The larger vision of the early feminist leaders, to use the vote as a stepping-stone to complete sexual equality, had all but disappeared.

Meanwhile, many upper-class and upper middle-class women continued to fear the social opprobrium connected with the movement. As late as 1893 the N.C.W. deliberately disassociated itself from the original American National Council of Women because it was too closely affiliated with the suffragists.<sup>42</sup> Lady Aberdeen felt it necessary again and again to reassure Canadian men that the Canadian Council were not "fanatics," that they had no intention of marching into man's territory "to rob and pillage and destroy."<sup>43</sup> Mrs Harriet Boomer, a prominent Ontario woman, expressed misgivings about joining the Council and inquired if it stood for "emancipation" or that curious conglomeration, "the new woman," adding: "Should we hustle one another at the polls and cry aloud for woman's rights?" In reply, Lady Aberdeen pledged the Council to "Women's Duties" not "Women's Rights" and stressed the unselfish, benevolent nature of the Council's intentions.<sup>44</sup> Only in 1910 had the suffrage issue become sufficiently innocuous to allow the N.C.W. to sanction it.

By 1895 the suffrage movement stood in a no-man's-land. The feminist founders seemed too old, too tired, or had retired. The large majority of



women remained unconcerned or unconverted. The "middle men," temperance and other reformers, placed greater emphasis on their own particular reform than on the suffrage. It would take ten years or so for the movement to reorganize and re-emerge as a potent political force.

#### IV

Although Toronto dominated Canadian suffrage activity, the movement was not confined to that city alone. From their official inauguration in 1883 to the slump of the 1890's, Toronto's suffragists attempted to develop missions outside their precincts but with varying shades of success. The expanse of the Canadian countryside, communication difficulties, and sectional rivalries prevented the formation of a genuine national organization. A few indigenous groups appeared, frequently inspired by emissaries sent out from Toronto.

Less is known about these societies, due to a lack of records, but several themes recur which suggest a common character for the whole first phase of suffrage activity. In each case, the organization appeared in the province's largest city, confirming the urban nature of the movement. The instigators were frequently professionals, usually pioneers in their field, who as a result upheld a larger vision of women's rights. In each province the W.C.T.U. began to infiltrate the suffrage organizations, subtly changing the character of the movement.

Only three provinces (other than Ontario), Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba, actually had recognized suffrage societies before the turn



of the century. The W.C.T.U. managed the campaign in British Columbia until that time, when several of its members became important suffrage leaders.<sup>45</sup> In Quebec two associations served as incubators for the movement, the Local Council of Women of Montreal, much more audacious than the N.C.W., and the Montreal Women's Club, introduced in the previous chapter.<sup>46</sup> The prominent figures in both these associations, Carrie Derick, McGill's first woman professor, and Dr Grace Ritchie-England, a pioneer Canadian female physician, later became leaders in the Montreal Suffrage Association (1913). The Montreal Local Council had declared itself in favour of woman suffrage in 1893. The reforms sought by the Montreal Women's Club suggest the feminist disposition of that group: that women be allowed to sit on school boards, to study and to practise medicine, to become school administrators, and to gain admission to the School of Art and Design, an institution supported by the government but which refused to women the tuition it freely gave to men.<sup>47</sup>

In Nova Scotia, in 1895, a well-known novelist, Mrs A. H. Leonowens, and Nova Scotia's first woman professor, Dr Eliza Ritchie, organized the Halifax Suffrage Association, continuing the tradition of professional leadership.<sup>48</sup> The prohibitionist cause was strong in Canada's Eastern provinces and the W.C.T.U. soon became a powerful, well-organized society and the spearhead of the suffrage crusade. Between 1892 and 1895 the Nova Scotia W.C.T.U. presented thirty-four petitions on behalf of woman suffrage.<sup>49</sup> Some temperance women, angered by the unresponsiveness of the legislature, joined the new suffrage association, bringing to it their



diverse causes.<sup>50</sup> In its own right, however, woman suffrage proved unable to maintain public interest. The Halifax Suffrage Association disbanded after a year, to resume activity again only in 1915.

New Brunswick suffragists profited from the intervention of the Toronto Suffrage Association. As early as 1884 Sarah Curzon reported that "down in St John, New Brunswick, two Conservative ladies are taking the question up and that through my influence."<sup>51</sup> More encouragement in 1894 resulted in the formation of the St John Woman Suffrage Association. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Association in that year was Ella B. M. Hatheway, a part of a husband and wife team who campaigned for woman suffrage right through till victory in 1919. Warren Frank Hatheway represented a "tory democratic" tinge in the New Brunswick Conservative Party.<sup>52</sup> A wholesale grocer and President of the Board of Trade, 1894-95, Hatheway became associated with "profit sharing" schemes and a graduated income tax. As a Member of Parliament, he promoted the 1903 Factory Act, the 1904 Workmen's Compensation Act, and the creation of a Bureau of Labour.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of biographical material, the other leaders of this association could not be identified.<sup>53</sup> Public indifference, it seems, killed it too and in 1902 it withdrew its two representatives from the St John Local Council of Women. Suffrage agitation reached New Brunswick again only in 1915. In 1917 Ella Hatheway became President of the revitalized association.

A rather unique group of Icelandic suffragists, recent arrivals in Canada, led by Mrs. Margaret Benedictssen, brought the suffrage movement



to Manitoba.<sup>54</sup> In 1894 Dr Amelia Yeomans, a former Montreal woman and a medical graduate of Ann Arbor, Michigan, organized the first English-speaking society, the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club. Dr Yeomans belonged to the Manitoba W.C.T.U. which had campaigned for woman suffrage since the 1880's. But she now insisted on the separation of suffrage and temperance. Like Dr Stowe in the East,<sup>55</sup> Dr Yeomans believed that woman suffrage had to stand on its "sole merits," asking no assistance or endorsement from other reformers. Besides, she argued, a temperance connection might harm the suffrage movement, driving away potential supporters who had no sympathy for prohibition. But suffrage proved unable to stand on its own and the Association died within a year of its founding.

The first suffrage wave in Canada tended, in the beginning, to attract women who had to earn their living in male-dominated professions. Like the American first wave, by which it was largely inspired, the first suffrage societies, typified best by the Toronto Literary Society, had a radical bent. Confronting discrimination first hand, these women challenged the intolerance and bigotry of a society which tried to limit the scope of a woman's world to the home or to the less illustrious, lower income positions.

These exceptional women, worn down by the antagonism they aroused, made a tactical error, however, and switched their emphasis from the critical sex role issue to the political, legal target, the vote, which seemed nearer to hand. In an attempt to attract allies and ward off



disapprobation, they also diluted their programme and their membership.

They welcomed social reformers with very different priorities and a very different social vision, none of whom wished to reallocate traditional sexual roles. The reformers soon became a numerical majority and began to mould woman suffrage to their own moderate intentions. The second phase of Canadian suffrage history completed this task.



Notes

1. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Emily Stowe Papers, article re. Emily Stowe by Miss Maryard-Smith, undated.
2. Emily Stowe's life established a pattern noticeable in the histories of several suffrage leaders. The women began in a profession, frequently teaching. They married and retired to the home. Several years and several children later they re-entered the job market. Often the death or ill-health of their husband forced them to return to work. For some, economic pressure did not seem to have been a factor.
3. Susan B. Anthony wrote Emily's daughter, Dr Augusta Stowe-Gullen, on the death of her mother in 1903: "How well I remember her way back at Dr Lozier's in 1867 and 68 in New York." Dr Clemence S. Lozier, a well-known defender of women's higher education, headed the New York Women's Medical College. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Emily Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, Susan B. Anthony to Augusta Stowe-Gullen, May 25, 1903.
4. Significantly, Aileen Kraditor considers Anthony and Stanton two principle spokesmen for the radical phase of American suffrage history.
5. W. Stewart Wallace, The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Toronto, 1967, 167.
6. Donald A. McDonnell, warden of Kingston Penitentiary in 1861, died in 1879. Richard B. Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario, 1791 - 1893, Toronto, 1965, 185.
7. Marc Le Terreur, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1871 to 1880, Toronto, 1881, 469.
8. Public Archives of Canada (P.A.C.), John A. Macdonald Papers, S. A. Curzon to J. A. Macdonald, May 29, 1884.
9. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, untitled newspaper clipping, June, 1890.
10. Ibid., Stowe to editor of Toronto Globe, undated.
11. Ibid., Scrapbook III, undated review. A copy of Emily Stowe's book could not be located.



12. Ibid., undated address by Helen Archibald to the Women's Literary Club.
13. Ibid., Scrapbook IV, Stowe to the editor of the Globe, Nov. 29, 1877; Stowe lecture on "Woman's Sphere," c. 1877.
14. Mary Beard, Woman as Force in History, New York, 1946, 45. In Quebec, "community of property" also left all property in the husband's control.
15. N.B., 1877; P.E.I., 1880; N.S., 1881; Manitoba, 1880; B.C., 1897; N.W.T., 1898; Sask., 1907; Alta., 1910. Index to Dominion and Provincial Statutes to 1916, Lowell and Son, Mtl., 1918.
16. R. H. Graveson, ed., A Century of Family Law, 1857 - 1957, London, 1957, 90.
17. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives (W.L.U.A.), Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, debate of the Women's Literary Society on the merits of universal suffrage, 1880.
18. George Watson, The English Ideology, Studies in the Language of Victorian Politics, London, 1973, 60.
19. Ibid.
20. Machar, op. cit., 54.
21. Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1962 (reprint of 1933), 96.
22. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, Resolution of the Toronto Women's Literary Society, Feb., 1882.
23. Toronto Globe: March 3, 1910. Letter to the editor from Sarah A. Curzon.
24. In 1869 Jacob Bright carried an unopposed amendment in the British House of Commons extending the municipal franchise to propertied widows and spinsters.
25. New Brunswick in 1886; Nova Scotia in 1887; P.E.I. in 1888; Manitoba in 1891; Quebec in 1892.
26. Sir Joseph Pope, Sir John A. Macdonald, Prime Minister of Canada, Volume II, undated, 1885.
27. Sir Joseph Pope, The Day of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1920, 138.



28. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 1885, 1388, 1389.
29. P.A.C., John A. Macdonald Papers, Hamilton Wilcox to Macdonald, June 3, 1888; Macdonald to Wilcox, August 1, 1888. Hansard, 1885, 1388, 1389.
30. Hansard, 1885, 1391.
31. Ibid., 1399.
32. Montreal Herald: April 28, 1885.
33. Ibid.
34. Hansard, 1885, 1444.
35. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, Scrapbook III, address by Emily Stowe, c.1890.
36. The following men joined the C.W.S.A. in 1883: Thomas and J. W. Bengough, both ardent prohibitionists, William Houston, an education reformer, Phillips Thompson, the radical labour reformer, the philanthropist, Captain William McMaster, the politicians, John Hallam, James Armstrong, George E. Foster, and W. I. McKenzie, the reformer-capitalist, Robert Jaffray, public servant, Frank Yeigh, and prohibitionist editor, William Burgess.
37. Indicative of the American influence in this period, a portrait of Susan B. Anthony hung over the middle of the platform at the 1890 inauguration of the D.W.E.A.
38. Propertied widows and spinsters received the school suffrage shortly after the municipal vote and won the right to sit as members of the School Board at the same time. Edith M. Luke, "Woman Suffrage in Canada," Canadian Magazine, Toronto, 1895, 329.
39. Ibid., 330.
40. Including M.P.'s James Armstrong, John Waters, Andrew B. Ingram, alderman John Baxter, former mayor of Toronto, James Beatty, Minister of Education, Hon. George W. Ross, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Hon. A. S. Hardy, Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Mr Drury, the labour reformer, Alexander Whyte Wright, and three prohibitionist clergymen, Rev. Manly Benson, Rev. Alexander Sutherland, and Rev. William Robert Parker.



41. Hattie Stevens, President of the Toronto W.C.T.U. in 1906; Mrs A. Vance, Vice-President of the Toronto W.C.T.U. in 1905; Miss Lottie Wiggins, Superintendent of the Franchise Department for the Ontario W.C.T.U., 1898 - 1900; Mrs Fred C. Ward, Franchise Superintendent for the Ontario W.C.T.U., 1891; Mrs F. S. Spence; Letitia Youmans, President and founder of the W.C.T.U. in Canada.
42. American suffragists organized the first meeting in 1893 which led to the formation of the American National Council and the International Council of Women. Lady Aberdeen, ed., The International Congress of Women, London, 1899, 96.
43. Local Council of Women of Montreal, Report, 1897, 7.
44. N.C.W., Report, 1894, 172; 1895, 263.
45. Maria Pollard, the daughter of Rev. William Pollard and Mrs Pollard, the first President of the W.C.T.U., became Mrs Gordon Grant, the President of the Victoria Political Equality League.
46. For the history of the Montreal Women's Club see Chapter 1, p.59.
47. Montreal Women's Club, Report, 1894, 5.
48. Mrs Anna Leonowens won her reputation as author of An English Governess at the Court of Siam. Eliza Ritchie, born in Halifax in 1856, the daughter of Judge Thomas Ritchie of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, graduated from Dalhousie and Cornell, and became a Professor at Wellesley College between 1890 and 1900.
49. Cleverdon, op. cit., 160.
50. Mrs Edith Jessie Archibald, the daughter of the former Attorney-General of Newfoundland, later the N.B.M. Consul-General at New York, joined the new society. Previously she had been active in the Dominion and Provincial W.C.T.U.'s, the N.C.W., and the Halifax Local Council. A second new-comer, Mary Russell Chesley, had served for four years as President of the Nova Scotia W.C.T.U., John Leonard, ed., Woman's Who's Who of America, New York, 1914, 54, 175.
51. P.A.C., John Macdonald Papers, Curzon to Macdonald, May 29, 1884.
52. R. B. McDowell, British Conservatism, 1832 - 1914, London, 1959, 138, 139.
53. Mrs Emma J. Fiske, Mrs Edward Manning, Mabel Peters.



54. Iceland had an early suffrage movement. White, nordic, and Protestant, the Icelanders cooperated in 1894 and again in 1916 with Canada's native suffragists.
55. Like Emily Stowe, Amelia Yeomans had been married for several years and only turned to medicine after her husband's death in 1878. Like Stowe, she was forced to go to the United States for her medical training.



## CHAPTER 3

## CANADA'S SECOND SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

AND THE WAR YEARS, 1906 - 1918

The Canadian suffrage movement between the years 1895 and 1906 entered a period of doldrums. No new societies appeared. Only the D.W.E.A., headed by Emily Stowe's hand-picked successor, Dr Augusta Stowe-Gullen, continued to organize meetings and lead deputations. But interest was so low that Dr Stowe-Gullen had to pay the dues to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance out of her own pocket.

Many of the early, dynamic leaders were either dead, ill, or living elsewhere. Moreover, as Emily Stowe had predicted, the transfer of power to male members had made the women lethargic. Finally, the Canadian movement's dependence on the morale, example and assistance of the British and American campaigns meant that when they stagnated, as they did around the turn of the century, the Canadian movement languished also.<sup>1</sup>

The suffrage cause likewise suffered from the lull in reform activity generally. The influx of social reformers, male and female, in the suffrage societies tied the fate of woman suffrage to the fortunes of other reform issues. During this period the prohibition movement suffered a serious setback. Despite a numerical majority in favour of prohibition in the 1898 plebiscite the Federal Government refused to introduce the



legislation. This defeat following a history of discouraging failures reduced the zeal of the temperance campaigners. The W.C.T.U., the spearhead of the suffrage campaign in several provinces, became sluggish and this affected the vigour of the suffrage movement.<sup>2</sup>

But by 1906 the depression began to lift. That year Dr Stowe-Gullen, following her mother's example, tried to revive interest. She changed the ponderous name of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association to the shorter and simpler Canadian Suffrage Association (C.S.A.), and managed to conscript two new aggressive and energetic leaders, Flora Macdonald Denison and Dr Margaret Gordon.

These women became the core and character of the suffrage revival. All three fell firmly within the feminist tradition established by Emily Stowe. Each had battled societal prejudice to win acceptance in her chosen field. Dr Stowe-Gullen confronted and defeated the opponents of women's medical education in Canada. Dr Margaret Gordon belonged to this same group of pioneer female medical practitioners in Canada, having received her degree from Trinity (University of Toronto) in 1898.<sup>3</sup> Flora Macdonald Denison had begun her career as a costumer in the Robert Simpsons' Company and had gradually worked her way up to become owner of her own fashion establishment and a part-time real estate broker. She was probably the only self-made businesswoman in the movement.<sup>4</sup> The three were outspoken defenders of women's rights. Following the tradition established by Dr Stowe, feminism and political nonconformism often coexisted. Dr Gordon held the Vice-Presidency of the Progressive Club and



belonged to the Single Tax Association while Denison had a reputation as an ardent critic of capitalism and religious orthodoxy.

Under the direction of this triumvirate, the C.S.A. created affiliates in St John, Victoria, Winnipeg and Montreal and five new societies in the Toronto area. Despite these successes, the movement made little real headway until 1910 when two seemingly contrary factors combined to change the whole tone and tempo of the movement. First, revived interest in the British movement, particularly the sensational suffragette tactics of Mrs Pankhurst and her daughters, aroused the Canadian public. Second, the N.C.W. passed a resolution in 1910 in favour of woman suffrage, giving the movement a new respectability.

After this date, suffrage societies proliferated. Branches appeared in Winnipeg, Halifax, Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, London, and even in some smaller cities, in Brantford, Fort William-Port Arthur, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and Moosemin. New societies of major importance included the Manitoba Political Equality League, started in 1912, the Montreal Suffrage Association, begun the next year, and the Saskatchewan Provincial Equal Franchise Board, initiated in 1915. In 1916 Toronto alone claimed eight suffrage associations.<sup>5</sup>

The movement continued to attract to its ranks the professionals, journalists, doctors and teachers, women who worked in a "man's world." But now, thanks to the N.C.W.'s stamp of approval, the numbers of married, middle-class, well-educated but non-professional women increased too. The



tone of the movement also changed. The new suffragists were almost unanimously social reformers first and suffragists second, as is indicated by this interview with one of the newcomers, Mrs A. M. Huestis, President of Toronto's Local Council of Women. Mrs Huestis outlined a long list of reforms the Local Council had prepared for the Legislature: separate trials for women, examination of female prisoners by women doctors, police women to deal with prostitutes, prohibition of night labour for children of fourteen years of age and under, adequate segregation and care of the feeble-minded by the Provincial government, and a housing commission to deal with the increased numbers of immigrants. When asked if she and the Council supported woman suffrage, she answered, "Yes, but that is the last plank on our platform. We put the reforms first."<sup>6</sup> The trend towards the assimilation of the suffrage movement by reform men and women who shared this attitude, begun in the years 1880 to 1895, continued and as a result the second suffrage movement became less aggressive, more conciliatory but infinitely more popular.

# I

The rebirth of the Canadian movement owed a great deal to the revival overseas initiated by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her "suffragettes," as they were called to distinguish them from the more docile "suffragists." Since 1867 Britain had sustained a conservative, constitutional suffrage society, the National Union of Woman Suffrage Societies. Disturbed by the lack of progress and infuriated by the ridicule heaped upon the women by government



officials, in 1906 a small group of women decided to break new ground, employing a variety of tactics ranging from civil disobedience to overt violence and destruction of public and private property. The "militants," as they were called because of the means they used, were arrested for their actions. Their leaders now began hunger strikes in the British jails, were submitted to forcible feeding, and were released under the infamous Cat and Mouse Act, by which they could be released, without trial, when they were seriously ill, only to be re-arrested once their health had improved.

Canadians viewed the new British militancy with mixed feelings. Some condemned these women out of hand for employing "unwomanly" tactics. Others pointed to the horrors of forcible feeding and the pitiable physical condition of the women. In 1909, at the invitation of the C.S.A., Mrs. Pankhurst gave a series of lectures across Canada. Scarcely a single news report found fault with the Pankhurst lectures. This tiny, frail, intelligent woman captivated her Canadian clientele and left in her wake the seeds of indigenous suffrage associations.<sup>7</sup> According to Castell Hopkins, as a result of the Pankhurst talks, woman suffrage became a new issue in Canada.<sup>8</sup>

Militancy, however, found few sympathizers among Canadian suffragists who generally reflected the mood of the nation as a whole. The majority tried to disassociate themselves from the British suffragettes who, they believed, would attract only unfavourable publicity. Only a small minority, the feminist members like Stowe-Gullen, Gordon, and Denison expressed



admiration for their British colleagues' daring. The C.S.A., at their instigation, recorded a "hearty appreciation of the intelligence, courage, and energy shown by the W.S.P.U. [Women's Social and Political Union]."<sup>9</sup>

In 1913 Flora Macdonald Denison spoke against the Cat and Mouse Act in a London, England, demonstration and actually joined the Pankhurst-led association.<sup>10</sup>

A few scattered newspaper reports suggest that Canada had militants of her own. In 1909 the Winnipeg Voice recorded the meeting of a militant suffragette group under the auspices of an Icelandic society.<sup>11</sup> Helen Cunningham, a Toronto optician, and Laura E. McCully, a Canadian-born poet, established the Woman's Political Club which won the title "Canada's militant suffrage association." None of the Club's tactics are disclosed by the Voice except the suggestion that it staged open air meetings, something no other Canadian association dared do since society condemned women for addressing mixed public groups. In one summer the Political Club organized twelve branch societies with two hundred members including socialist women and university graduates.<sup>12</sup>

These few radicals were undoubtedly assisted by the immigration of British militants who were ready to renew their struggle in Canada.

Barbara Wylie, well-known in British suffrage circles and the sister of the Saskatchewan M.P. for Maple Creek, David James Wylie, tried to arouse the Saskatchewan suffragists. Olivia Smith, the British woman who gained notoreity by shouting out in the Canadian House of Commons, organized a group of fifty Toronto women called the Provincial Legislative Suffrage



Association. The Association declared its intention to lobby actively the Commons and was immediately condemned for this outrageous behaviour by a more typical Canadian suffragist, Mrs Dora M. Morrison, the President of a more typical Canadian society, the Suffrage Club of the Forresters, presumably a "fraternal" organization of the Independent Order of Forresters. Mrs Morrison wrote to the Ontario Premier, J. P. Whitney, demanding that he put a stop to "these English women disgracing our Canadians."<sup>13</sup>

The militants, of course, were exceptions. In general Canadian tactics were cautious and undemonstrative, in keeping with the country's reputed character. Canadian suffragists staged mock parliaments, sponsored plays, arranged exhibits, sold postcards and generally used more subtle methods of persuasion. Taking the politicians at their word, that Canadian women had only to demonstrate that they wanted the vote in order to receive it, they considered the petition their most effective tool. A 1909 petition to the Ontario Premier, J. P. Whitney, contained over one hundred thousand signatures. The petition which preceded the provincial enfranchisement of Manitoba women contained 39,584 names.<sup>14</sup>

With but one exception, Canadians failed to resort to anything even as tame as a march or demonstration on their own soil. In Hamilton on November 2, 1916, the suffragists staged a public meeting described in one newspaper report as "fiery and energetic." The women dressed in white, bore shields inscribed "We Want the Vote," and sang "A Better Day is Coming."<sup>15</sup> A few more enthusiastic women, tired of Canadian lethargy,



participated in foreign demonstrations. Generally well-to-do, the women criss-crossed the Atlantic Ocean and the North American continent at will. One Toronto suffragist, Alice Chown, and a group of her friends formed an ad hoc Canadian deputation in a militant London march, each carrying a stem of wheat to identify the country they represented.<sup>16</sup> In 1913 the C.S.A. sent a delegation to a large American demonstration on the eve of the Wilson inaugural. Still cautious, however, the women refused to consider using such tactics in Canada.<sup>17</sup>

Several reasons explain the Canadian women's timidity. The movement was still young and had not faced the long years of rebuke and ridicule which enraged British women. In Britain, women had outnumbered men for years, making sex antagonism much stronger.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Canadians had a reputation to uphold as non-violent, law-abiding citizens, a reputation the suffragists themselves sustained through their docile behaviour. The well-known Manitoba suffragist, Nellie McClung, used Canada's history to justify nonviolent constitutional tactics. She explained that we had

... a world of beauty and abundance, here in Canada, the country which had no enemies, no ancient grudges, no hymns of hate. We were not a nation by any act of aggression but by Act of Parliament. The whole world was wishing us well. Surely we were meant to lead the way to a better pattern of life, for to whom much is given, much is expected.... We would copy no other country. We would be ourselves and proud of it.<sup>19</sup>

More significantly, the Canadian movement lacked the cohesiveness and strength necessary for a concerted drive. The associations were widely dispersed and poorly organized. They were fragmented both regionally and ideologically.





Presentation by the Manitoba Political Equality League of its petition, December 23, 1915.  
Top (L to R) Lillian Beynon Thomas, Mrs F. J. Dixon. Bottom (L to R) Dr Mary Crawford, Mrs Amelia Burrit (age 93).





The Canadian delegation to the American suffrage parade, the eve of the Wilson inaugural, March 15, 1913.





Flora Macdonald Denison, President of the  
Canadian Suffrage Association since 1908.



Sectionalism, an attribute of most Canadian social movements, troubled the suffragists as well. Although the C.S.A. claimed national status, in fact, it had few associations and even less control outside of Toronto. Suffragists in British Columbia considered themselves autonomous. Suffragists in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta cooperated with one another but wanted nothing to do with a National Association directed by Eastern women. The Montreal Suffrage Association became an affiliate of the C.S.A. but it too conducted its own campaign with little guidance from Toronto. With the exception of occasional encouragement to New Brunswick, the C.S.A. had little to do with the Maritime Provinces. The W.C.T.U. led the campaigning there.

More serious still were the ideological disputes within the movement. Disagreement existed primarily between the "Old Guard" of the C.S.A. and the new social reform suffragists. The "Old Guard," Stowe-Gullen and her associates, supported by a few sympathizers, for example, Agnes Chesley in Montreal, Francis Marion Beynon in Winnipeg, and Helena Gutteridge in Victoria,<sup>20</sup> continued to discuss the feminist issues raised by the early suffragists. They criticized marriage, questioned the motherhood role, and demanded equal educational and occupational opportunities. The social reform suffragists, on the other hand, were intent on preserving the traditional social structure, including the traditional allocation of sex roles. For the feminists, the ballot constituted only part of the woman's movement, a movement which hopefully would change the male's conception of



woman and open to her new work and a wider sphere of action. For the social reformers, suffrage represented status and the means to implement their wider programme, nothing more. The feminists inevitably drew their strength from among the self-supporting suffragists. The social reform suffragists included some professionals, those who decided that the most pressing current problems were social not sexual, and a large number of married, non-professional women for whom the problem of discrimination was even more remote.

The feminists raised several issues reminiscent of the modern movement for liberation: a woman's right to forego matrimony and maternity in order to undertake an occupation of her choosing and woman's claim to economic self-sufficiency. Francis Beynon, for example, insisted that "Labour was sexless." She and Flora Macdonald Denison advocated complete economic independence for both married and unmarried women, arguing that "All the woman who isn't either mentally or physically lazy wants is a chance to support herself."<sup>21</sup> The assumption that women were predestined housemaids was groundless, according to Agnes Chesley, whose "Woman of the Future" would not allow domestic duties to become the totality of her interests. She refused to allow woman's domestic function to define her importance. To Chesley, "The home exists for women, not women for the home."<sup>22</sup>

Flora Macdonald Denison felt that the institution of marriage robbed a woman of her individuality and reduced her to the level of a prostitute. The whole idea of signing a contract to love repulsed Mrs Denison who,



coincidentally, in 1914 was in the process of securing a divorce. Unhappily, she explained, "The contract is the very thing that too often kills our love."<sup>23</sup> Both she and Dr Margaret Gordon wished to see the word "obey" deleted from the marriage ceremony because of the insidious implications it carried for women. Francis Beynon went further and suggested that a woman keep her own name in marriage and refuse to wear a ring which indicated that she had been "annexed" by some man.<sup>24</sup> Alice Chown, another feminist, saw procreation as the only legitimate reason for marriage: "If there is no legal marriage, how can any woman be sure that a man will stay with her after the children are born." For herself personally, though, the possibility of marriage was remote - "Freedom meant more to me than marriage."<sup>25</sup>

Admittedly the feminists were few in numbers. Yet they were qualitatively different from the majority and hence represented an important faction within the second suffrage movement. They defended a woman's right to an identity distinct from her relationship to some man and beyond her child-bearing capacity and thus illustrate the radical potential for change which resided, albeit peripherally, within the suffrage movement. They remained a minority for the very same reason the suffrage movement ultimately failed to alter fundamental attitudes towards woman and her place, the pressures which urbanization and industrialization imposed upon the nuclear family. For Canada's middle classes had decided to strengthen the family as a bulwark against the forces of perceived social disruption and this, of necessity, meant re-emphasizing woman's



domestic role.

The new suffrage recruits accepted this directive and endorsed the maxim that a woman's first duty lay within the home. James Hughes, typical of the male reformers who flocked into the suffrage societies, endorsed female enfranchisement because, as he saw it, a woman could obviously vote without neglecting her children for any length of time. As for electioneering and sitting in Parliament, he saw plenty of "unmarried women and widows, and married women with grown-up children to do that."<sup>26</sup> Even a suffragist as prominent as Nellie McClung, a temperance woman and a good representative of the social reform suffragists, could recommend careers only to women with grown-up children, women who had already fulfilled their maternal responsibility. After all, she explained, children do grow up, and "the strong, active, virile woman of fifty, with twenty good years ahead of her ... is a force to be reckoned with in the uplift of the world."<sup>27</sup> Sonia Leathes, a new Toronto suffragist, agreed that "the place of those women who are wives and mothers and who have husbands who can and will support them and their children" will certainly be the home.<sup>28</sup>

Why the vote then? Simply, answered the social reform suffragist, because society through industrialization had intruded into woman's sphere. To protect the home she needed an "expression of opinion" in the outside world. Voting meant housekeeping on a municipal, provincial, or federal level, nothing more.

Even the feminists when set on the defensive or perhaps for tactical



reasons made random comments which undermined their previous position on sex roles. Agnes Chesley pointed out that woman suffrage, "this perfectly logical step in the evolution of a democratic form of government," necessitated no alteration in the "functions" of men and women.<sup>29</sup> Flora Macdonald Denison in one of her weaker moments actually conceded that "the primal mission of woman is to get married and have children."<sup>30</sup>

But the "Old Guard" and the new suffragists could not resolve their basic ideological differences and in 1914 the movement split in two. A Toronto section, the Toronto Equal Franchise League, headed by Constance Hamilton, left the C.S.A. and established a competing national association, the National Equal Franchise Union (N.E.F.U.). Previously the cause of the split has been attributed to "personal ambition and pique."<sup>31</sup> A closer examination of the break suggests that more than personality may have been at stake. The new association represented the social reform suffragists and took a more moderate stance on many controversial issues. The C.S.A. on the other hand or at least the C.S.A.'s executive, Dr Stowe-Gullen, Dr Gordon, and Mrs Denison, continued to outrage the public with their unreserved opinions and extremist views.

The programmes, priorities, and tactics of the C.S.A. and the N.E.F.U. differed. The break-away members, Constance Hamilton, Edith Lang, and Mrs G.I.H. Lloyd were all newcomers to the suffrage movement, in contrast to the C.S.A. executive who had literally carried the movement on their shoulders for the past fifteen years. The three recent converts came from the same social class as the original suffragists<sup>32</sup> but while the C.S.A.



triumvirate all held jobs, the N.E.F.U. executive were housewives. As a result, in good Victorian tradition, the latter tended to look down upon women who condescended to work. They found the leadership of such women, especially of Mrs Denison who stooped so low as to rub shoulders with men in the business world, objectionable from every point of view.<sup>33</sup> As Honorary President, the N.E.F.U. selected a woman more to their taste, Lady Grace Julia Drummond, philanthropist, social reformer, and the wife of the Montreal senator, Hon. George A. Drummond.<sup>34</sup> Mrs Denison's son, Merrill Denison, pinpointed the social dichotomy between the groups when he explained that his mother was too much of a democrat for the likes of Mrs Hamilton and the other "Rosedale socialites."<sup>35</sup>

In an attempt to oust Mrs Denison and her associates, the N.E.F.U. branded them an "anti-democratic oligarchy," unwilling to make room for new officers, draw up a constitution, or to arrange for annual meetings or regularly audited accounts.<sup>36</sup> The "Old Guard," it is true, invoked their seniority and refused to step aside for "johnny-come-lately's" to the movement. After struggling through the hard times and occasionally financing the movement out of their own pockets, they felt they deserved to reap some of the laurels. Perhaps, also, the women had seen the first movement taken over by similar individuals and its subsequent fate and were determined to retain control. Mrs Denison, at any rate, refused to surrender the decision-making to "the new women of the Equal Franchise League, with only a few month's work to their credit":



When a council of men and women have struggled with a proposition against all the inertia, prejudice, and ignorance of an age and at last have been instrumental in educating the public to the point where its reform is accepted so seriously that parliament is considering its claim - is it to be wondered at, if this council might think it their prerogative to decide the policy of a general meeting .... 37

The N.E.F.U. accused the C.S.A., particularly Mrs Denison, of being tied up with the British militants, a position these respectable ladies refused to tolerate. It was no coincidence that both Mrs Lang and Mrs Lloyd, recent arrivals in Canada, held memberships in the constitutional British suffrage association, the National Union of Woman Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.). In fact, the N.E.F.U. allied itself with the British constitutionalists and used the name "the N.U.W.S.S. of Canada" for the first year of its existence.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs Denison denied the charge of militancy, despite her sympathy for the Pankhursts and their tactics.<sup>39</sup> Having worked for the suffrage for many more years than the ladies of the N.E.F.U., however, Mrs Denison assumed a more aggressive attitude. She expressed her sincerest hope that militancy would be avoided in Canada but warned that the only way to do this was to enfranchise Canadian women.<sup>40</sup> Her threats never led to action although she did manage to address one London militant demonstration in 1913, alienating the ultra-pacific majority in the Canadian movement.

The N.E.F.U. succeeded in attracting a large following from across the country, composed of dissidents who were tired of or discontent with the Toronto elite. The Beaches Progressive Club, the Toronto Teachers'



Suffrage Society, and the Junior Suffrage Club all changed their allegiance to the N.E.F.U. The Union's first executive included several well-known suffragists: Mrs Sara Rowell Wright of London, sister of the Ontario Liberal and prohibitionist leader, Newton Rowell; Carrie Derick, President of the Montreal Suffrage Association, and Dr Mary Crawford, President of the Manitoba Political Equality League. Nellie McClung, who had never been on good terms with Mrs Denison, also joined the new association.<sup>41</sup> Although it is impossible to estimate the actual numbers in the C.S.A. and the N.E.F.U., it would seem that the N.E.F.U. had become a major contender for suffrage support.

Based upon the above sample, the N.E.F.U. clearly appealed both to professionals and to reformers. The movement did not divide along strictly occupational lines. The deciding factor seems to have been one of priority. Women who joined the N.E.F.U. placed greater emphasis on stabilizing the social order and therefore wished to disassociate themselves from a group which they claimed endangered that order. The C.S.A. executive remained confirmed defenders of women's interests, regardless of the repercussions genuine equality might have on the previously sacrosanct symbol of middle-class life, the family.

The N.E.F.U., anxious to strengthen its title to national standing, made a concerted effort to win the West since by 1915 the enfranchisement of Western women seemed almost a certainty. The Toronto-led C.S.A. had had little success in the West. The Manitoba P.E.L. had refused to affiliate on the grounds that "suffrage is really provincial work" and



"each province must work independently."<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, on June 24, 1915, in Regina, the N.E.F.U. sponsored an informal gathering of suffragists from all over the Dominion for the purpose of organizing a Federal Equal Franchise League. But Canadian regionalism proved a difficult obstacle to surmount, for, although the meeting decided to form a Dominion Suffrage Board, the Board was still-born.<sup>43</sup> Both the C.S.A. and the N.E.F.U., Canada's nominal national associations, continued to speak only for Toronto and Ontario.

## II

The outbreak of war in 1914 divided the two bodies even more deeply. It also illustrated their different priorities. At the start both the C.S.A. and the N.E.F.U. endorsed the war, justified its necessity and promised cooperation and support.<sup>44</sup> But when the N.E.F.U. suggested dropping the suffrage issue "for the duration," the C.S.A. refused. The C.S.A. called for "Business as Usual" and continued to send petitions and conduct deputations throughout the war. In the minds of its leaders, the suffrage issue superceded even national emergency.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand the N.E.F.U. represented a multiplicity of reform causes and was, therefore, less committed to a suffrage victory. It also seemed more susceptible to patriotic, nativistic appeals, a weakness the politicians later exploited in the Wartime Elections' Act. Its President, Constance Hamilton, condemned the C.S.A. for spending money, time and energy on a campaign which divided women at a time when "the united efforts



of the women of Canada should be put in valiant service for the empire."<sup>46</sup>

The C.S.A. refused to become unquestioning patriots and kept an open mind on the whole question of war and peace. In 1916 it sponsored a lecture by the well-known pacifist, Newton Wylie, on "Woman Suffrage and Universal Peace." The N.E.F.U. was outraged. It denied any connection with the lecture and declared it had "no intention of discussing any aspect of peace until the war is over."<sup>47</sup>

The question of pacifism fragmented both national societies. Laura Hughes, daughter of James L. Hughes and niece of Sir Sam, Canada's Minister of Militia, embarrassed her uncle by founding in Toronto a Canadian branch of Jane Addam's Peace Party.<sup>48</sup> In 1915 Miss Hughes attended the Hague Peace Conference but she represented no country. Most Canadian women rejected peace talk as unpatriotic while the war was in progress. A second Toronto pacifist, Harriet Dunlop Prenter, withdrew from the ultra-patriotic Ontario Equal Franchise League, a provincial branch of the N.E.F.U., and set up yet another suffrage society, the Political Equality League.<sup>49</sup>

Francis Marion Beynon, Woman's editor of the Grain Growers' Guide, feminist, pacifist, and anti-conscriptionist, wrote a semi-autobiographical account of her life during the war, entitled Aleta Dey. Her heroine, who naturally opposes the war, is publicly and privately harassed for her views and in the closing scene is stoned to death by an angry crowd of war-mongers.<sup>50</sup> While obviously an over-dramatization, Aleta Dey possessed an element of autobiographical truth. In 1917, under threat of unspecified "heavy penalties," Beynon's employers warned her neither to speak nor write



against the war. Shortly thereafter, Mary McCallum, a good patriot, replaced her as lady editor of the Guide.<sup>51</sup> Francis Beynon left Canada and settled in New York. Beynon's sister, Lillian Beynon Thomas, the President of the Manitoba P.E.L. and a journalist (Lillian Laurie) for the Winnipeg Free Press, shared her sister's views on the war and within a year joined Francis in exile.<sup>52</sup>

Only a small minority of suffragists became pacifists, however. The majority, reflecting the country at large, were better represented by Carrie Derick, founder and first Vice-President of the Montreal Khaki League. Derick felt the war justified and favoured any measure necessary for victory. Generally the suffragists were anti-foreigner and anti-German. Nellie McClung, for example, declared that it would be preferable to be dead "than to live under the rule of [German] people whose hearts are so utterly black and whose process of reasoning is so oxlike...."<sup>53</sup>

### III

In 1917 the Borden government introduced the "infamous" Wartime Elections' Act which simultaneously disfranchised enemy aliens<sup>54</sup> and gave the vote to the nearest female relatives of soldiers overseas, the first step towards complete federal female enfranchisement. The legislation sparked a controversy which tore apart suffrage ranks and brought partisan feelings to the surface.

The granting of a provincial vote in 1916 to women in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta actually forced the issue of federal



enfranchisement on Ottawa since, according to the 1898 franchise law, federal electoral lists were drawn from provincial lists. The former New Brunswick Premier and long-standing defender of women's rights, William Pugsley, moved that the House grant federal voting privileges to women who already possessed a provincial franchise.<sup>55</sup> Uncertain where he stood constitutionally, the Prime Minister, Robert Borden, appealed for advice to his shrewd, political lieutenant, Arthur Meighen.

Meighen's response revealed a complex political situation. The Conservatives were about to force an election and to stand on the issue of compulsory conscription. Meighen already feared the large number of alien voters in the Prairies and did not want this number enlarged by adding female aliens to the electoral lists. The large French representation, traditionally Liberal and suspect because of their reluctant war contribution, increased in Meighen's eyes the chance of a Conservative defeat.<sup>56</sup> He felt that foreign and French women would be far more likely to exercise their ballot than the English woman who took no interest in politics.<sup>57</sup> For these reasons he recommended that for the time being Borden take the ground that "in so radical an alteration of the whole basis of the franchise there should be no discrimination between the Provinces."<sup>58</sup> In normal circumstances, Meighen went on to explain, he would recommend leaving this to the provinces but, due to the absence of soldiers overseas, foreigners controlled many constituencies and made the possibility of a pro-war, pro-conscription victory unlikely.

As a result of the provincial enfranchisement of Ontario women in 1917,



Borden could no longer put off a decision on the federal status of women who could vote provincially. Again he sought Meighen's advice. This time Meighen recommended a Dominion Act along the lines of the recent Saskatchewan and Alberta Acts which denied the vote to aliens. But he added a new stipulation to the proposed federal legislation, giving the nearest female relatives of enlisted men a vote.<sup>59</sup> The question remains as to why Meighen did not consider granting the vote to all qualified women. He could then have simply disfranchised the female alien the same way he disfranchised the male. Even Borden, while he agreed that neither men nor women of enemy nationality should vote, failed to see the justice of denying the franchise to good British and Canadian women whose husbands failed to make it overseas due to some physical disability or due to their employment in essential war industries like munitions, mining and agriculture.<sup>60</sup> Meighen, it seems, continued to fear the votes of the wives of French-Canadian or for that matter English-Canadian slackers. Enfranchising the wives, mothers, and sisters of soldiers practically guaranteed that they would favour conscription. In any event, despite Borden's misgivings, the franchise act followed Meighen's recommendations to the letter and opened the Tories to charges of partisanship and electoral manipulation.

The suffragists displayed mixed feelings towards the Elections' Act. Symptomatic of the increased nativism in the country at large, very few objected to the clauses disfranchising enemy aliens. Only the Beynon sisters called the Act undemocratic on these grounds:



...the organized women of the province will not agree for the women of the province to be divided into two camps - one half voting because of an accident of birth place and the other half barred for the same reason.<sup>61</sup>

The real controversy arose over the question of partial female enfranchisement. The suffragists divided on this issue in much the same manner as they had over the question of pursuing the vote during war-time. The resolute suffragists rejected the Act as a half measure; the more pliant bent to the Government's will. Predictably the C.S.A. condemned the Act as a "win-the-election" device, designed simply to ensure a pro-conscription Conservative majority.<sup>62</sup> The N.E.F.U., composed of social reform suffragists who had a prior commitment to the country's strength and survival, eagerly endorsed the Act as a "win-the-war" measure. In fact, the N.E.F.U. had anticipated the problem and had suggested as early as 1915 that an absent soldier be allowed to appoint a wife, mother, or sister as proxy.<sup>63</sup> Nellie McClung, another social reform suffragist, who had one son overseas, pushed the alien argument even further than the government legislation. In 1916 she asked the Prime Minister, Borden, to give only British-born women the vote to offset the lower moral tone of the electorate caused by "the going away of so many of our best and most public-spirited men."<sup>64</sup>

Other social reform suffragists played an even more active role in bringing in the Elections' Act. Constance Hamilton participated in a partisan, political venture along with the country's leading women reformers, Mrs F. H. Torrington, President of the N.C.W., Mrs E. A. Stevens,



President of the W.C.T.U., and Mrs Albert Gooderham, President of the I.O.D.E., to test the effect full female enfranchisement might have on conscription. These four women, at the Prime Minister's request,<sup>65</sup> sent a telegram to women across Canada asking "Would the granting of the Federal franchise to women make conscription assured at the general election, if such is inevitable, taking carefully into consideration the vote of foreign women?" The telegram added the furtive note, "Please glean your information as quietly as possible."<sup>66</sup> The straw vote indicated the dangers in full enfranchisement. Violet MacNaughton, the President of the Saskatchewan Women's Grain Growers' Association, for example, warned that in Saskatchewan the language controversy over compulsory English in elementary grades had consolidated the foreign element.<sup>67</sup> These findings probably reinforced Borden's decision to limit female enfranchisement to reliably patriotic women. In 1917 the four women who had conducted the survey issued a public letter, formally approving the Wartime Elections' Act and declaring that Canadian women were willing to forego the privilege of voting in order that Canada "remain true to her sacred trust to the Canadian men now fighting the battle for freedom."<sup>68</sup>

Not all Canadian women were equally enthusiastic. Indeed the letter attracted a flurry of protests from members of the associations supposedly represented, the N.C.W., the I.O.D.E., and the W.C.T.U., denying that they had been consulted. In the end Mrs. Torrington had to print a retraction stating that she spoke only for herself and not for the N.C.W. or for its executive.<sup>69</sup>



While many suffragists claimed to be above party politics, politics still divided them. Several accused the four women of supporting the Act for partisan political reasons; all four possessed husbands who were active Conservatives.<sup>70</sup> In the Prairies where the Liberals had given women the provincial vote, many suffragists retained Liberal sympathies and condemned the Act for its pro-Conservative bias. The Manitoba P.E.L. and the Saskatchewan P.E.F.B. both recorded their absolute opposition to a limited franchise for women.<sup>71</sup> The Act also divided the Montreal Suffrage Association along party lines. The majority condemned the legislation and forced the resignation of two important Conservative members, Mr Lansing Lewis and Mrs John Scott.<sup>72</sup>

The announcement of Union Government which ostensibly at least placed the Act above politics and made it strictly a "win-the-war" measure ended most protests.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Borden's promise that full female enfranchisement would follow within a year convinced the majority of Canadian suffragists to resign themselves to partial but temporary disfranchisement.

#### IV

Politics also played a crucial role in the provincial suffrage battles.<sup>74</sup> While it might seem that ideologically all liberals ought to have endorsed woman suffrage and all conservatives to have opposed it, this did not happen in the political arena. Parties added woman suffrage to their rostrum only when it seemed to their political advantage to do so.



A study of the suffrage movements in other countries shows that Canada was not exceptional in this regard. In Australia, for example, the political consequences, not the principle, determined where and when women received a vote. In the words of one Australian historian,

...at each stage, in each legislature the real considerations were just as political as those which bore on the abolition of plural voting, male suffrage, redistribution of seats, reform of upper houses and all other changes which affected the balance between rural and urban interests, between the forces of labour and capital, between liberals and conservatives.<sup>75</sup>

In the Prairies, the first provinces to enfranchise Canadian women, a reform coalition composed of temperance men and the organized farmers pressed for woman suffrage because they felt it would advance their particular goals. In Manitoba, the reformers fought a long and hard battle against Sir Rodmond Roblin, the Conservative Premier and the friend of business and liquor interests.<sup>76</sup> The Liberal Party, under T. C. Norris, became the party of reform and endorsed woman suffrage along with prohibition, direct legislation, civil service reform, workmen's compensation, mothers' allowances and child welfare legislation. In 1916 the Liberals came to power and stood by their electoral promises, becoming the first province to enfranchise women. In Alberta and Saskatchewan the suffrage movement took a fairly easy road owing to the persistence of the farmers' organizations and other progressives groups which had made suffrage part of their reform package. The Liberal Premiers, Sifton and Scott respectively, soon followed the Manitoba example and gave women the vote in 1916.<sup>77</sup>



The situation in Ontario was a little different. For years the women had petitioned both parties asking that woman suffrage be added to their programmes. The Liberals, led by the prohibitionist, Newton Rowell, finally relented shortly before the 1917 Session opened. But the Conservatives held power. The Conservative Party, first under J. P. Whitney and after 1914 under William Hearst, had consistently rejected the women's request. Then, in 1917, a Conservative, J. W. Johnson, tabled two bills which provided for full municipal and provincial female voting privileges. Hearst performed an admirable volte-face and now defended the women's right to vote on the basis of their performance during the war.<sup>78</sup> One historian suggests that Borden exerted pressure on Hearst to pass this legislation because, in anticipation of his own franchise bill, he thought it wise to make Ontario women grateful to the Conservative Party, to offset the Liberal power in the Prairies.<sup>79</sup> Whether or not this is true, Hearst, like most politicians at the time, realized that the reform could not be resisted long and that he might as well take the opportunity to feather the Conservative Party's political nest with grateful female voters.

In British Columbia, under Premiers McBride and Bowser, the Conservatives had remained in power from June 1, 1903 to November 23, 1916. The Liberals, under Brewster, had backed woman suffrage for years. Bowser decided to divorce the suffrage question from party politics by making it the subject of a referendum to be held at the same time as the election in 1916.<sup>80</sup> The male electorate agreed by a vote of two to one that women should have the vote.<sup>81</sup> The referendum failed Bowser's purpose, however,



for it aroused the hostility of the suffrage groups who felt that the referendum was being used to delay the legislation. Disgusted by this tactic, they campaigned actively for the Liberals who came to power in 1916 and a year later brought down the suffrage legislation won by the referendum.

In 1918 the year succeeding the Wartime Elections' Act the Borden Government followed through on its promise to extend the federal suffrage to all women of British or Canadian citizenship over twenty-one years of age. Following federal enfranchisement, the political leaders in the remaining provinces realized that it was just a matter of time before women could vote in their provinces also. As a result in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland the parties competed to see who could enfranchise women first, hoping all the while to profit politically from female gratitude.



Notes

1. See E. Flexner, Century of Struggle, op. cit., for the story of the American "doldrums." On the British scene, see Constance Rover, Woman's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866 - 1914, Toronto, 1967.
2. The President of the Ontario W.C.T.U., May R. Thornley, reported: "To have lived three years in preparation for, or participation in a great contest - then find the well-earned, clean, honest victory obtained, nullified by casuistic interpretations of it, clips the wings of hope ...." Ontario W.C.T.U., Annual Report, 1899, 54.
3. Leonard, op. cit., 240, 334, 348.
4. University of Toronto Archives, Flora Macdonald Denison Papers, Collection of newspaper clippings, Woman's Section of the Star Weekly, March 21, 1914.
5. In order to facilitate identification of Canada's suffrage associations, they have been listed, together with the names of their presidents, where they were available, in Appendix I. Appendices II and III identify the executive members of the Montreal Suffrage Association (M.S.A.) and the Manitoba Political Equality League (P.E.L.), two of the most important societies.
6. Beatrice Pullen-Burry, From Halifax to Vancouver, London, 1912, 150. (Emphasis added.)
7. British Columbia and Manitoba responded to the Pankhurst visit by immediately organizing new suffrage societies.
8. Castell Hopkins, Canadian Annual Review, 1909, 244. Flora Macdonald Denison and Mrs E. M. Murray, President of the new Halifax Suffrage Association, gave the British militants all the credit for the rebirth of the Canadian movement. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., undated newspaper clipping. Cleverdon, op. cit., 161.
9. The name of the Pankhurst association. N.C.W., Annual Report, 1907, xix.
10. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., Woman's Section of the Star Weekly, March 21, 1914.



11. Winnipeg Voice: Feb. 5, 1909.
12. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., undated article by Laura McCully. The Political Club was either short-lived or under-publicized as I have found only one reference to it.
13. Ontario Archives, J. P. Whitney Personal Papers, Mrs Dora M. Morrison to Whitney, April 12, 1910.
14. Hopkins, op. cit., 1915, 635.
15. Toronto World: Nov. 2, 1916.
16. Alice Chown, The Stairway, Boston, 1921, 103.
17. Toronto World: March 16, 1913.
18. Rover, Woman Suffrage and Party Politics, op. cit., 188.
19. Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast, Toronto, 1945, 105.
20. Agnes Chesley wrote a column for the Montreal Herald; Francis Beynon worked as lady editor for the Grain Growers' Guide; Helena Gutteridge, the only identified working-class member of a suffrage association, wrote for the B.C. Federationist and became Secretary of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Congress.
21. Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 17, 1913.
22. Montreal Herald: Jan. 20, 1912.
23. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., "Flora Macdam's Karma," unpublished, undated typescript.
24. Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, Convention Report, 1915, 31. From an address by Beynon.
25. Chown, op. cit., 39.
26. James L. Hughes, Equal Suffrage, Toronto, 1895, 31.
27. Nellie McClung, "Speaking of Women," Maclean's Magazine, May, 1916, 26.
28. N.C.W., Report, 1913, 70, 71.
29. Montreal Herald: March 4, 1916.
30. Toronto World: Dec. 14, 1913.



31. Cleverdon, op. cit., 36.
32. This can be inferred from the occupations of their husbands.  
L. A. Hamilton was a land commissioner for the C.P.R.;  
G.I.H. Lloyd and Major William Lang were both University of Toronto Professors.
33. In an interview (October, 1973), Merrill Denison told how his mother was blackballed from the Haleconian Club, a society for women in the arts, because she worked in business.
34. Mrs Denison on the other hand had difficulty understanding this choice. "However estimable a woman she may be," she felt that Lady Drummond's title had won her the position: "she has never worked for suffrage .... Those of us who are democrats would give positions of honour to the workers [i.e. workers for suffrage] who are surely more deserving of recognition." Toronto World: March 21, 1914.
35. Interview with Merrill Denison, October, 1973.
36. Toronto World: March 15, 1914.
37. Toronto World: March 21, 1914.
38. Archives of Saskatchewan, Violet MacNaughton Papers, Edith Lang to Violet MacNaughton, April 11, 1915. N.C.W., Year Book, 1915, 123.
39. Refer to page 98, this chapter.
40. Toronto World: March 29, 1914.
41. According to Merrill Denison, a battle royal raged between his mother and Nellie McClung, in Mrs Denison's estimation simply another "johnny-come-lately" to the movement.
42. Manitoba P.E.L., Minutes, June 27, 1912. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., May Clendennan to MacNaughton, March 31, 1915.
43. In 1918 Kenneth Haig of the Winnipeg Free Press reported that she knew nothing of any Dominion Board in Manitoba or elsewhere. Saskatchewan Provincial Equal Franchise Board (P.E.F.B.), Minutes, Feb. 12, 1918.
44. The N.E.F.U. and the C.S.A. cooperated in the formation of a Suffragists' War Auxiliary. Mrs A.B. Ormsby became President and Dr Stowe-Gullen and Constance Hamilton, a representative from each of the competing nationals, became Vice-Presidents. In a single year the Auxiliary raised over \$6000 and by 1918 had distributed over 11,000 recruiting leaflets.



45. Toronto Globe: Oct. 31, 1914.
46. Toronto Globe: Sept. 23, 1914.
47. Toronto Globe: Nov. 29, 1916.
48. According to Violet MacNaughton, Sam Hughes offered his niece a half section of prairie land if she would give up her interest in peace work. In 1917 Laura Hughes married a conscientious objector, becoming Laura Hughes Lunde, and moved to the States. Archives of Saskatchewan, Zoa Haight Papers, Laura Hughes to Haight, August 9, 1919, notation by Violet MacNaughton.
49. Toronto World: Sept. 3, 1917.
50. Francis Marion Beynon, Aleta Dey, Toronto, 1919.
51. Grain Growers' Guide: August 8, 1917; June 27, 1917.
52. According to Francis Beynon, Lillian's husband, Mr A. V. Thomas, was dismissed from the Free Press for shaking hands with the anti-conscriptionist, F. J. Dixon. From Brooklyn, Mr Thomas sent an article to the Winnipeg Voice entitled "Are these Men (Conscientious Objectors) Yellow?" Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., Subject File 23, Francis Beynon to MacNaughton, Feb. 20, 1917. Winnipeg Voice: Jan. 18, 1917.
53. Montreal Local Council of Women, Twenty-First Anniversary, 1893 - 1915, 66. Nellie McClung, Next of Kin, Toronto, 1917, 44.
54. By this legislation any foreigner who had arrived in Canada after 1902, whether naturalized or not, lost his right to vote.
55. Cleverdon, op. cit., 125, 126.
56. In 1917 Meighen received a report from Manitoba which confirmed his fears: "In Emerson (Provencher) I would judge that the Galicians now control the constituency ... In Mountain and Manitou ... there is a full French registration as well as others. All Sisters of Charity have registered and Baird tells me that the French control Mountain. I might add Dufferin and another constituency in which there is a full French vote. In Winnipeg I understand the female vote exceeds the male by 324, a full foreign registration." P.A.C., Robert Borden Papers, Colbert Locke to Arthur Meighen, July 21, 1917.
57. Ibid., Meighen to Borden, Oct. 4, 1916.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., Meighen to Borden, April 14, 1917.



60. Ibid., Borden to Meighen, April 17, 1917.
61. Winnipeg Free Press: Dec. 16, 1916.
62. Toronto Globe: Sept. 21, 1917.
63. N.C.W., Year Book, 1915, 125.
64. Grain Growers' Guide: Jan. 26, 1916.
65. According to Mrs Stevens, the Prime Minister had asked her to find out if full enfranchisement of Canada's womanhood would guarantee conscription. Ontario W.C.T.U., Annual Report, 1917, 82.
66. Toronto Globe: August 2, 1917.
67. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., MacNaughton to Torrington, c. Aug. 6, 1917.
68. P.A.C., Borden Papers, op. cit., "Women of Canada and the War Franchise Act," # 74783.
69. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., copy of Mrs Torrington's statement which appeared in the Toronto papers of Dec. 6, 1917.
70. Toronto Globe: Sept. 22, 1917. Mrs Hamilton's husband, L. A. Hamilton, land commissioner for the C.P.R., almost won the Conservative nomination in Peel in 1917.
71. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 21, 1917. P.A.C., N.C.W. Papers, J. Wilson to Emily Cummings, Sept. 13, 1917.
72. M.S.A., Minutes, Sept. 4, 1917; Sept. 14, 1917; Feb. 1, 1918.
73. N.C.W., Report, 1918, 55, 58.
74. For details about the provincial contests see Cleverdon, op. cit.
75. MacKenzie, op. cit., 53.
76. W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, Toronto, 1950, 31.
77. Refer to Appendix IV for the exact dates for achievement of political equality in each province.
78. Brian D. Tennyson, "Premier Hearst and Votes for Women," Ontario History, Sept., 1965, 120.



79. Ibid.

80. Audrey M. Adams, "A Study of the Use of Plebiscites and Referendums by the Province of British Columbia," M.A. University of B.C., 1958, 53.

81. Referendum results:

Civilian Vote: 43,619 for - 18,604 against  
Soldiers' Vote: 8,273 for - 6,002 against.



### Conclusion

In any society the tactics of a privileged order are always the same tactics. Declare in the first place that the demand is impossible; insist when it has been proved to be possible that the time for its translation into statute has not yet come; then when it is clear that there seems to be an urgency about it that the time is coming but that this is not yet the time; then when an angry clamour surrounds the demand, insist that you cannot yield to violence; and when finally you are driven to yield say that it is because you have been intellectually convinced that the perspective of events has changed.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, Canadian women won the suffrage battle when they were least potent. The war detracted from suffrage activity in several ways. It divided the movement, accentuated pre-war differences, and proliferated worthy causes for women volunteers. After 1914, for example, the Montreal Suffrage Association spent no more money on public speakers and assisted instead in patriotic ventures like the Khaki League, the Patriotic Fund, the Soldiers' Wives' League, and the Women's War Register.<sup>2</sup> A Manitoba suffragist complained that, since the outbreak of war, "it had been impossible to get a meeting together."<sup>3</sup> Those who continued the campaign, notably the C.S.A., were berated by female patriots for doing so.

Traditionally, it has been argued that women's patriotic service during the war, convinced reluctant males that women were ready for equality. According to the politicians, this was definitely the case. Canadian Premiers and M.P.'s from coast to coast mimicked British statesmen and sang women's praises for their unstinting and untiring contribution to the war effort in the factories and in patriotic societies.



Invoking the Victorian motto that "justice comes to those who earn it," they declared that women had proved that they deserved the country's highest honour, a political voice. Even the die-hard Conservative Premier of Ontario, William Hearst, claimed that the "splendid part" the women had played in the war had converted him to the cause. He eulogized women for their "capacity for organization" and their work which unquestioningly proved that they possessed the "qualification to assist" and the "ability to advise in the work of the nation."<sup>4</sup>

In actuality the war did prove a turning-point for the suffrage movement but not for the pious explanation given. Political considerations, many of them a direct result of the war, seem to have been the prime motivation. In the provinces the war accentuated and popularized reform causes, particularly prohibition, and brought to power reform administrations committed to woman suffrage and the rest of the reform programme. The fact that provincial electoral lists were used federally forced the issue upon the central government. Expediency intervened once again. The first instalment of the woman's federal franchise was neither won nor conceded but was imposed to assure the passage of the conscription bill.

No doubt, the eagerness with which the majority of the suffragists embraced the war, willingly subsuming their own campaign, reassured apprehensive politicians that voting women posed no threat. The small feminist clique had been successfully overthrown and the new suffragists evinced fine, patriotic, nativistic feelings and a proper respect for



authority and tradition. The taming of the suffrage movement guaranteed its victory.

At base, practical politics not merit decided the issue. As early as 1885, the debate on the Macdonald Franchise Act showed that few political figures felt a profound, ideological aversion to women voting. They awaited, it seems, only the appropriate moment.

At first, Canadian politicians defended the position that Canadian women did not want the vote and that, if the suffragists could demonstrate the contrary, they would most certainly receive it. Petitions flooded in. At the same time the international situation which yearly added to the growing list of states and countries where women could vote convinced many that woman suffrage was inevitable. The British suffragettes added a note of urgency, for British politicians especially, but also for Canadians who had no desire to see their own women rise up against them. Those with foresight realized it was futile to resist longer. The war gave them the opportunity to appear magnanimous, simultaneously supplying them with a rationalization for their change of heart.



Notes

1. Rover, Woman's Suffrage and Party Politics, op. cit., 101. A quotation from Harold Laski, a member of the Montreal Suffrage Association in 1915.
2. M.S.A., Minutes, Aug. 19, 1914. Montreal Local Council of Women, Twenty-First Anniversary, op. cit., 80. McGill University Archives, Women's War Register.
3. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., E. E. Stores to MacNaughton, Sept. 21, 1914.
4. Tennyson, op. cit., 117.



## SECTION II: THE IDEOLOGY OF REFORM: IN DEFENCE OF HOME AND HOMELAND

### Introduction

Canadian women won the vote primarily because they posed no threat to the established order. Very early in their history the majority of the suffragists disassociated themselves from those aspects of women's rights which created alarm, particularly the insistence on an unqualified occupational equality. In its place they substituted a more palatable doctrine. Inspired by a growing professionalization, bred of industrialism, they offered to professionalize motherhood, to make a science of domestic drudgery. They no longer claimed that they were identical to men but promoted instead the value of their purely feminine qualities, piety, chastity, and the maternal instinct.

The suffrage movement lost its critical orientation for several reasons. The women, following a well-known sociological principle, attempted to win acceptance by assimilating or imitating the ideology of those in power.<sup>1</sup> Even the few feminists in the movement modified their arguments in an effort to win allies. Moreover, the women had a triple allegiance, to their nation, to their class, and to their sex. Owing to a peculiar sequence of historical circumstances, the latter lost primacy.

Uncertainty marked the end of the nineteenth century. Scientific discoveries, particularly Darwinian evolution, undermined religious



authority and challenged the whole order of being which saw man as the centre of a rational, benevolent universe. Industrialization and urbanization created numerous social problems, unemployment, poverty, slums, anonymity, overcrowding. City life undermined traditional moral norms or at least it seemed that way to anti-booze, anti-prostitution reformers. The nineteenth century also saw the beginning of the end of the ascendancy of the British Empire. Population and trade figures showed that England's industrial, military and commercial "greatness" were being seriously challenged by Germany, Japan and the United States. Paradoxically, in the midst of these qualms and misgivings, scientific and industrial advances seemed to indicate that the world was moving somewhere and somewhere better at an accelerating pace.

The situation created a feeling among a portion of the population that, if the most visible ills of the present society were rectified, man could progress indefinitely and inevitably towards Utopia. Reform meant a middle way between "blind acceptance and the horrors of upheaval." It offered a chance, even a probability of "moderating the shock of change and controlling its tempo."<sup>3</sup>

Industrialism made class lines and antagonisms more visible. The middle class, men and women of middle means, neither opulent nor exigent, faced challenges from above and below, from the new, large corporations and from the restless masses. Although, technically, the big industrialists might themselves be labelled "middle-class," small businessmen and professionals saw them as a group apart, an uncontrolled



and uncontrollable power block. On the other side the industrial labour force became larger, better organized, and more demanding. The middle classes, now in a position to benefit from the increased specialization of industrial life, had most to lose in a social upheaval.<sup>4</sup> From their ranks came the reformers, men and women ready and willing to temporize, patch, and reform. Some Protestant clergymen, increasingly alienated in a world governed by materialism and corporate structures which belied Protestant individualism, joined the reform alliance. The reform coalition included temperance advocates, social gospellers, municipal reformers, child welfare workers, public health, prison and education reformers. It rested upon common assumptions and a common ideology: an anxiety about the present, a feeling of individual impotency, an untiring, romantic faith in progress, and a desire to restore order and efficiency to a society run riot.

Behind each reform lay a racial concern. As a direct result of Clifford Sifton's efforts to populate the Prairies, large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants flooded into Canada in the period after 1896, including Austro-Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, American blacks and Doukhobors.<sup>5</sup> The strange manners and customs of Canada's new citizens aggravated middle-class insecurity and presented an additional challenge to the Christian Church, which had become inextricably bound to a cultural context. The reform programme had a nativistic side. It was designed to impose agreed-upon social and moral and religious norms upon the newcomers.



On a larger scale the reformers envisioned creating within Canada a master race to lead the world to a Christian, social Utopia. At least this seemed to be the message or assumption of articulate Canadian spokesmen like Sarah Jeannette Duncan, Ralph Connor, Nellie McClung and Salem Bland. At different times they exhorted the "Canadian nation" or the "British Empire" or the "Anglo-Saxon race" to take up its destiny and lead the world in a civilizing mission, a "white man's burden." For the reformers the three collectivities were inseparable even if they were not politically coterminal. Nationalism and imperialism merged. All knew what they meant by race, that is, something wider than ethnology, a matter of cultural affinity and allegiance which included language, religion, and ways of thought.

The reformers also knew or felt that a nation suffering from malnutrition, tuberculosis, venereal disease, the other afflictions of poverty or vice, or fraught with class dissension could never lead the world. A strong and healthy nation needed a stable social structure upon which to build. "Social-imperialism," therefore, the desire to improve the situation of the working class in order to draw all classes together in defence of the nation and empire, motivated each and every part of the reform programme.<sup>6</sup>

The reformers were idealists and progressives, not revolutionaries. As a result, they retained a faith in many traditional institutions, primarily the family, which they continued to revere as the fundamental social unit. They were willing to adopt minor changes if they seemed to



promote their larger goal. Hence they advocated an extension of woman's power and responsibility in order to strengthen the family and to bolster social and moral values they believed in. Women were entrusted with the moral guardianship of society. They were expected to curb restlessness and rebelliousness in men and instill virtues of civic submission in children. These functions, however, were to be exercised through family relationships.

Middle-class women shared their men's hopes and anxieties. They faced the same status crisis, the same feeling of estrangement in a world which rejected their values, their morality, their entire belief system. As a result they joined the crusade which aimed at bolstering the role and authority of their class.

The suffragists, predominantly professionals, belonged to this middle class. Many participated in one or more branch of the reform coalition. In order to present a united front to the enemy, the majority decided to smooth over the differences amongst themselves, that is, between middle-class men and women. The sociologist, Guy Rocher, notes that, in many instances, "ideology camouflages actual divisions or specifically asks that they be forgotten, at least temporarily."<sup>7</sup> To meet the needs of their class the women allowed the ideology of reform to supplant their feminist ideas.

The suffragists also responded to the racial or nationalistic impulse which moved the reformers. Some believed that Canada could become a regenerative force within the Empire, the new "City Upon the Hill,"



"favoured of God," "free from the blighting evils that afflict and torment older lands."<sup>8</sup> A few, for example, Francis Marion Beynon, looked to one particular region, the Prairie west, to develop this truly "superior citizenship."<sup>9</sup> To others, like Flora Macdonald Denison, working from her metropolitan headquarters in Toronto, Utopia meant a world city ruled by a race of cosmopolitans.<sup>10</sup> All alike were idealists who shared a messianic faith in the glory and destiny of their country and their race and the uninterrupted march of progress.

As the reformers built their vision of the future around the family unit, retaining it as the foundation of the reformed social structure, the programme carried serious implications for the women in the movement. They were told that they had a duty to remain at home, to build a haven there against the forces of disruption threatening society and to produce and nurture happy and healthy citizens for the New Jerusalem. The suffragists, sharing the preoccupation with the health and future of the race, could scarcely consider alternate roles to those of childbearer and homemaker. Rather, they reinforced the cult of domesticity. The reform programme satisfied their class anxieties. At the same time, it offered them an important role in a non-competing field, as professional housewives, and the respect due colleagues, friends, and allies. The offer seemed too good to refuse. The women abandoned their earlier, unpopular demands and chose the reform option.

At this stage the male reformers were quite prepared to enfranchise women for the vote in itself meant nothing. More importantly, the men



trusted in the women's new-found dedication to the home and concluded that the female franchise would double the political representation of the family. Finally, by retaining a property or intelligence qualification, woman suffrage promised to increase the numbers of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle-class voters. By subsuming feminist issues, therefore, the suffragists won the official support of the men of their class and, due to the growing influence of the reform coalition in early twentieth-century Canada, they received the vote.

Fundamental attitudes towards woman and woman's sphere, however, remained unchanged. In fact, the ever-clearer split between "the interpersonal sphere and the growing public sphere of technical rationality" that was inherent in the rising socioeconomic system made the division between "woman's place" and "man's world" even more precise and reinforced the value of the nuclear family.<sup>11</sup> Minor changes did occur but each of these, for example, the opening of new jobs in the white collar sector and the increased numbers of women in institutions of higher learning, were simply responses to the needs of an industrialized community and represented no real ideological victory. The feeling that most women would become wives and mothers still prevailed, indeed became respectable, patriotic, and necessary. According to Betty Friedan, the traumas of the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Cold War induced a massive over-evaluation of the virtues of domesticity, the first victims of which were educated American women.<sup>12</sup> This thesis argues that the traumas of the 1890's and early 1900's had the same effect, the first



victims of which were the suffragists. Urban congestion, increased disease and immorality, the growth of powerful conglomerates, the discoveries of eugenisists, rural depopulation, and the social dislocation caused by heavy immigration made it impossible for middle-class women to do other than endorse the idea of a professional motherhood.



Notes

- 1.<sup>8</sup> Rocher, op. cit., 401.
2. R. J. W. Selleck, The New Education, 1870 - 1914, London, 1968, 81-87.
3. George Watson, The English Ideology: Studies in the Language of Victorian Politics, London, 1973, 7, 43.
4. Wiebe, op. cit., 112.
5. Brown and Cook, op. cit., chp.4, passim.
6. Bernard Semmell, Imperialism and Social Reform, Massachusetts, 1960, 24.
7. Rocher, op. cit., 406.
8. Annie Parker, "Woman in Nation Building" in B. F. Austin, ed., Woman, her Character, Culture, and Calling, Ontario, 1890, 465.
9. Grain Growers' Guide: April 2, 1913.
10. Toronto World: Nov. 6, 1913.
11. B. W. Harrison, "Sexism and the Contemporary Church" in Alice Hageman, ed., Sexist Religion and Women in the Church, New York, 1974, 205.
12. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, New York, 1963, cited in David Morgan, Suffragists and Democrats, U.S.A., 1972, Conclusion.



## CHAPTER 4

## THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF THE SUFFRAGISTS

Many Canadian suffragists recognized the existence of two types of suffrage women, the two types described in Section I of the thesis, social reform suffragists and feminists. Flora Macdonald Denison distinguished between "social service suffragists," those with a prior commitment to reform, and "real suffragists," those who believed that "... men and women should be born equally free and independent members of the human race...."<sup>1</sup>

The categories, however, are not exclusive. Most feminists were also enthusiastic, dedicated social reformers. The distinction is one of priority. Even Mrs Denison, a leading feminist, believed woman suffrage would rectify crimes against childhood and other social evils. Otherwise, she explained, she would not work for it another day.<sup>2</sup>

The shared belief in the need for some degree of social reform rested upon a common faith in state intervention. But within this broad area of agreement there existed many variations which represented the diverse shades of political opinion of the day, ranging from a point just left of orthodox laissez faire liberalism to a point a little right of socialism. The social reform suffragists controlled the centre and accepted limited state interference for the common good. A few, usually the most recent proselytes, preferred to keep state initiative to a minimum. The feminists,



outspoken on the social issue, frequently stood left of the political centre and came close, in some instances, to endorsing a completely planned economy.

The suffragists, like their allies in the general reform movement, can be grouped in yet another way. Those with a strong religious commitment can be distinguished from those pledged to reform for secular reasons. A few definitions of terms are required here as several historians have argued that some degree of religious awareness motivated every social reformer.<sup>3</sup> According to Melvin Richter, for example, men like T. H. Green, discouraged with the failures of the Christian Churches, turned to social reform but their motivation was still essentially religious.<sup>4</sup> "Religious" in this context means spiritual, non-materialistic, and other-worldly. Few would argue that nineteenth-century idealists were unmoved by deep soul-searching and a sense of spiritual mission. However, the reformers still fall into two categories, those willing to work with and through the traditional Churches, and those who possessed no connection with orthodox religion. In this thesis the former are called "religious," the latter "secular." While, admittedly, it is difficult to estimate the degree of a man's religiosity, clergymen and laymen who played a strong, active role in Church activities definitely represent one distinct group, while reform politicians, journalists and educators who concentrate solely on the practical application of their service constitute another.

The two groups also adopted different approaches to reform. Religious reformers appropriately emphasized Sabbatarianism and temperance, a cause



closely allied with the Christian Churches in the nineteenth century; secular reformers attributed greater importance to social reforms such as public health, pure food, child welfare, and the "new" education.

Religious reformers tended to be more hesitant to exhort state interference and continued to emphasize individual guilt and individual reformation.

Secular reformers on the other hand seemed to recognize the need for some, if moderate, structural change and were more willing to use state machinery for positive goals. These categories, of course, are not exclusive; many who began careers in applied Christianity or temperance moved easily into the secular camp as they became less dogmatic, more politically aware, and less confident of the Christian Churches' capacity to cope with the growing social crisis.

The religious suffragists were frequently relatives of clergymen or W.C.T.U. members. They constituted some 25% of the suffrage women, a relatively small percentage given the traditional assumption that Canada's "social passion" was grounded in religion.<sup>5</sup> Secular suffragists, that is to say, women involved solely in child welfare, social work, civic and education reform, and who had no connection with either Church or temperance societies represent almost 36%. The suffrage men fall into a similar pattern. Some 29.5% were prohibitionists, another 18.1% social gospellers, while 52.5% were civic reformers, agrarian radicals, and educationists.<sup>6</sup>



## I.

The suffragists' political ideology was a product of the changed circumstances of industrial life. Urban society had eroded the old faith in cut-throat competition, independence, and self-help. In the city, slums and diseases threatened the whole population. The health of one became the health of all. In the words of the Montreal Recorder and suffragist, Robert Stanley Weir: "The body politic is like the human body in that the infection of any one part causes the whole to suffer."<sup>7</sup> Poverty and unemployment could no longer be safely ignored, according to an 1889 Quebec W.C.T.U. Report: "Our paths may not lead down to the city slums or within the prison walls, but this 'monster of so frightful mein' comes up to our hearthstones."<sup>8</sup> Although young, Canada had begun to bear an ominous resemblance to the Old World with its slums, its poverty and its discontents.<sup>9</sup>

Large aggregations of capital, "the interests," "the trusts," "Big Business," - reform rhetoric borrowed from the United States almost before the situation existed in Canada - towered above the little man, challenging his liberty and his control over his own life. As capitalism depended upon the free interplay of equal units, Big Business, particularly cartels and monopolies, upset the balance and made free enterprise a fondly-remembered myth.

Political philosophy responded to these changes in the economy. Few historians would continue to defend Dicey's strict distinction between individualism and collectivism;<sup>10</sup> however, political ideology in the nineteenth century definitely evolved in the direction of greater



government intervention. Party lines blurred over the issue. According to one study of British Victorian politics by George Watson, no political party in Britain believed in or practised complete laissez faire and no philosopher defended it. The Liberals, Watson suggests, always accepted a role for government in the national economy. "They debated not whether it should exist, but what it should be."<sup>11</sup> A second study which traces developments within the British Conservative Party in this period maintains that the traditional conservative defence of State authority made it easier for Conservatives "to adopt a cautiously pragmatic approach to social reforms" than their Liberal rivals who were closely identified with classical British economics.<sup>12</sup>

Jeremy Bentham, the man usually credited with enunciating orthodox laissez faire liberalism, wished to reduce government interference in the economy in order to sweep away those things that stood in the way of the English industrialist. His attack was directed against feudal law, primogeniture, the tariff, apprenticeship, old poor laws, sinecures and extravagant government, and nepotism in Church and State.<sup>13</sup> Hence he became associated with the dictum that the state which governs least, governs best. On an individual level, he defined liberty to mean that each man ought to be free to pursue his own interests. But even Bentham admitted a role for the government. He defended the retention of a gently paternal state which would not interfere directly with individuals, except criminals, but which would encourage correct behaviour with suitable rewards and punishments. Prizes, for example, were to be offered for inventions! Manchesterian



economics, however, had difficulty explaining away the findings of Charles Booth or Seebohm Rowntree or answering the social criticism of Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, Arnold Toynbee, and H. G. Wells.<sup>14</sup> In an industrial society, Bentham's individual liberty became an illusion for all but a powerful and affluent minority who made life uncomfortable for the rest of society.

John Stuart Mill attempted to humanize utilitarianism by adding to it the principle of self-protection which, in Mill's words is "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty or action of any of their number."<sup>15</sup> This proviso admitted the intervention of the government, the only tool available to the common man to protect the larger, general interest against unscrupulous individuals, but its function was still largely negative. According to Mill,

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.<sup>16</sup>

T. H. Green's political theory is often described as the principal link connecting the Old Liberalism of the Manchester School to the New Liberalism which inspired the social legislation enacted by the Asquith government before 1914. Crane Brinton argues that Green's idealist metaphysics provided the necessary basis for the transition from laissez faire to state regulation.<sup>17</sup> Green redefined liberty to mean not simply



the freedom from legal restraint but a more positive freedom, the freedom to do good. In his opinion, since the state represented the "accumulated efforts of generations" of men striving to translate their aspirations into reality, it offered a higher rationality than is found in the individual and, therefore, the good man would do well to conform to its dictates. In other words, the state could define what the good life entailed.

Green was still far from collectivism in the strict sense. He consistently maintained a presumption against state action when other means existed.<sup>18</sup> He distinguished between moral and political freedom and argued that a strictly moral act is done voluntarily, as an end in itself, without regard for any enforcing agent. He continued to defend the idea of self-help and felt that the state should only do for people what they are unable to do for themselves. The ultimate aim of Green's state was to create a social environment in which moral men could operate and he justified using state interference to remove obstructions to moral behaviour. On these grounds he defended compulsory education for "Without a command of certain elementary arts and knowledge, the individual in modern society is as effectually crippled as by the loss of a limb." The state also had a responsibility to remove such anomalies as religious discrimination and class-based land laws. Finally, Green endorsed prohibition on the grounds that the state "ought to aid those who could not aid themselves to become temperate."<sup>19</sup>

While the Conservatives did not provide the theorists to justify



their shift in direction, both Arthur Balfour and Lord Salisbury displayed a "hesitant benevolence" towards the working classes. Two other prominent Conservative politicians, Randolph Churchill and Joseph Chamberlain, presented a more constructive approach to social problems. Churchill advocated a new "tory democracy" based upon the realization that the masses were naturally conservative and that, therefore, a Conservative Party should adopt a policy to satisfy them. Chamberlain recognized that "a movement for social legislation is in the air" and argued that the Conservatives should guide it. His programme included payment of M.P.'s, an eight hour day for miners, the establishment of arbitration tribunals for trade disputes, labour exchanges, workmen's compensation, and old age pensions.<sup>20</sup>

All the suffragists had moved beyond orthodox laissez faire liberalism. The slogans they used to describe their philosophy were products of the prevalent idealism of the day and indicate a consensus regarding the need for collective action in the modern industrialized world. James Hughes, for example, referred to an "unselfish, progressive aim to make the world better," Flora Macdonald Denison appealed to the "social soul," and Mrs John Cox, a Montreal suffragist, to the "corporate conscience," a "sense of our interdependence."<sup>21</sup> They redefined liberty to allow room for state intervention. Flora Macdonald Denison, for example, maintained that "...your Personal Liberty stops just where society's begins," a précis of Mill's classic definition.<sup>22</sup> Another Toronto suffragist, Margaret Carlyle, a factory inspector, to whom the question of government



intervention was a real and vital issue, defended "the great principle of the greatest good of the greatest number, even if it does demand some small personal sacrifice."<sup>23</sup>

They were, of course, not socialists. The majority were liberal reformers of the Mill and Green variety who called for equality of opportunity not equality of condition. They believed that capitalism could work and would work but only if each citizen was guaranteed an equal start, an open road for advancement, and some protection against the contingencies of life. The state had only to provide an "even chance" for everyone by removing all artificial restrictions which barred the way to "progress, development, and advancement."<sup>24</sup> A smaller number were committed Conservatives, notably Sarah Curzon and James L. Hughes in Toronto, Mrs John Scott in Montreal, Mrs Ella Hatheway in New Brunswick, and Helen Gregory MacGill in British Columbia. Woman suffrage was not strictly a party issue. The Conservative suffragists represented a strain of Canadian "tory democracy" and unanimously endorsed the growth of state authority and responsibility.

Within this broad consensus, however, the suffragists disagreed on the amount and kind of state intervention needed. Some had advanced as far as the early Mill<sup>25</sup> who advocated the use of the state as policeman, to prevent one person from abusing another's liberty. Factory and minimum wage laws are an example of this type of legislation. Many turned to the state for protection against the "interests," again primarily a negative defensive function. Another group advanced a more positive view of the



function of good government. One Manitoba suffragist, paraphrasing Green, asked that the state safeguard the interests of the governed "not only in the matter of the prevention of harm but in the cultivation of that which makes for good."<sup>26</sup> Temperance advocates took this to mean that you could force men to be free, thereby justifying prohibition.<sup>27</sup> A few extended Green's precepts beyond what the master intended or could possibly accept. Several Toronto suffragists belonged to the Public Ownership League which advocated nationalization of public utilities. Emily Stowe, Dr Margaret Gordon, J. W. Bengough, the Toronto cartoonist and suffragist, and several Western suffragists endorsed Henry George's answer to land speculation, the single tax on land value.<sup>28</sup>

Most had a very limited vision of what the interests of the governed entailed. Generally, they advocated using the government to remove only the most glaring evils and inequalities of the system. To Ethel Hurlbatt of the M.S.A., the key problems were inadequate accommodation, tenement buildings, and lack of fresh air.<sup>29</sup> While not consciously self-seeking, they concentrated on the areas of reform which, if left untended, threatened their own health, security, and way of life. The Montreal suffragist, Robert Stanley Weir, for example, asked only for the provision of better housing for the poor, for purer and freer forms of public amusement, prevention of the spread of contagion by more ample hospital facilities, a strict enforcement of the license laws relating to the retail sale of intoxicating beverages, and constant efforts to keep up the "moral tone" of the community.<sup>30</sup>



A few had a broader vision. Flora Macdonald Denison saw the city of the future as a "great hospital home" guaranteeing employment and comfort to all within its gates.<sup>31</sup> Violet MacNaughton of the Saskatchewan P.E.F.B. went far towards a complete "social service" state. She asked the community to provide every child, "from its birth until it becomes a fully grown and self-supporting member of society," with the essential material conditions of life, medical care, and both general and more specialized educational opportunities. Only then, she argued, could we "render the child a worthy citizen."<sup>32</sup>

The suffragists' attitudes towards the problem of poverty illustrate the shades of difference within their political philosophy. All unanimously condemned private, individual charity because of its inability to cope with the magnitude of the problem. Corporate charity, still voluntary but organized and anonymous, found many more adherents as it promised greater efficiency and a wider field of coverage. The Charity Organization Society (C.O.S.), an idea which originated in Britain in 1869 and which reached Canada in 1901, proved particularly popular. It attracted only the more reluctant interventionists, however, since it contained an old laissez faire assumption that the poor are so through choice. The C.O.S. deliberately made the reception of charity as unpleasant as possible in order to discourage paupers from remaining on the dole.<sup>33</sup> The question of the recipient's character seemed more at issue than his suffering.

A few more socially aware suffragists demanded government-managed relief as a matter of justice, not pity. Recognizing that many, through



no fault of their own, became ill or unemployed, Francis Marion Beynon recommended a system of state-managed relief run in conjunction with a comprehensive chain of employment bureaus.<sup>34</sup> The Toronto author and suffragist, Agnes Maule Machar, asked that the state assume complete responsibility for orphans, mental and physical cripples and the aged.<sup>35</sup>

Idealism, as a theory of state interference, was profoundly ambiguous. Considered purely logically, Green's emphasis on individual character gave as much support to the C.O.S. as his theory of positive government gave to the New Liberals.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps this confusion is due to the attempt by liberals to advance a new social ideology while retaining their intense faith in the individual. In a recent interpretation of John Stuart Mill, Gertrude Himmelfarb argues that this dichotomy exists throughout Mill's writings. On the one hand he defends "absolute" liberty and the "sovereign" individual, yet on the other he endorses a variety of social and historical forces to counteract the tyranny of the masses.<sup>37</sup> The suffragists frequently invoked the theme of "woman's individuality" and "individual worth" to justify their claim to the ballot. Like Mill, they had just as much difficulty reconciling this view and their willingness to restrict the liberty of other classes to ensure peace and harmony.

The increased place and importance assigned to legislation and the power of the state naturally enhanced women's desire for enfranchisement. Cut off from political power, they had no way to influence the legislature or lead it into new directions. Their only protection against the vulturous "interests," the only device available to redeem the system lay



beyond their grasp. Consequently the new political philosophy contributed a powerful impetus to the suffrage cause.

## II

Since Canada had a weak suffrage movement, it evoked little strong opposition. A group of Toronto women, led by Mrs H. D. Warren, the wife of a Toronto businessman, formed Canada's only Anti-Suffrage Society. A few Canadian intellectuals contributed to the ideological debate. Yet the political philosophy of this group is interesting as it allows us to pinpoint even more clearly the attitudes of the suffragists.

Fundamentally the anti-suffragists had no faith in democracy. They upheld an organic conception of society and feared that democracy undermined the organism by dividing it into competing individuals. Andrew Macphail, a well-known Canadian intellectual and anti-suffragist, compared democracy to a cancer which "strives to destroy the organs and organization of society, which strives to reduce races, nations, and families to unorganized congeries of individuals."<sup>38</sup> Democracy, he argued, is not a species of government; rather it is the chaos out of which governments develop. Sonia Leathes, an active Toronto suffragist, went to the heart of their argument when she observed that "Some people say they do not believe in woman suffrage but what they really do not believe in is representative government."<sup>39</sup>

The organic view of society rested upon the family. Consequently woman suffrage held a special fear for the anti-suffragist. Not only



would it compound the evil of individualistic democracy but it threatened to divide the family into separate individuals as well. As a unit the family obviously required only one representative, the husband. An outspoken suffrage opponent, the retired Manchester Liberal, Goldwin Smith, felt female enfranchisement would set husband against wife, brother against sister, man against woman, destroying the harmony of the home and undermining the strength of community and family ties.<sup>40</sup>

The family, of course, constituted an equally important element in the suffragists' scheme of things. But they interpreted the effects of woman suffrage very differently. They maintained that by giving the separate individuals in the family separate votes you doubled the political representation of the family and consequently doubled its strength. The suffragists trusted in "purified" democracy. They saw that a political reform could be used to bolster the status quo. The ends were basically the same; only the means differed.

The anti-suffragists felt that they had valid evidence to support their case against the "new woman". They attributed both a decreasing birth rate and an increasing divorce rate to woman's new independence and maintained that giving her a vote would encourage these trends. A vocal anti-Toronto/suffragist, Mrs Clementia Fessenden, feared that women were already increasingly avoiding the responsibilities of "Motherhood" and "If those [responsibilities] of nation-management were added, it was hard to say where the end would be."<sup>41</sup> The suffragists argued exactly the reverse. They maintained that women could easily be both mothers and voters. The



whole purpose of enfranchising women, they maintained, was to extend the maternal influence into society not to see it destroyed.

Both suffragists and anti-suffragists feared that extra-familial occupations for women might undermine home-life. Stephen Leacock became an anti-suffragist because he believed that the right to vote would encourage female independence and discourage marriage. He raised the cry of race suicide:

It is quite impossible for women - the average and ordinary women - to go in for having a career. Nature has forbidden it. The average woman must necessarily have ... about three and one quarter children. If she fails to do this the population comes to an end.<sup>42</sup>

Most suffragists would have accepted this analysis. But they could not understand why Leacock anticipated that female enfranchisement would create career-minded women. They wanted votes in order to be effective mothers.

Consistent with their suspicion of democracy, the anti-suffragists had little confidence in the power of legislation. They could not understand, therefore, the women's intense desire to share in the making of laws. The McGill Professor, Warwick Chipman, criticized the tendency to "propose laws on every subject and to constantly exhort state interference." To his mind women voters would simply multiply the mass of laws. A mother's duty, according to Warwick, was to keep the home fire burning and to tend to the spiritual and physical needs of her children for "it is these that keep the world pure and good, rather than the cold forms of the law."<sup>43</sup>



A basic confusion characterized the anti-suffrage ideology, paralleling that in the suffrage mind. The suffragists defended individualism but were willing to compromise it to achieve certain social goals. The anti-suffragist considered individualism destructive but felt equally uncomfortable with its alternative, state interference. Both groups were essentially socially conservative. They differed only in that the anti-suffragists wished to preserve the old order sacrosanct and immutable while the suffragists were willing to accept minor modifications to guarantee the perpetuation of that order.

While it seems fair to call the anti-suffragists "anti-democratic," this by no means made the suffragists supreme democrats. Like most Victorian liberals, the suffragists greeted democracy with a "welcome tinged with warning."<sup>44</sup> Walter Bagehot feared handing over government to "the jangled mass of men." Even Mill argued that liberty could be trusted to the masses only in certain circumstances. Implicit in the philosophy of both Mill and Green is the need for a ruling elite, based less on inherited rights and prerogatives than on acquired talent. If the function of the State, as Green maintained, was to provide the "good life" for its citizens, we must ask who is to determine what the "good life" entailed?

Education played the chief role in the creation of this meritorious hierarchy. It developed the mind, the rational in man, but it did more than this. Victorian idealism was in part a reaction against the purely rational. Education possessed an added primary virtue of character





First Free Enlightened Elector—"Whatta you tinka dis votes for women?"

Second Free Enlightened Elector—"Tommyrot! Why, they've got to be eddicated up to it fust."

Montreal Herald, Woman's Edition, November 26, 1913.



formation - it made men good. Many suffragists belonged to the education reform movement which had, as its purpose, the development within the schools of moral, pure, Christian character.

Logically, every suffragist, with the exception of a few radical democrats like Francis Marion Beynon, defended the need for an intelligence or educational qualification for the vote.<sup>45</sup> Most suffrage society platforms included a request for compulsory universal education. And since they were generally well-educated women themselves, they assumed that education would admit them to the ruling elite.

Green's philosophy hinged upon the assumption that the state would remove hindrances to the improvement of character. But it was left to the elite to determine which moral traits ought to be encouraged. Similarly the suffragists were convinced that they knew what was good for people. They considered themselves "the thinkers among the masses." They were "men and women whose ideals are lofty" and "who have control of our appetites and passions." Therefore, they did not hesitate to use the state to impose their ideals upon the whole population. Paternalistic moralism justified prohibition, for example. Nellie McClung argued that if liquor "isn't safe for everyone, it isn't safe for anyone."<sup>46</sup> They felt it their duty to boost the less fortunate, to make the ignorant aware of the "good life."

Education served a dual purpose for the women in the movement. It guaranteed them, as members of the intelligentsia, a position of power and respect in the community. It also served as a sex solvent, which would



obliterate the visible, social distinctions between men and women and reduce them to a measurable standard of equality. In a society in which strength and force still wielded power, women had to look for equality in their mental capacity.

The suffragists, therefore, were little more enamoured of popular government than were the anti-suffragists. Their democracy had very definite limits. The individual achieved a new importance in their system but the type of individual who would be allowed to exert influence would be very closely regulated.

Like democracy industrialism both enchanted and alarmed the suffragists. The pace of city life with its total disregard for the Protestant virtues of family, morality and sobriety distressed them. Ideally they longed to return to the land. The agrarian myth of "peace and security and plenty"<sup>47</sup> strongly appealed to them. The grasping materialism of industrialization offended their sensibility and threatened their design for a meritocracy, ruled by intellectuals. Mrs Annie B. Jamieson, a B.C. educator and suffragist, fought against "the encroachments of a materialism everywhere present and threatening to engulf us." She hoped the university would become for women "the ideal in the midst of the material" and an avenue to future seats of power.<sup>48</sup>

The revolt against industrialism assumed a "romantic," idealistic view of man. Many women had joined the movement because they were disgusted with the ease and frivolity, the utter uselessness of the typical



Victorian middle-class woman's life. The suffrage movement had a spiritual side to it, revealed in this almost religious dedication to the individual's duty to act and the rejection of crass materialism. Lillian Beynon Thomas exhorted women to stop following gold, "that which is not meat or drink for body or mind," and to return from the "glitter and the show" to the "real."<sup>49</sup>

While loathing the materialism and social devastation, the suffragists became intrigued with the mechanism of industrialism. It created a methodical regimentation of life which fascinated them. It stood for the ruthless elimination of waste and inefficiency. It required a society in its place and on time. The suffragists and their fellow reformers were equally disturbed by the restlessness and confusion they observed in the world around them. They decided to transform society into a well-run corporation by applying the iron rules of industrial production to the social order. "Efficiency," "control," "planning" became the key words in their reform programme.

The dichotomy in their attitude towards industrialism, their abhorrence of its grubby materialism and their infatuation with its precision, left the suffragists and their allies open to the seduction of bureaucrats and social experts. "Rule by expert" seemed to promise the application to society of the lessons of industry while it relieved the intellectuals of the distasteful task of worrying about such mundane matters.

The problem of political corruption increased their infatuation with "rule by expert." The revelations of purchased votes, closely allied to demon rum, graft in public works, rake-offs in purchasing departments and



the bribing of aldermen by the representatives of "great corporations with favours to ask" naturally alarmed reformers who looked to the State for society's salvation.<sup>50</sup> Commissions delving into American political corruption stimulated Canadian vigilance. The suffragists, meanwhile, did not lack examples close to home.

Attuned to the general disillusionment of the age, the suffragists blamed party politics for much of the graft and related evils. Their concern is suggested by one of the Saskatchewan Franchise Board's debating topics - "Resolved that the system of party government is detrimental to the welfare of democracy."<sup>51</sup> These women flirted with two remedies, both popular panaceas of the day: direct legislation and the creation of boards of experts, free from political manipulation.

The more democratic of the two solutions, direct legislation, comprised a trio of reforms designed to win the legislatures back into the control of the people. The "initiative" allowed a portion of the population to instigate legislation; the "referendum" permitted the people to voice an opinion on a specific piece of legislation while the "recall" enabled the people to remove from office any politician who failed to live up to his promises. The Saskatchewan P.E.F.B. and the Ontario Women's Citizen's Association, the successor to the Ontario Women Franchise Association, both included in their platforms requests that candidates to the legislature be subject to recall.<sup>52</sup> The Saskatchewan Board added that candidates should be free representatives, free that is from political machines, that amounts subscribed to party funds be publicized, that



patronage be abolished, and civil service examinations be made competitive. Several male suffragists and suffragists' husbands even belonged to the Direct Legislation League, started in 1906.<sup>53</sup>

On another level, principally in municipal government, the desire for efficiency led to the creation of appointed Boards of Control to replace elected, ward politicians. Since municipal government dealt with the day-to-day health and convenience of the people, reformers saw a need for prompt, businesslike service, a civic corporation, so to speak. Appointment rather than election would hopefully place these officials above the temptations of bribery.<sup>54</sup> In both Montreal and Toronto, suffragists participated in the local campaigns for Boards of Control.

Facing the choice between efficiency and democracy, the suffragists, like many other reformers, frequently preferred the former. Admittedly, as one historian has noted, "Goals such as the strong executive, apolitical administration and non-partisanship held out the promise of a more efficient, businesslike polity."<sup>55</sup> But the price was a less democratic government since the expert elite stood outside and above the control of the electorate.

### III

Another menacing factor in the Canadian electorate, the new immigrants, made the suffragists willing, even anxious, to restrict democracy. Between 1896 and 1914, as a result of the concerted effort by the federal government to people the Prairies, some three million immigrants, many from central, eastern and southern Europe, arrived in Canada. Unaccustomed to political



democracy, they became the target of dishonest political interests. Their vulnerability intensified Anglo-Saxon middle-class xenophobia. The Alberta suffragist, Emily Murphy, told an anecdote about an Italian immigrant who sent home the message: "Come to Canada, all of you, they give you a vote out here and then give you \$2 for it."<sup>56</sup> Her meaning was clear.

The immigrant's political malleability was not his only vice, unfortunately. The suffragists had a vision of a homogeneous, Christian Canada which the presence of large unassimilatable immigrant groups challenged. The example of the United States frightened them. Here foreigners had flooded into the country unchecked. Rev. R. W. Dickie, a social gospel Presbyterian clergyman and a member of the Montreal Suffrage Association, cautioned his audience that

We are receiving more [immigrants] according to our population than the United States ever received and it is our duty to see that Christian principles and Christian institutions be planted in their life.<sup>57</sup>

Many reforms in the suffragist programme aimed specifically at cleansing, Christianizing and assimilating the immigrant. Through prohibition, they hoped to impose sober Protestant standards on wine-making foreigners. The demand for legislation to raise the age of consent for girls arose, in part, in response to testimony at the 1905 Dominion W.C.T.U. Convention that brides were being sold into slavery among "the debased population of southern Europe."<sup>58</sup> The suffragists endorsed compulsory education primarily because they believed it to be the only truly effective means of transforming the immigrant into a Canadian. In the West, the



majority favoured an "English only" policy in the first six years of public schooling, to remove "the large colonies of people in our provinces who have not adequate knowledge of the English language."<sup>59</sup>

Mrs Francis Graham, "Isobel" of the Grain Growers' Guide and a member of the Manitoba P.E.L., conducted an overtly racist campaign for equal homesteading rights for British-born and Canadian women. As she explained in a letter to Mrs F. H. Torrington, President of the N.C.W. in 1913, the whole purpose of the crusade was to help equalize the balance in the Prairies on behalf of the native population. She asked: "Are we Western farmers so cultured, so steadfast, so loyal, so philanthropic that we can bear dilution by the ignorance, low idealism, and religious perversity of the average foreigner?" She implored her audience to "Keep back the foreigner. Give us good, sound British stock - women already British, already civilized, already subjected to both earth and heaven for conduct."<sup>60</sup>

Generally Canadians remained confident of their ability to assimilate most immigrants, save perhaps those of a different colour, the blacks and the Orientals. Black immigration in the period was slight. Yet the same Mrs Graham lamented the "negro invasion." She deplored the atrocities and outrages against white women committed by members of these "terrible communities," and recommended, as punishment, lynching or burning at the stake.<sup>61</sup> Alison Craig, another Manitoba suffragist, had an equally unfriendly welcome for the Hindu or East Indian who, she claimed, by "sheer force of numbers" would submerge the hemisphere.<sup>62</sup>

A few women had a more open-minded attitude. Emily Murphy, for one,



admired certain immigrant traits, for example, the Ukrainian's peasant values and the Doukhobor's deep religiosity. Still she wished to see them Canadianized although her methods were more subtle. She asked that Canadians teaching them citizenship, language, and laws adopt a "sympathetic respect for their pride and a wise patience."<sup>63</sup> She also had her racist side, however. In Black Candle, her study of the opium trade in the West, she included sensationalist photos of black men lounging alongside opium-intoxicated white women. She warned that perhaps the Chinese and Negro dope pedlars were unconscious emissaries of superiors intent on the downfall of the white race. She further supported the total exclusion from Canada of the "prolific Germans," "the equally prolific Russians," and "the still more fertile yellow races" who threatened to wrest the leadership of the world from the British.<sup>64</sup>

The foreigner provided powerful rhetoric to advance the cause of female enfranchisement. Believing that the right to vote ought to depend upon one's ability to vote, particularly upon one's intelligence, the women found it frustrating to be disfranchised while untutored Ruthenians and Galicians determined their laws. The female franchise, they argued, without apology, was needed to offset the increased numbers of illiterate immigrants and paupers. The Saskatchewan P.E.F.B. demonstrated statistically how the enfranchisement of women could right the balance in favour of the native born:

Male immigrants to this country outnumber the female 2 to 1. The enfranchisement of women would increase the proportion of native-born electors. It is proportions, not numbers that determine elections.<sup>65</sup>



Capitalizing on the belief in woman's moral superiority, they insisted that good Christian women could perform equally as well if not better than the foreigner. They also invoked their nativity and their patriotism. Margaret McAlpine of the C.S.A., for example, explained to Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1911, that "Canadian women have the well-being of the country more at heart than the average foreign immigrant."<sup>66</sup>

This rationale transformed many male reformers into suffragists. The prohibitionist and well-known Grip cartoonist, J. W. Bengough, also a devoted member of the D.W.E.A., saw in female enfranchisement "the offsetting of an electoral element largely evil by the introduction of an element largely good." It would, he explained, increase the native vote against the foreign, the educated against the ignorant, the moral against the vicious.<sup>67</sup> James Hughes, similarly, could not understand why ignorant foreigners, uneducated men of native birth, and weak young men without experience or training were allowed to vote while the most cultured and intelligent women were refused this right simply because they were women.<sup>68</sup>

#### IV

The women added one last, convincing argument to the already well-stocked arsenal of reasons in favour of their enfranchisement. They used the fact of social change, particularly the growth of industrialism, to justify a modification in woman's social role. As a result of industrialization, they argued, the world had intruded into woman's sphere



and removed many of her functions to distant, impersonal, collective enterprises. Factories made the food and clothing; schools educated the children; governments controlled the environment which affected her family's health. To guarantee that these tasks, which were originally her tasks, were performed well, woman needed to intrude into the world. Government had become housekeeping on a grand scale and women were still the most natural housekeepers.

None of these arguments was radical. There was no question of woman abandoning her sphere. The home had become a beleaguered fortress against crime, immorality, and disease. How better to strengthen it than to allow woman, its protector and guardian, a say in controlling the forces which threatened it. "The greatest safeguard from incursions from without," according to Elizabeth Smith-Shortt, a late convert to woman suffrage, is "to strengthen the forces within."<sup>69</sup> Giving the vote to women, especially to married women, increased the weight of the family vote and so of the solid, stable element in political life. "Home protection" became the slogan and symbol of the second suffrage movement, destroying in the public mind the association between women's rights and social revolution.

The social reform suffragists even managed to confine their political interest to matters peculiarly feminine, to civic cleanliness, the humane treatment of children, the city-beautiful, education, civic morality, the protection of children from immoral influences, the reform of delinquent children, child labour, infant mortality, food adulteration and public health.



All, they claimed, were legitimately "within the province of motherhood."<sup>70</sup> In this climate the ideas of the few courageous feminists became increasingly irrelevant.

Woman suffrage, in its final and most visible phase, rested upon a protective impulse directed against the devil, industrialism, and its apprentices, urbanization and immigration. Industry had forced some women, those who had engaged previously in small cottage industries, out of the home. The city created odious and offensive social conditions, drunkenness, disease, prostitution, pauperism. The foreigner challenged native values and ideals. Industrialism also challenged the role of the intelligensia since it put power in the hands of "Big Money."

The suffragists were optimists and idealists and hoped to create a social Utopia in Canada. They had a very precise vision of what their Utopia would look like and were not hesitant, in the slightest, to impose their blue-print upon the whole population. Government intervention, in fact, provided the means to do just that. Through state planning and control, they hoped to establish an efficient, orderly structure in which they and their male allies, the natural ruling elite, would be the directors. Predictably, they wanted the means, a political voice, to enforce their desires upon the legislature. Their allies, the Protestant clergy, temperance men, and secular reformers, equally apprehensive about industrialism and its consequences, and equally anxious to strengthen the home against disintegration, welcomed the women's assistance. Expediency rather than democracy explains their political success.



Notes

1. Toronto World: March 16, 1913.
2. Toronto World: Feb. 3, 1910.
3. Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religious and Social Reform in Canada, 1914 - 1928, Toronto, 1971, 20-25.
4. Richter, op. cit., 33. The breadth of his use of the term "religious" is clear in this statement: "Idealist philosophy and Comtist positivism, heroic vitalism and social Darwinism, nationalism, liberal and integral, socialism, utopian and scientific, all in their separate ways attempted to enlist religious impulses in the service of worldly causes."
5. Allen, op. cit.
6. While a few men show up in more than one category (See Appendix VII), the percentage distribution still reveals a basic religious-secular dichotomy. See Appendices V and VI for the numerical breakdown of the reform interests of the female suffragists, Appendices VII and VIII for the male.
7. Mr Recorder R. Stanley Weir, The Social Evil: Toleration Condemned, Montreal, 1909, 10.
8. Quebec W.C.T.U., Annual Report, 1889, 59.
9. Toronto's Medical Health Officer, C. J. O. Hastings, warned: "There are few conditions in the slums of European cities that have not been revealed in Toronto." Methodist Church, Department of Evangelism and Social Service, Annual Report, 1910, 48.
10. Richter, op. cit., 340.
11. Watson, op. cit., 69, 75.
12. R. B. McDowell, British Conservatism, 1832 - 1914, London, 1959, 435.
13. Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1962, 21.



14. Arthur Mann, "British Social Thought and American Reformers of the Progressive Era," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 1956, 672.
15. Watson, op. cit., 83.
16. Brinton, op. cit., 96.
17. Ibid., 212.
18. Richter, op. cit., 271.
19. Ibid., 271, 296.
20. McDowell, op. cit., 135-143.
21. Lorne Pierce, Fifty Years of Public Service; A Life of James L. Hughes, Toronto, 1924, 153. Toronto Sunday World: Nov. 14, 1909. Mrs John Cox, "Play for the People," McGill University Magazine, 1908, 628.
22. Toronto University Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., Sunset of Bon Echo, April, 1916, 32.
23. International Congress of Women, Report, Volume III, Women in Professions, 1899, 102.
24. N.C.W., Annual Report, 1912, 67.
25. Mill later moved toward an open sympathy for socialism.
26. Winnipeg Free Press: Jan. 22, 1916.
27. Montreal Herald: Nov. 7, 1913. Nellie McClung, In Times Like These, Toronto, 1915, 170.
28. See Appendix IX, # 10, 11. Since only two complete political programmes of suffrage societies could be located the Saskatchewan Provincial Equal Franchise Board representing the West, and the Ontario Women's Citizen's Association representing the East, both have been transcribed in full in Appendices IX and X.
29. Montreal Herald: April 3, 1911.
30. Weir, op. cit., 10.
31. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., "The Mental Atmosphere: the Unemployed and Zero Weather," unpublished typescript.



32. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., File on Publications, "Some of the Things We Believe In."
33. J. T. Copp, Anatomy of Poverty, Montreal, 1974, 50.
34. Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 20, 1916.
35. N.C.W., Report, 1897, 224.
36. Richter, op. cit., 340.
37. Gertrude Himmelfarb, On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill, New York, 1974, 66-70.
38. Andrew Macphail, "Women in Democracy," McGill University Magazine, February, 1920, 4.
39. N.C.W., Annual Report, 1912, 69.
40. Goldwin Smith, "The Woman's Rights Movement," Canadian Monthly, March, 1872, 259.
41. Hopkins, Canadian Annual Review, 1909, 245.
42. Stephen Leacock, "The Woman Question," Maclean's Magazine, October, 1915, 8.
43. Montreal Daily Witness: March 13, 1912; Feb. 13, 1913.  
Toronto Globe: Feb. 15, 1910.
44. Watson, op. cit., 156.
45. James Hughes and Carrie Derick spoke out strongly on the need for an educational qualification for the ballot.
46. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 1, 1911.
47. Ibid., Oct. 4, 1911.
48. Vancouver Sun: March 19, 1913.
49. Winnipeg Free Press: Oct. 30, 1915.
50. Social Service Congress of Canada, Ottawa, 1914, 281.
51. Saskatchewan P.E.F.B., Minutes, 1916, 9.



52. See Appendices IX and X.
53. The membership in 1906 included the suffragists, Mr F. J. Dixon, Mr D. W. Buchanan, and Mr S. J. Farmer.
54. For a discussion of municipal experiments in the period, see John C. Weaver, "The Meaning of Municipal Reform: Toronto, 1895," Ontario History, June, 1974.
55. Louis Galambros, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," Business History Review, 1970, 284.
56. Canadian Women's Press Club, Edmonton Branch, Club Women's Reports, 1916, 16.
57. Montreal Daily Witness: Feb. 8, 1912.
58. Howard Palmer, "Response to Foreign Immigration, Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1890 - 1920," M.A., Edmonton, 1971, 105.
59. Sask. P.E.F.B., Minutes, Feb. 12, 1918. Francis Marion Beynon, again an exception, believed that the more languages a person knew the better. Grain Growers' Guide: June 6, 1917.
60. P.A.C., N.C.W. Papers, Isobel Graham to Mrs Torrington, March 1, 1913.
61. Grain Growers' Guide: May 3, 1911.
62. Winnipeg Free Press: July 11, 1914.
63. Byrne Hope Sanders, Emily Murphy, Crusader, Toronto, 1945, 294.
64. Emily Murphy, The Black Candle, Toronto, 1922, 30, 47.
65. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., File 18, Equal Franchise League, 1914 - 1919, "Reasons Why Women Should Be Enfranchised."
66. P.A.C., Wilfrid Laurier Papers, Margaret McAlpine to Laurier, Sept. 8, 1911.
67. J. W. Bengough, Bengough's Chalk Talks, Toronto, 1922, 93.
68. Hughes, Equal Rights, op. cit., Preface.
69. University of Waterloo Archives, Smith-Shortt Papers, op. cit., Speech to a Mother's meeting, 1913.
70. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 1, 1911.



## CHAPTER 5

## IN DEFENCE OF THE CHURCH

The nineteenth century has often been called the "Age of Ideologies." In this century of ideological confrontation the cult of science challenged the traditional control of religion. Darwin's Origin of the Species in 1859, archaeology, and textual criticism cast doubt on the historical validity and veracity of Biblical literalism. Moreover, evolutionary theory undermined a God-centred universe as it seemed to substitute accident for intelligent purpose in the natural order.

In the ensuing debate, mid-Victorians were called to choose between faith and science. Defenders of belief either repudiated the new knowledge or tried to accommodate Christianity to it. Those who attempted to adapt religion to science turned their backs on the contentious points of theological debate and sought unity in the more immediate matters of morality and the social order, giving rise to the so-called "social" gospel.

These changes in the status and content of religion affected women in two ways. First, the challenge to Biblical literalism freed them from the strictures of Pauline dogma, particularly the insulting and restraining command to keep silent. Second, women responded readily to the Church's new social orientation. Many joined evangelical associations. These



extra-familial duties doubtlessly made women more aware of current social problems and political solutions.

Ultimately, however, the Church remained a bastion of male privilege. John Knox's dictum that it is a sin for a woman to bear rule over men continued to shape policy.<sup>1</sup> Women were excluded from the ordained ministry. They could neither preach, administer the sacraments, nor did they have a peculiar or particular function, prior to 1850, comparable to the Roman Catholic sisterhood. Even following the creation of deaconess and missionary societies, women were still considered primarily assistants and help-mates.<sup>2</sup>

The Church also upheld the traditional social structure based upon the home and the woman within the home. In its view the vast majority of women were predestined, pre-ordained housewives and mothers. The new areas of Church work, the missionary and deaconess societies, were meant to be restricted to widows or spinsters or to wives with grown-up children and time on their hands. Christianity endorsed the organic conception of the family with the man at its head, and the woman, its heart. The traditional marriage ceremony illustrated the Church's masculine bias, according to the suffragist, Nellie McClung. A woman was transferred from the authority of one male, her father, to another, her husband, indicated by the injunction to "obey." To McClung, this only proved that "The church has been dominated by men and so religion has been given a masculine interpretation."<sup>3</sup>

This restrictive vision of woman's place imposed severe constraints upon those Canadian suffragists who wished to retain their ties with the



Church. Unless they were willing to move outside orthodox religion, they had to confine their objectives to suitably respectable female goals. Consequently, without exception, the "religious" suffragists made social reform rather than women's rights their priority. The few feminists in the movement were either agnostics, atheists or members of very unorthodox sects.

"Religious" suffragists accounted for 25 to 30% of the male and female suffrage elite. They were active, devoted Church workers who usually belonged to the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican Churches, Canada's three largest Protestant denominations. Since the temperance organizations were very much a part of the Protestant, particularly the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist evangelical crusade, it has been assumed that the forty female suffragists who belonged to the W.C.T.U. also possessed a strong religious motivation.<sup>4</sup> Nine of these had close relatives in the ministry, two belonged to missionary societies, and a third led Bible classes, facts which sustain their religious devotion. Another seven women, Anglicans, for whom no mention is made of membership in the W.C.T.U.,<sup>5</sup> were the daughters or wives of Protestant clergymen. Among the male suffrage leaders, 12 of 44 belonged to the Protestant ministry. Because of their overt ties to the Church, these suffragists, male and female, have been labelled "religious" to distinguish them from the "secular" suffragists who shared several of the same reform interests but who, apparently, did not owe their inspiration to religion.

The "religious" suffragists therefore comprised a significant segment



proportionately of the suffrage movement. As they had no option but to endorse the conventional image of woman as helpmate and mother, their presence had a taming effect on the movement as a whole.

## I

The rise of the city presented traditional religion with its most severe challenge. There was a distinct falling off in church attendance in the cities. Clergy were proving difficult to recruit and even that "most stubborn of Victorian institutions, the Sabbath, was beginning to yield to new pressures."<sup>6</sup> Industry tried to override the Puritan Sunday for profit's sake. The indifference and fatigue of the working classes took an even greater toll.

Decreasing memberships aggravated apprehensions about lost prestige and authority in some sects more than others. Canada's Methodist Church, a denomination closely associated with English-Canadian nationalist aspirations, suffered a marked relative decline from 17.1% of Canada's population in 1881 to 14.98% in 1911. Baptists in the same period dropped from 6.86% to 5.31%. The Presbyterians remained stable at 15.68% while the Anglicans suffered a temporary decline from 13.35% in 1881 to 12.69% in 1901 but recouped their losses during the next decade to register 14.47% in 1911.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile the small pockets of foreigners who professed a different religious faith continued to grow. The Lutherans advanced from 1.06% to 3.19% between 1881 and 1911 and the Greek Church, nonexistent in 1881,



registered 1.23% in 1911. More unorthodox groups made inroads also. The Eastern Religions, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, represented .39% in 1911 and Mormons, .22%. While the percentages might seem insignificant, the numbers, approximately 29,000 and 16,000 respectively, and the alien character of the creeds presented a direct challenge to traditional Christianity.

This explains the dominant nativist strain in works like J. S. Woodsworth's My Neighbour and Strangers Within our Gates or C. W. Gordon's The Foreigner. The obvious solution to the problem lay in conversion. In Woodsworth's words, "There is a danger and it is national! Either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes or they will drag us and our children down to a lower level."<sup>8</sup> Christianizing and Canadianizing were considered two parts of the same process since "Protestant ideals and values were seen as an integral part of Anglo-Saxon civilization."<sup>9</sup>

Many Christians began to suspect that the Church was stagnating largely because its message had lost social relevance for large numbers of people. The writings of British and American social critics and social scientists, Carlyle, Tennyson, Thoreau, Benjamin Kidd, Arnold Toynbee, Edward Bellamy and Henry George, drew attention to the pressing social distress of the urban populace. Woodsworth recognized the problem:

The Church, as an organization, does not exercise the predominating influence in the lives of its members that once it did... it is not to-day coping successfully with the great social problems which in their acutest form, are found in the city.... Perhaps its programme is too limited.<sup>10</sup>



In response the Churches dropped their obsession with theological dogma and began emphasizing the physical and social needs of their parishioners. All the Protestant sects, even the Roman Catholics,<sup>11</sup> shared, though in different degrees, in the new social awakening.

Methodism had a long tradition of social awareness, going back to John Wesley who insisted that his was a "social religion."<sup>12</sup> In the decades between 1880 and 1910 the Canadian Methodist Church became a principal vehicle of the social gospel. Whereas in 1880 the Canadian Methodists seemed committed to a doctrinal religious mission, by 1910 its aim was "nothing less than the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth."<sup>13</sup>

In the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches a tradition of strong paternalism found expression in the social service movement. Moreover, Canadian Presbyterianism had been stimulated by the evangelical influences of the Free Kirk movement.<sup>14</sup>

The new evangelical crusade required an army of workers, teachers, and "help-mates." Women, the majority<sup>15</sup> and reputedly the most pious members of the congregation, provided a vast, untapped reservoir of strong, devoted "crusaders for Christ." The Church conscripted them to service in Home and Foreign Missions, Deaconess Societies, Epworth Leagues, and Christian Endeavor Organizations.

The Women's Methodist Missionary Society, founded in 1881, had workers on two fronts, in the Far East and in the Canadian West where they established reformatories for wayward girls and worked in the foreign



settlements. In the period after 1904 the Methodist W.M.S. opened a Ruthenian House for Girls in Edmonton, a Settlement House in Regina, All People's Mission in Winnipeg, the Turner Institute at Vancouver, and Missions in Sydney, Ottawa, Hamilton, Welland, Toronto, and Windsor. In 1900 over fifteen thousand women belonged to the Methodist Society; that same year the corresponding Presbyterian W.M.S. had twenty-six thousand members.<sup>16</sup>

The deaconess was the Protestant answer to the Catholic nun. Methodist and Presbyterian Deaconess Training Homes, established in Canada towards the end of the nineteenth century, produced teachers and nurses to work among the alien immigrants or aid the poor and the sick. Some moved into the wider fields of city missions and organized charity.<sup>17</sup> The opening of these new avenues to social work had a beneficial side-effect, making it permissible, even admirable, for women to participate actively in reforming endeavours.

The Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican synods soon took the next logical step. Convinced that good, Christian women could act as a counterweight to the immigrant and the pauper, all three passed resolutions endorsing woman suffrage. Several Protestant ministers, usually those most committed to the social gospel, actually joined suffrage societies. For example, Rev. Herbert Symonds, an Anglican, and Rev. George Adam, a Congregationalist, were both members of the M.S.A.; Rev. Dr James Logan Gordon, Honorary President of the Manitoba P.E.L., Rev. Daniel S. Hamilton, second Vice-President of the Manitoba League, and Rev. Dr Hugh Pedley,



Honorary Vice-President of the M.S.A. in 1914, were all well-known for their advanced social views.<sup>18</sup>

At the Social Service Congress of Canada, held in Ottawa in 1914, the bond between woman suffrage and the social gospel was clear. The Congress, called by historian Richard Allen the "culmination of social gospel ideology," passed a resolution in favour of women's enfranchisement, welcomed delegates from the local suffrage society, and listened to addresses by two active suffragists, Mrs Sara Rowell Wright of London, Ontario, and Mrs Rose Henderson of Montreal. Two speakers, Dr Charles J. O. Hastings, Toronto's medical health officer, and Rev W. W. Andrews, Methodist President of Saskatchewan College, both had wives who were suffragists. Four others, the prominent Labour leader and Toronto civic politician, James Simpson, Toronto Controller, J. O. McCarthy, the child welfare reformer, J. J. Kelso, and Rev. C. W. Gordon, better known to Canadian readers as Ralph Connor, all verbally supported woman suffrage on this and other occasions.<sup>19</sup>

On the other side, the social gospel awakened Christian women to their social duty. Women were instructed that, like the men, they had an obligation to earn their salvation through good works. They were told that they, as individuals, had an "individual responsibility" to spread the faith and reform the world.<sup>20</sup> Protestant clerics condemned the traditional middle-class woman's laziness and lack of productivity. The Rev. B. F. Austin, principal of Alma College in Belleville, told his female students that "Labour of some kind is the great law of God written on



woman's nature as it is on man's and to both sexes alike it is the highway to health, happiness, and success."<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly sermons of this kind had a profound effect on the women in the audience. Several suffragists attributed their social awakening directly to religious injunction. Elizabeth Smith-Shortt, for example, thanked the Protestant ministers for stirring women out of their apathy, for making them long to "enter on a new life, to cast behind us the petty things that encumber our better selves."<sup>22</sup> Nellie McClung also rejected female parasitism in favour of saving souls for Christ and worked alongside J. S. Woodsworth in Winnipeg's All People's Mission.<sup>23</sup>

The social gospel blurred the line between Church and State since social legislation required state intervention. Following the lead of their men who turned more and more frequently towards the legislature to remedy an unhealthy social situation, the women soon concluded that they too needed a vote, a necessary weapon in the arsenal of every reformer. Since women were commanded to do their share in the reform of the world, they had, not a right, but a duty to vote. Woman's enfranchisement meant simply the consecration of all her capabilities to Christ. Christianity made woman "a daughter of God" and raised her to such a "level of opportunity" that a ballot became her due.<sup>24</sup> In this way the social gospel led many women into the suffrage movement.



## II

Doubtless the Church's sanction of woman suffrage lent respectability to the movement. In a religious society like Canada, any movement which failed to secure ecclesiastical blessing may well have been suspect.

Moreover, the women utilized this "trojan horse of respectability" to gain support and approval by offering clergymen the largely titular rank of Honorary President or Honorary Vice-President in the suffrage societies. They also found several genuine reform friends in the Church, notably the Reverends Adam, Dickie, Symonds, and Hamilton, introduced earlier.

But the Church's endorsement of woman suffrage involved no re-evaluation of its stand on social sex roles. A vote meant simply that woman's religious influence would have a wider field. Even the more radical, social gospel ministers advocated a conventional distribution of sexual functions which grew out of the defensive, preservative nature of the social gospel itself.

C. W. Gordon, for example, recognized the many new spheres which had attracted women but insisted "the impressive fact remains unchallengeable that her natural sphere is that of the Home."<sup>25</sup> Rev. B. F. Austin eulogized marriage and motherhood - "no height to which vaulting ambition would lead you is more exalted than a mother's seat by the fireside" - and predicted that most women would end up housewives.<sup>26</sup> J. S. Woodsworth, no radical when it came to women's rights, argued that woman's presence in the home was essential to assure the physical and moral health of the children. Social order remained his first priority. Since he believed that motherless



homes would produce a shiftless, unmanageable future generation, he could not condone the idea of working mothers. In his opinion, the educated class made the best mothers. As a result he berated the trend among educated women to marry later and have fewer children. In fact he condemned the woman's movement because he believed that independence and self-reliance among women could lead to race suicide and the destruction of the family.<sup>27</sup>

The campaign for higher female education, in which the Christian Churches played a leading role, illustrates their narrow, confining attitude towards women. According to many Churchmen the traditional, frivolous female education encouraged in women a "listless ennui," "a sleep of indifference," and slavery to "folly and fashion,"<sup>28</sup> which hardly prepared them for the role of good Christian mother or missionary. To raise feminine ideals many Protestant ministers founded female academies which offered women a more demanding curriculum than needle-point and dancing and which emphasized moral and mental discipline and Christian instruction. One such academy, Alexandra College in Belleville, hoped to attract girls already suitably imbued with a strong, Christian devotion by offering an incentive of half fees to the daughters of ministers.<sup>29</sup>

The new schools, however, continued to emphasize religion and culture. They restricted women to conventional duties and denied the necessity of professional education for women. According to Albert Carman, the head of the Canadian Methodist Church until 1914, women required some intellectual instruction but he did not expect them to join in professional life.<sup>30</sup>



A more liberal clergyman, Rev. Austin, wanted every field of endeavour open to women but even he ranked domestic training as a first priority.

Social circumstances forced the Church to concede that some women might have to work. The increasing proportion of women in urban centres made it difficult for all women to find husbands. However unlikely it might seem, the Church feared that middle-class women in need might resort to the desperate profession of the "lady of the streets." The Church's dread of prostitution and venereal disease outweighed its apprehension about women working and, reluctantly, it conceded that in this situation it might be advisable for a woman to know how to support herself.<sup>31</sup>

Independent, self-sufficient women also promised indirectly to improve the quality of middle-class marriage. As things stood, women who faced the alternative of marriage or poverty, chose the former whether or not they felt inclined towards this sphere. Unhappy mothers made poor mothers, poor housewives, and led inevitably to unhappy homes and a rise in the divorce rate. To protect the home, a woman needed at least sufficient training to be able to choose an alternate occupation should she reject marriage.<sup>32</sup>

Women's education, therefore, provided a safety-valve for discontents which could, conceivably, undermine the family and subvert the whole social order.

The nationalist fervour of the late nineteenth century strongly influenced Canada's Protestant Churches, particularly the Methodists. They considered it a part of their Christian duty to strengthen and protect the nation from decay. This impulse, rather than a desire to free



women from unnatural restraints, lay behind many ostensibly liberal reforms. The discoveries of genetics had revealed the disastrous effects of tight lacing on the womb and of lack of exercise and poor nutrition on a woman's general condition and that of her offspring. Consequently the Churches usually endorsed factory laws, equal pay for equal work, dress reform and calisthenics for women, all for a single purpose, to improve the race by fostering the health of the mother.

The "new woman," therefore, had her usefulness and the Churches were willing to exploit her fully so long as she knew her place. "A more intelligent, better educated motherhood would produce more intelligent children. Independent women who chose marriage would bring all their energy and dedication to it. The dress reform movement promised to produce healthier offspring. The Methodist minister, W. H. Withrow, used this logic to justify women's higher education:

Woman is none the less womanly because she is neither a fool nor a doll .... She is none the better helpmate because she has no sympathy with the studies and employments of her husband. She is none the more charming companion because her thoughts run in a narrow round. She is none the better mother for being engrossed in fashionable folly and frivolity.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, the Churches allowed women greater freedom only if they considered it necessary in the long run for the preservation of order and stability.



## III

The Church's fundamental conservatism created a dilemma for the religious suffragists. Although they found allies in the few radical clergy who joined their associations and although the Churches verbally favoured female enfranchisement, still, within the Church, women were asked to be content with a secondary, subservient role. As late as 1921 the Canadian Methodist Conference rejected a proposal to admit women to the ministry.<sup>34</sup>

A few religious suffragists condemned the Churches for their hypocrisy. Nellie McClung, a temperance woman and a devout Methodist, informed a Methodist Conference in 1914 that it need not send resolutions to the legislatures on behalf of woman suffrage until it cleaned up the Church and gave women a place in the Church courts.<sup>35</sup> In 1916, the President of the Saskatchewan P.E.F.B., Mrs F. A. Lawton, took the same message to the Presbyterians. Nonetheless, these women remained good Christians and continued to work from within the Church.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the religious suffragists tended to be conservative socially. The Church's moderate stance on sex roles inhibited them and made it difficult for them to initiate change outside the limits set down by religious authority. The religious suffragists generally accepted the deification of the maternal role and made no attempt to open new spheres to women. In a study on women in the Church, Beverly Harrison calls the attitude of these women "soft feminism," since on one level they undertook new responsibilities but, on another, dealt only with



issues which no one could challenge as being legitimately within their realm - other women, children, the sick and disabled. Harrison maintains that "soft feminism" was the only stance open to women within the Church.<sup>36</sup>

The religious suffragists also tended to be conservative politically. That is, they shied away from the new trend towards increased state intervention. Richard Allen divides social gospellers into three groups, depending upon their response to social problems. Those on the right, he argues, gave precedence to prohibition and other legislation designed to restrain individual impulse. The centre party favoured a broader welfare programme, including factory laws, a minimum wage, and maximum hours. Those on the left forecast a vast overhaul of the existing order.<sup>37</sup> This typology is predicated on Allen's definition of "social gospeller" which seems to include just about every Canadian reformer. He may be faulted perhaps for seeing religious inspiration where in fact none existed. The religious suffragists, those with an obvious religious commitment, stand consistently to the right in the political spectrum. The majority favoured prohibition; only a few saw the State as anything more than a policing agent.

After the suffrage victory in 1918, Nellie McClung addressed a World Methodist Ecumenical Conference and soundly chided the Church for its unwillingness to break new ground for women, for being "slow to move, stiff and cold." "The Church of Christ should have championed the woman's cause," she complained. "It should have led all the reform causes in



bringing liberty of soul and freedom of action to women."<sup>38</sup> Instead, by its die-hard attitude towards feminine equality, she argued, the Church had driven many leading women outside its ranks. Yet she herself was a consecrated, pious Christian who seemed unable to consider that alternative.

While it is relatively easy to identify those suffragists with a strong religious conviction either through familial influence, membership in the W.C.T.U., missionary or allied societies, it is more difficult to prove the absence of that conviction. Indeed, the conclusion that many reformers and suffragists were more secular than religious can be reached only through insinuation, "guilt" by association, or as in this case "guilt" by lack of association. The paltry number of suffragists in missionary or other Church societies and the small percentage (25%) of suffragists in the W.C.T.U., an association very popular among Methodists and Presbyterians, suggests that many women had other than religious reasons for becoming reformers and suffragists. As Nellie McClung suggested, liberal women found it very difficult to live within the Church's constraints. The feminists in the movement, the small minority who challenged prevailing attitudes towards woman's role, became without exception religious rebels, either avowed agnostics like Flora Macdonald Denison or universalists like Dr Mary Crawford in Manitoba and Dr Stowe-Gullen who declared themselves comfortable in all the Churches.

Flora Macdonald Denison perhaps best illustrates the feminist-agnostic syndrome. Her unorthodox social attitudes towards marriage and motherhood,



have already been explored.<sup>39</sup> In a spirit of genuine, undisguised feminism, she refused to acknowledge a man-shaped deity - "Spirit is free, not personality"<sup>40</sup> - and blamed the Church for woman's continuing subservience. "The teaching of the Church is at the bottom of woman's slavery" she declared, "and until she can recognize that fact and resent the teaching she will remain enslaved."<sup>41</sup> Mrs Denison had little love for organized religion. She rejected the Puritan God of wrath "watching mortals and jotting down all the little or big wrong-doings." She accused the Church of creating the concept of "sin" to keep men and women in subjection. As a political radical she condemned the organized Church for lavishing itself in "imposing ceremonies" and "palatial cathedrals" while it allowed the poor to go hungry.<sup>42</sup>

For all these reasons Mrs Denison abandoned the Church and turned to spiritualism. She supported the theory of "cosmic consciousness" which maintained that an intelligence existed in and around the world and that particularly sensitive individuals could tune it on it.<sup>43</sup> In the thinly-disguised account of her sister's life, entitled Mary Melville: The Psychic, Mrs Denison claimed that her sister possessed this gift and that, after her untimely death at age eighteen, her sister continued to communicate with her. At Bon Echo in southern Ontario, Mrs Denison established a Walt Whitman Club where she drew around her an interesting body of progressive thinkers, including several suffragists who shared her religious views, a fact which suggests the existence of a small, radical sub-culture within the suffrage movement.<sup>44</sup>



What is interesting in this instance is not what divided the suffragists but what united them. In substance, Mrs Denison and the religious suffragists shared a similar social vision although they had different names for it. Inspired by the social gospel, the religious suffragists worked towards the establishment of "Christ's Kingdom" on earth. Similarly, Mrs Denison looked for "Eternal Progression" towards the goal of worldly perfection.<sup>45</sup> The spirit of the age, a humanistic idealism, which aimed at creating a better, healthier world in which everyone had an equal chance and no one suffered unduly, provided a common denominator for the movement. J. S. Woodsworth called it a "zeitgeist," a modern impulse traceable to no one individual or organization which revealed itself in men of the "most diverse creeds" and gradually permeated and leavened our social life and transformed our institutions.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately the religious suffragists anticipated a somewhat narrow Utopia, more precisely, a Protestant Anglo-Saxon Utopia, which often constricted the altruism of their message.

The Church aided the suffrage movement by initiating a new social theology which focused the attention of Christians on the need for social reform and the particular usefulness of the ballot. In the process it awakened women out of a comfortable lethargy, filled them with a moral imperative to contribute to the new social order, and made them painfully aware of their political impotence.

The religious suffragists, inspired by this message, found it difficult,



however, to attack the inherent prejudice against women in the Christian social order. They were told that the Kingdom of God on earth depended upon strong families which, in turn, depended upon keeping women in the home. As a result, they resigned themselves to unnatural restrictions on their talent and creativity. As they were fully committed to spreading the faith and defending Christianity, they made social reform their priority and avoided the issue of female equality. In the end, the Church reinforced the growing conservatism of the movement and made religion a substantial obstacle to genuine female liberation.



### Notes

1. Geddes MacGregor, The Thundering Scot, a Portrait of John Knox, London, 1958, 90ff.
2. The Secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union made this clear in 1888 at the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions of the World: "Women's work in the foreign field must be careful to recognize the headship of man in ordering the affairs of the kingdom of God .... 'Adam was first formed, then Eve' and 'the head of the woman is still the man.'" Hageman, op. cit., 168.
3. McClung, In Times Like These, op. cit., 108.
4. The W.C.T.U., a powerful Protestant organization pledged to the Christianizing of the Canadian nation, worked hand in glove with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The District Unions established departments for "Evangelism," "Sabbath Observance," "Sabbath Schools," all evidently designed to strengthen Canadian Protestantism. Toronto District Union, W.C.T.U., Report and Directory, 1905, 1906, 9 ff. Charles Rowell Wood, "The Historical Development of the Temperance Movement in Methodism in Canada," B. D., Emmanuel College, Victoria University, 1958, 47 ff.
5. As the Church of England favoured temperance but not prohibition, it is not surprising to find very few Anglican suffragists in the W.C.T.U. See Appendix XI for a chart showing the number of suffragists with relatives in the ministry.
6. Selleck, op. cit., 81.
7. Census of Canada, 1921, 768.
8. J. S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within our Gates, Toronto, 1909, 3.
9. Ibid., University of Toronto reprint, Introduction by M. Barber, xix.
10. J. S. Woodsworth, My Neighbour, Toronto, 1911, 101.
11. Alex R. Vidler, A Century of Social Catholicism, 1820 - 1920, London, 1964.
12. Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800 - 1850, London, 1937, 271.



13. Methodist Church of Canada, "Principles, Problems, Programme in Moral and Social Reforms," Canadian Pamphlet Collection, #3786, 53.
14. Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religious and Social Reform in Canada, 1914 - 1928, Toronto, 1971, 6, 7.
15. In 1890 Rev. B. F. Austin of the Canadian Methodist Church noted that women formed nearly two-thirds of the membership of the Christian Church. In 1910 the Methodist Church Department of Evangelism and Social Service reported a majority of three million girls and women in the Church. Austin, Woman; her Character, Culture, and Calling, op. cit., 210. Methodist Church, Dept. of Evangelism and Social Service, Annual Report, 1910 - 1911, 54.
16. N.C.W., Women of Canada: Their Life and Their Work, prepared for the Paris International Exhibition, 1900, 303.
17. United Church Archives, Papers of the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training Home, W.A.J. Martin, "The Ewart Missionary Training Home."
18. Herbert Symonds: A Memoir, Compiled by Friends, Montreal, 1921, 178. Allen, op. cit., 232, 15.
19. Social Service Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings and Addresses, Ottawa, 1914.
20. Hughes, Equal Suffrage, op. cit., 17.
21. Austin, op. cit., 31.
22. University of Waterloo Archives, Smith-Shortt Papers, op. cit., Diary, March 1, 1882.
23. McClung, In Times Like These, op. cit., 20, 100. Rev James Woodsworth, Thirty Years in the Canadian North-West, Toronto, 1917, 237.
24. Austin, op. cit., Introduction.
25. Ralph Connor, The Friendly Four and Other Stories, New York, 1926, 239.
26. Austin, op. cit., 200, 375-380.
27. Woodsworth, My Neighbour, op. cit., 60-70.



28. Rev. W. H. Withrow, "Higher Female Education," Methodist Magazine, January, 1875, 24. Austin, op. cit., 23, 24.
29. United Church Archives, Alexandra College Papers, printed flier, c. 1884/.
30. United Church Archives, Albert Carman Papers, Box 24, Item 57, letter to Globe entitled "Education of Girls."
31. Austin, op. cit., 31, 32.
32. Ibid., 33.
33. W. H. Withrow, "The Higher Education of Women," in Austin, op. cit., 325.
34. See Appendix XII for a province by province breakdown of the referendum which shows clearly that in each instance the Western provinces were more amenable to the reform than the East. This suggests that there may have been less hostility towards women in provinces where they represented a distinct numerical minority.
35. Winnipeg Free Press: June 13, 1914.
36. Beverly Harrison, "Sexism and the Contemporary Church," op. cit., 195 ff.
37. Allen, op. cit., 7 ff.
38. World Methodist Ecumenical Conference, Report, 1921, 258 - 260.
39. See Chapter 3, p.105 for a discussion of Denison's feminist attitudes.
40. Queen's University Archives, Merrill Denison Papers, The Sunset of Bon Echo, issue # 4, c. 1916, 27.
41. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., Woman's Suffrage Correspondence, Programmes, and Speeches; undated speech.
42. Flora Macdonald Denison, Mary Melville: the Psychic, Toronto, 1900, 147.
43. The theory of "cosmic consciousness" is explained in Richard Maurice Burke, Cosmic Consciousness, Philadelphia, 1901. Burke was one of the three Literary Executors of Horace Traubel who happened to be a friend of Mrs Denison's and a member of her Walt Whitman Club.
44. Mildred Bain, the President of the Montreal Equal Suffrage Club, J. W. Bengough and Albert Durant Watson all belonged to the Whitman Club. Watson, a member of the D.W.E.A., wrote Mediums and Mystics, a study in spiritual laws and psychic forces. Lorne Pierce, Albert Durant Watson: An Appraisal, Toronto, 1923.



45. Denison, Mary Melville, op. cit., 55.

46. Woodsworth, My Neighbour, op. cit., 178.



## CHAPTER 6

## TEMPERATE BEGINNINGS

The prohibition movement provided the single, most popular route to suffrage activity for many men and women in Canada. Male temperance leaders became convinced that enfranchised Anglo-Saxon Protestant women, the most vocal anti-liquor element in the community, would vote in prohibition and, as a result, many joined the suffrage movement. At the same time temperance activity gave nineteenth century Canadian women their first real political experience.<sup>1</sup> It taught them how to organize, how to persuade and pressure politicians, and showed them the value of a ballot. In short, it transformed many into suffragists. Approximately 25% of the men and women who joined Canadian suffrage societies belonged to temperance organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The alliance with prohibition helped the suffrage movement in two ways. First, it won the cause many powerful allies and a degree of respectability owing to the popularity of temperance among Canadian reformers and reform politicians. Second, given the broad rural appeal of temperance,<sup>3</sup> it created a valuable link between the predominantly urban suffrage societies and the larger rural constituency. The temperance suffragists, that 25% in the active suffrage societies, tended to be citydwellers themselves. (The urban character of the suffrage societies is a constant.) But,



through the temperance organizations, they had the means to convince rural women of the value of woman suffrage.

Ultimately, however, the temperance suffragists had a taming effect on the suffrage movement. Students of the Canadian temperance movement describe it as an essentially defensive impulse on the part of the native, Protestant middle classes, designed to impose their standards on a dissenting community.<sup>4</sup> Industrialism, urbanization and immigration, it seems, challenged their culture and authority. The great capitalists who amassed fortunes and flaunted their wealth or who lived on inherited wealth offended the Puritan code of self-control, industriousness and impulse renunciation. The immigrant and the urban poor also had their own culture and their own moral priorities. Prohibition represented an attempt by "a declining social elite" to retain some of their "social power and leadership."<sup>5</sup>

The men and women who came to suffrage through temperance generally saw the vote as the means to an end, prohibition. More accurately, both the vote and prohibition were the means to a more comprehensive end, that is, a guarantee for their race and class of a position of authority in the new social order. To these men and women, women's rights meant no more than that women be given an opportunity to help defend traditional institutions, a rather short-sighted vision. Class interests came first and sexual equality became a near-dead issue. Like the social gospel with which it was closely associated, temperance strengthened the cautious, conciliatory element in the suffrage movement.



## I

The organized temperance movement originated in late eighteenth, early nineteenth century America and spread from there to Canada and Britain. The first American temperance societies appeared in Saratoga, New York, in 1808 and in Massachusetts in 1813. In 1826 the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance was founded in Boston and by 1833 there were 6,000 local societies in several states with more than 1,000,000 members. The first European societies were formed in Ireland around 1818. In 1830 the movement spread to Yorkshire and Lancashire and in 1831 the British and Foreign Temperance society was founded in London.

The movement reached Canada very early in the nineteenth century. Ruth Spence, in her history of Prohibition in Canada, claims that in 1827 the community of West River, Pictou County, Nova Scotia, established Canada's first organized temperance group.<sup>6</sup> One American fraternal association, the Sons of Temperance, came to Nova Scotia in 1847 and arrived a year later in Brockville, Canada West. As early as 1847 there was a Ladies' Total Abstinence Society in St John, New Brunswick.<sup>7</sup> In 1876 the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, Canada's most vocal prohibitionist group, was formed. Two additional important American temperance lodges, the Independent Order of Good Templars and the Royal Templars of Temperance, had a following in Ontario by 1880.

Good Christian women, reputed to be virtuous and sober, formed female auxiliaries like the Daughters of Temperance which worked alongside the



male associations. These women, however, soon tired of the role of "lady-aiders," with no right to speak or vote on resolutions, and started to organize independent, wholly female associations. Of these the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) soon outstripped all others.

Mrs Letitia Youmans, an Ontario-born woman, brought the W.C.T.U. to Canada in 1874.<sup>8</sup> W.C.T.U. locals spread so quickly that by 1883 there were sufficient to justify forming a Dominion organization. The base of the movement remained in Ontario but by the turn of the century, each province had its own union.<sup>9</sup> By 1915 the W.C.T.U., with over ten thousand members, represented one of the strongest women's reform organizations in Canada.

In the early years of temperance campaigning the leaders seemed generally confident of their moral authority and their ability to persuade deviants to follow their exhortations. They relied, therefore, upon voluntary renunciation of the liquor temptation. The sheer magnitude of the urban problem, however, made pragmatic voluntarists despair. It soon became clear that neither the urban poor nor the plutocrats wished "to be saved." Coercion, therefore, replaced suasion and temperance became prohibition.<sup>10</sup>

Logically the state became the chief object of their attentions since the government licensed the liquor trade. Liberal consciences, of course, were still troubled by the implications of "legislated morality" but did their best to justify and rationalize their position. In the tradition of T. H. Green, the prohibitionists explained that a man who became a slave



to drink had renounced his freedom. Prohibition did not end liberty; it offered man a greater freedom, the freedom to become a prosperous, moral, and happy citizen.

With this rationale prohibitionists justified a degree of government intervention and regulation. Few saw beyond using the state as a negative, policing agent, however. Temperance had a strong rural base and its supporters, generally unsophisticated politically, still believed in personal rather than institutional morality. They reluctantly conceded the need to use the government in this instance but hedged at the introduction of other legislation. The temperance suffragists consistently stood to the right in the political spectrum and advocated a very limited state intervention.

The tendency to turn to the legislature to remedy the liquor problem made the women in the movement increasingly aware of their political incapacity. At the local level, under Canada's Scott Act, a community could vote itself "dry" by securing a three-fifths majority of the eligible voters in a referendum on the issue. The W.C.T.U. campaigned for the referenda but, when the crucial day arrived, the women had to sit back and watch their efforts go down to defeat without even having the chance to record an opinion. This experience turned many W.C.T.U. women into suffragists. The President of the Toronto W.C.T.U., Hattie Stevens, for example, asked for full municipal suffrage for married women in 1904 to "help secure that 60% majority in the Local Option contests."<sup>11</sup>

Local option became increasingly ineffective in a more mobile,





"Dispersing the Great Illusion," Grain Growers' Guide, March 3, 1917.



urbanized society where improved transportation made access to "wet" areas much easier. The prohibitionists, therefore, sought wider restrictions at the provincial and federal levels. In turn the women asked for the provincial and federal vote. By 1891 each W.C.T.U. provincial union had established a Franchise Department.<sup>12</sup> Female enfranchisement became a vital means to vote Canada "dry."

The vocal and aggressive W.C.T.U. campaigns for prohibition converted many temperance men into suffragists as well. As early as 1873 Rev. Thomas Webster, an Irish-born minister of Canada's Methodist Episcopal Church, published a volume, entitled Woman, Man's Equal, which explained why exactly he, a prohibitionist, wanted women to vote.

I believe, if we are ever to be freed from the rum demon in Canada; if we are ever to secure social purity; if we are ever to occupy the position we should occupy as a Christian country, in working out the country's true destiny and elevating the tone of Eastern immigrants who are to throng our coasts, the rights of citizenship must be given to our women.<sup>13</sup>

Webster was still actively promoting the cause in 1894 when he appropriately became an Honorary member of Manitoba's first Suffrage Club. And it is no coincidence that a prohibition paper, the Canada Citizen, contained the first woman suffrage column in Canada, edited by Sarah Curzon in the early 1880's.

Before the end of the century, many of the major male temperance associations had become unreserved sponsors of woman suffrage. The Dominion Alliance, for example, passed a resolution in 1890 endorsing female enfranchisement. Many temperance men actually enlisted in active



suffrage societies. The editor of Canada Citizen, William Burgess, the organizer of "Canada's New Party" (a Prohibition Party) in 1888, William W. Munns, artist and Alderman J. W. Bengough and his brother Thomas, both active in the Dominion Alliance, and the Hon. George E. Foster, called the "Neal Dow" of Canada because of his ceaseless struggle for prohibition, all became aggressive suffragists. Several clergymen who joined suffrage associations also had strong temperance ties; for example, the Rev. D. S. Hamilton, a Congregationalist minister who became Honorary President of the Manitoba P.E.L. in 1912 was a Royal Templar and the president of a Temperance League.

The 1894 Ontario plebiscite on prohibition convinced any doubting male prohibitionist of women's commitment to the reform. In this plebiscite, the Ontario Premier, Oliver Mowat, gave Ontario women their first provincial vote, allowing women who qualified for the municipal election, that is, propertied widows and spinsters, to record their opinion on yellow ballots. Fifteen thousand of an eligible forty-four thousand women voted, a substantial turnout given the popular prejudice against women's active involvement in politics. Of these 84.7% favoured prohibition, compared to only 64.2% of the men. Their support for prohibition confirmed the women's worth in the eyes of the male prohibitionists.<sup>14</sup>

The plebiscite also roused the ire of Ontario's married women who were not allowed a vote simply by virtue of their marriage. The contest, according to Mrs May R. Thornley of the Ontario W.C.T.U., proved an "eye-opener" to hundreds of voteless women "who toiled unceasingly through the



campaign to arouse and interest the favoured few of their sex possessing the ballot," and who realized, perhaps for the first time, "the grievous nature of the political disability under which they laboured."<sup>15</sup>

In the 1898 federal plebiscite on prohibition, no women voted. Smugly the women blamed the low turnout, only 44% of the eligible electorate, and the slim victory, only 51.<sup>3</sup>% in favour of prohibition, on their absence. Again in 1902 an Ontario plebiscite failed to attract enough people to justify introducing the legislation and again the women attributed the defeat to the "futility of attempting to govern a country by less than half of its adult and responsible citizenship."<sup>16</sup>

In 1905 the Ontario W.C.T.U. gave suffrage an important place in its programme. During its annual pilgrimage to the Ontario Provincial Legislature, it insisted on the municipal enfranchisement of all properly qualified women, married and unmarried.<sup>17</sup> In 1906 it decided to make the franchise the "pivotal point" upon which the success of the temperance movement rested. By 1909 a franchise message had become as much an integral part of every convention as the opening and closing exercises.<sup>18</sup>

## II

The Ontario pattern, wedding suffrage to temperance, became a popular strategy across the country, particularly in the Prairies where demographic patterns enhanced the urgency of prohibition. The old Ontario settlers, bringing temperance ideas with them, became the strident advocates of



prohibition, their ranks swelled by heavy immigration from the American North West. The presence of large numbers of eastern, central, and southern Europeans, congregated in isolated settlements which preserved their language, religion, and customs, sharpened the nativist concern and consolidated the prohibitionists.<sup>19</sup>

The W.C.T.U. attracted a large, enthusiastic clientele in the West. Following the Ontario precedent, the temperance women soon added female suffrage to their platform. The W.C.T.U. actually initiated suffrage activity in the three Prairie Provinces. The Manitoba W.C.T.U. campaigned for female enfranchisement from its inauguration in 1877 under the leadership of a former Ontario teacher, Mrs Elizabeth Chisholm. Even Manitoba's Icelandic community, the pioneer suffragists in the province, organized an Icelandic chapter of the W.C.T.U. in Winnipeg in 1903.<sup>20</sup> In the North West Territories, the W.C.T.U., initiated in 1904 by Maria G. Craig, a long-standing member of the Quebec W.C.T.U., also led the suffrage battle in the early years.<sup>21</sup>

After 1910, the W.C.T.U. consistently canvassed the rural areas in search of suffrage supporters, leaving the cities to the regular suffrage societies and allied women's groups. In this way it filled an important function. It broadened the national base of the suffrage movement and offered proof to the politicians that the city women were not alone in their desire for enfranchisement. In the 1916 petition to the Alberta Legislature Mrs F. Langford, the Vice-President of the Provincial W.C.T.U., claimed credit for 7,000 of the 40,200 signatures, "collected in the rural



districts by the W.C.T.U."<sup>22</sup>

Due to the temperance-suffrage association in the public mind, the women found many faithful supporters among Prairie prohibitionists and clergy. They discovered allies in the strongly nativist, staunchly prohibitionist pioneer farmers' groups, in the United Farmers of Alberta and the United Grain Growers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Their alignment with what would later become important political pressure groups was vital to the success of both the prohibition and the woman suffrage movements.<sup>23</sup> The following telegram from J. B. Musselman of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association to the Acting Premier of Saskatchewan, J. A. Calder, in March, 1916, on the eve of the provincial concession of the franchise, gives one brief glimpse of the behind-the-scenes politicking and reveals the pressure exerted on behalf of woman suffrage by powerful, prohibitionist allies. Musselman wrote:

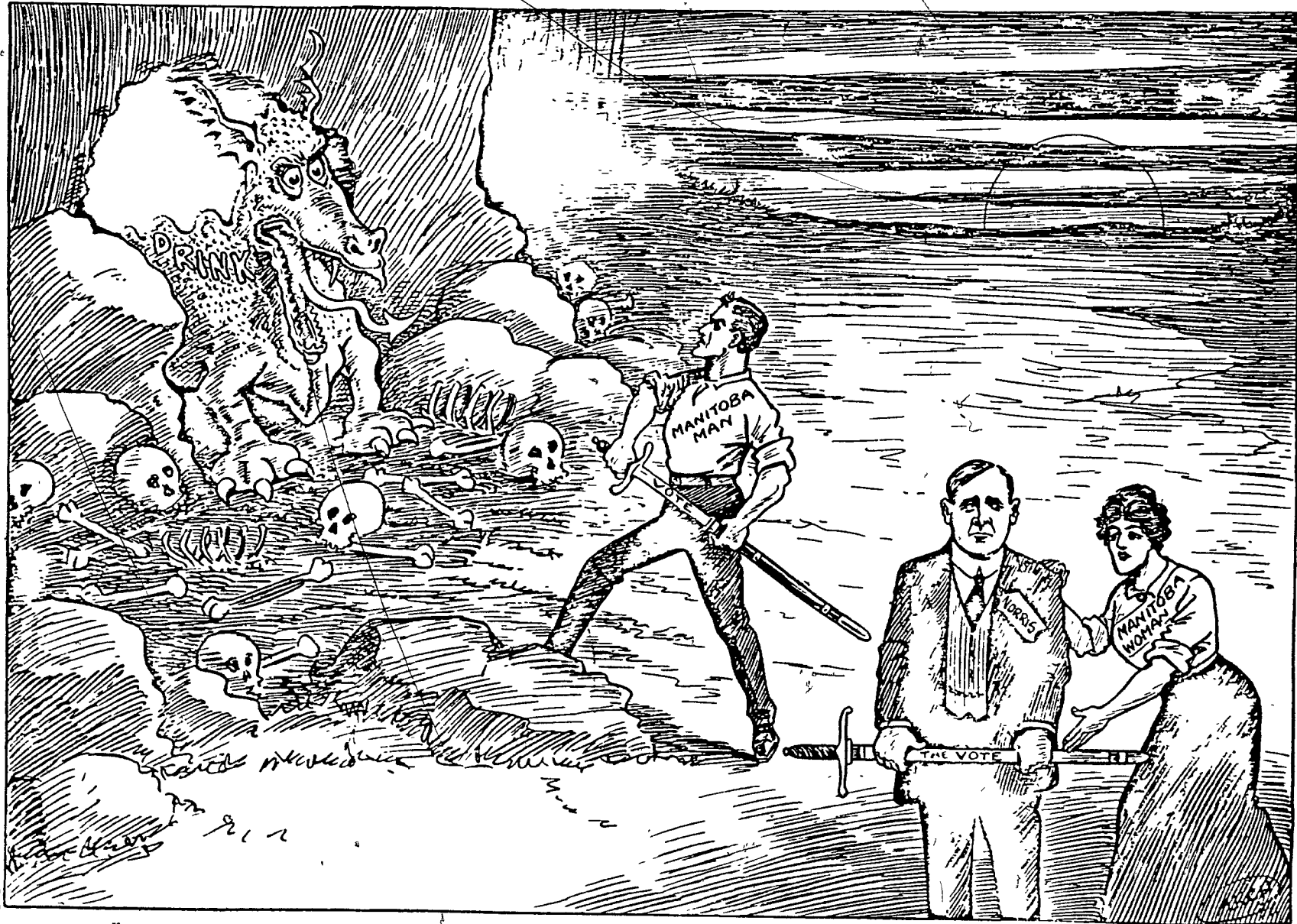
I am instructed by the executive of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in meeting to memorialize you stating that the body sincerely hopes that provision may be made fully enfranchising the women of Saskatchewan so that they may vote in December next on the referendum on the liquor question.

Calder replied: "law will be changed at present session for purpose mentioned."<sup>24</sup>

While not conclusive, the evidence reinforces the hypothesis that women received the vote primarily because they represented puritannical, moralistic values and not because of the growth of genuine sentiment in favour of sexual equality.

The precise importance of temperance to the suffrage victory is





"The Women of Manitoba Want to Help Slay the Dragon," Grain Growers' Guide, September 1, 1915.



difficult to assess. Temperance, like many other reform causes, became a popular recruiting and training ground for suffragists. It also attempted to bridge the gap between a rural and urban phenomenon. The twin reforms, female enfranchisement and prohibition, which were passed almost simultaneously in the Prairies, in British Columbia and in Ontario, suggests their interdependency.

But temperance also created enemies whose influence doubtlessly retarded the cause. In the United States, for instance, Carrie Chapman Catt, a national suffrage leader, suggested that the liquor interests made large contributions to anti-suffrage associations.<sup>25</sup> Liquor interests in Sydney, Australia, also financed an anti-suffrage society.<sup>26</sup> In one of her novels, Nellie McClung makes a similar charge, arguing that the brewers were the mainstay of the Roblin Government, the outright opponent of Manitoba suffragists.<sup>27</sup> Although McClung's claim is oblique and difficult to prove, additional circumstantial evidence exists which insinuates the existence of a liquor-anti-suffrage alliance. The President of Canada's only anti-suffrage society, Mrs H. D. Warren, was married to a Toronto businessman who in 1902 signed a manifesto against the Prohibition Act, a manifesto Castell Hopkins called the "last of a vigorous campaign put up by liquor interests and those opposed to Prohibition."<sup>28</sup> Taken together, this evidence, though scarcely conclusive, suggests that there may have been powerful or rather well-healed opponents who insidiously worked against woman suffrage because of its close association with prohibition.



## III

Although close ties between suffrage and temperance were forged during the reform struggle, the two movements were neither coterminous nor did their alliance evolve without difficulties. Some temperance men and women joined suffrage associations. Approximately 25.<sup>6</sup>% of the female and 29.<sup>5</sup>% of the male leadership of the suffrage associations belonged to the W.C.T.U. or other temperance societies. Yet not every temperance worker became a suffragist, that is, belonged to a recognized suffrage society. Many who endorsed woman suffrage were quite content to work for it through their own associations. Many others were even unwilling to endorse it at all because of its unpopularity.

Letitia Youmans, the founder of the W.C.T.U. in Canada, for example, refused in the early years to become associated with woman suffrage because she feared it might injure the campaign for prohibition:

So strong was the opposition in Canada to what was commonly called "women's rights" that I had good reason to believe that, should I advocate the ballot for women in connection with my temperance work, it would most effectively block the way and it was already uphill work for a woman to appear on a public platform.<sup>29</sup>

In 1885, as a propertied widow, Youmans received a municipal vote; she decided to do her "duty" but was scarcely enthusiastic about the idea.

Nor did every suffragist belong to the W.C.T.U. or male temperance associations, although the majority favoured prohibition. Many, perhaps some 50 to 60%, became suffragists for reasons other than their abhorrence of alcohol. (Their reasons are discussed in a succeeding chapter.) Emily Stowe believed that the association between temperance



and the suffrage cause compromised the latter's goals and, therefore, disassociated herself from the W.C.T.U. Dr Amelia Yeomans organized the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club in 1894 for the same reason. Until that date Manitoba suffragists had worked through the Franchise Department of the W.C.T.U. Yeomans demanded that suffrage stand on its own feet so that women who favoured suffrage but opposed prohibition not be deterred from supporting the former.<sup>30</sup> A few suffragists actually criticized the principle of prohibition. Flora Macdonald Denison called it just "another form of intemperance."<sup>31</sup> This was unusual, however, for by 1916 prohibition received verbal support from most suffragists and had become a part of almost every suffrage programme.<sup>32</sup>

The suffragists and temperance advocates, therefore, while members of the same Anglo-Saxon, Protestant middle class, differed in several important ways which kept the two movements separate. One student of the American movement, Janet Giele, in a sociology thesis, attempted to explain the basic ideological distinction between a temperance woman and a suffragist. She identified three stages in women's emancipation, the familial, the extra-familial and the communal, each stage essential to the next.<sup>33</sup> For the most part she saw temperance women predominantly occupied at the familial and extra-familial levels, with their homes, their families, and Church work. Suffrage women on the other hand, she noted, became more involved in broader community activities, particularly in civic reform.

Due partly to its rural background, the W.C.T.U., she explained, failed to keep pace with the rapid changes in industrial society and continued to



emphasize personal morality when the social problems obviously demanded a more comprehensive approach. Temperance women were less inclined to use the state in other than a purely negative, prohibitory fashion while the suffragists, generally more sophisticated city women, recognized the need for more serious institutional change. The latter perceived "the efforts of the temperance group as somewhat irrelevant to the new social problems around them."<sup>34</sup>

Giele attributed the women's different levels of emancipation first, to their occupation, and second, to the nature of their education. She discovered that a slightly higher number of suffragists were professionals, lawyers, journalists, while more temperance women were unemployed housewives, and that suffrage women were more likely to have had college and professional training.<sup>35</sup>

In Canada the contrasts are even greater. Based on a sample of 19 W.C.T.U. leaders, only 6 or 31% held an occupation outside the home compared to 64% of the female suffrage leaders. Both groups of women possessed good educations, indeed exceptional for the period, but the temperance women tended to be graduates of a Ladies' College, a Collegiate Institute, or received private tutoring while most suffragists attended a regular university.<sup>36</sup>

Their upbringing undoubtedly influenced their attitudes. Women with a more sophisticated education were more likely to be aware of current political debate and the trend towards greater government intervention. Moreover, women who held jobs in the regular work-a-day world confronted



social problems in a more direct fashion than women whose social experience seldom took them beyond the four walls of their homes.

A second factor, sexual antagonism, distinguished a suffragist from a temperance woman. Suffrage women were clearly more bitter than their temperance allies towards men.

On one occasion, in a public letter to the editor of the Toronto Globe, Emily Stowe charged that male speakers dominated women's temperance meetings and robbed women of the opportunity to practise public speaking, a situation which left them in the traditionally subservient role of "lady-aiders." "Men will never respect us as they ought to," she protested, "until we show them that we can get along without them very well."<sup>37</sup> Letitia Youmans, typical of the more conciliatory, soft-spoken temperance women, approved the dependence upon male speakers and possessed no desire to antagonize her co-workers, "our brethren who have toiled so long and faithfully in this work." The W.C.T.U. appeared more submissive and patronizing. One member even doubted if Canadian women could ever "vie with our vice-chancellors, governors, and public men on a platform."<sup>38</sup>

Social roles once again shaped attitudes. Since temperance women were less likely to be professionals, they confronted little occupational discrimination. Sexual equality, therefore, meant less to them and they displayed a lower degree of antagonism towards men. Temperance women, despite their education, clung much more closely to traditional female roles. The suffragist on the other hand tended to be a more exceptional woman, one who challenged male educational and occupational strongholds.



The suggestion, therefore, that women in the W.C.T.U. were motivated by sex antagonism, that their reforms constituted an "outlet for resentments" and an "oblique attack on the male domination of society" is disputable.<sup>39</sup> Although the W.C.T.U. constituted an exclusively women's organization, its social criticism, its tirade against drugs, social gambling, tobacco and impurity differed in no significant respect from male-dominated temperance societies, notably the Dominion Alliance. Unless we are ready to question the manliness of many temperance men, it is unwise therefore to characterize the W.C.T.U. as simply "attacking anything masculine."

The battle-line in the temperance movement lay between the classes, not the sexes. Temperance men and women saw drink as an upper and lower-class habit, not as a "distinctively masculine weakness."<sup>40</sup> The W.C.T.U. continually criticized the "well bred," "fashionable," "society" ladies for "taking a fortifier" or serving champagne at their afternoon teas.<sup>41</sup> Nor did they have any illusions about women's, particularly upper-class women's, immunity from other social vices abhorrent to their middle-class tastes, for example, social gambling which they deemed on the rise among society women.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Church and temperance men were the first to admit that their sex were the chief perpetrators of crimes against sobriety and purity. They even shared the women's distaste for tobacco which they blamed for "weakening the moral, physical, and mental capabilities of the youths of our nation."<sup>43</sup> Temperance men and women shared common interests and



common enemies.

If, therefore, a degree of sex antagonism distinguished a suffragist from a W.C.T.U. woman, how are we to explain the presence of some forty W.C.T.U. women in suffrage associations? Some of these women had been transformed into an angrier breed simply by virtue of their impatience with male legislators. Usually they were long-time members of the W.C.T.U. who became absolutely convinced that the key to a prohibition victory lay in the women's vote. Without exception, they came from city branches of the W.C.T.U. and had absorbed the current political attitudes towards state intervention which naturally increased their desire for voting privileges.

More importantly, the nature of the suffrage agitation had changed. Two processes went on simultaneously. The influx of temperance women modified the tone of the suffrage societies, making them less aggressive. The more docile the suffrage movement appeared, the easier it became for less feminist women to join. For the temperance recruits were scarcely passive members who capitulated to the more outspoken suffragists. They brought their ideas and tactics with them to the suffrage movement, softening its message.

First, the W.C.T.U. women altered the social composition of the suffrage societies. If we compare the 25% of Canadian female suffragists with a temperance affiliation to the 75% who were straight suffragists, we find that 33.3% of the latter were paid professionals compared to 42.2% of the temperance suffragists.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, no occupation could be found



for 47.5% of the temperance suffragists which suggests that they were housewives, compared to only 29.2% of the straight suffragists.

The straight suffragists also tended to be better educated. About 35.3% had attended a regular university and held a B.A. or better, compared to 22.5% of the temperance suffragists.<sup>45</sup> Only 13.7% of the straight suffragists received their education in Ladies' Colleges, Collegiate Institutes, or Normal Schools, while 22.5% of the temperance suffragists graduated from these institutions.

The temperance suffragists also helped alter the priorities of the suffrage movement and contributed new, moderate arguments in defence of female enfranchisement. They consistently put prohibition first and saw suffrage primarily as a means to implement that end. They staked no claim to occupational equality but wished instead to enforce, strengthen, and protect the traditional female family function which consisted of raising children and caring for a home and husband. Moved by class anxieties, they hoped, through the ballot, only to establish themselves and their men in a position of social eminence and to alleviate the pressure for change by legislating a moral and social conformity.

To temperance suffragists, "home protection" constituted the strongest argument in favour of woman suffrage. Nellie McClung, the best example of a temperance woman who turned suffragist, went out of her way to reassure men that enfranchised women would not "mix their tricks and lose interest in husband, home, and child." On the contrary, she argued, "the reason for women wanting the vote is to defend their children, the children they



have brought into the world."<sup>46</sup> In 1891 Annie Parker, the Superintendent of Franchise for the Dominion W.C.T.U., a devout Protestant, and a member of the D.W.E.A., likened the family and home to a "miniature state," a matriarchy ordered by God.<sup>47</sup> Louise McKinney, another temperance suffragist, confirmed that "Woman's franchise means home protection."<sup>48</sup>

Politically, although they had acquired some sophistication, the temperance suffragists tended generally to endorse a more limited state intervention than the straight suffragists, primarily of course in the direction of prohibiting alcohol consumption. Temperance suffragists like Mrs Gordon Grant in British Columbia, Letitia Youmans, and Nellie McClung herself were preoccupied with using the government to eliminate boxing, gambling, obscene literature, prostitution, social evils which blatantly challenged the Protestant code of behaviour. Straight suffragists like Emily Stowe and Flora Macdonald Denison expressed a greater interest in more advanced welfare legislation.

The growth of the W.C.T.U. faction within the suffrage movement curbed and restrained it socially and politically. The growing strength of the temperance representation in the suffrage societies as the century advanced was a symptom of the movement's new conservatism.

#### IV

The W.C.T.U. remained closely allied with the Canadian suffragists throughout the history of the woman's movement. The two groups worked together, led deputations and collected petitions, right up until victory



in 1918. Because the suffrage societies were weak organizationally and numerically themselves, they realized the powerful allies they had in the women of the W.C.T.U. and wished to keep their friendship. Moreover, due to the interlocking membership, the two groups appeared to be spokesmen for one and the same cause.

In contrast the American suffrage women tried to disassociate themselves from the W.C.T.U. in the period after 1890.<sup>49</sup> For several reasons they no longer wanted or needed temperance support.

Woman suffrage, it seems, became respectable in the United States long before it had in Canada. According to Janet Giele, the turning point was the 1893 Woman's Congress held at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. After that date, suffrage membership doubled, trebled, until in 1910 the American associations boasted some two million members, approximately 3% of the total adult population (over age fourteen).<sup>50</sup> In Canada woman suffrage won acceptance only following the 1910 N.C.W. resolution endorsing it and at its height the movement could claim no more than 10,000 male and female members or .2% of the adult population.

The social composition of the two movements suggests that in the United States woman suffrage had achieved a certain prestige unknown in Canada. From early in its history the American movement contained a good representation of well-to-do philanthropists and reformers. Until 1910 the Canadian movement depended heavily upon women willing to challenge social convention, which explains the large numbers of professionals, especially doctors, in Canada compared to the American suffrage



leadership.<sup>51</sup> Between the years 1910 and 1916 the Canadian movement began to attract a large new body of social leaders and married, non-professional society ladies, for example, Lady Drummond, the wife of the Montreal Senator, George Alexander Drummond, Mrs Annie Gardner Brown, the wife of Saskatchewan's Lieutenant-Governor, and Mrs R. R. Jamieson in Alberta, the wife of a former Calgary Mayor.

As suffrage moved up the social ladder, prohibition moved down. At the same time as woman suffrage became popular in the United States, the American W.C.T.U. began to lose pre-eminence. Practical city women, it seems, began to doubt if prohibition alone could rectify the grievous social dislocation they observed. Prohibition began to appear narrow and selfish. The woman suffrage movement meanwhile had added to its programme a whole list of broad, humanitarian reforms, factory legislation, child welfare, education, prison and civic reform, public health and pure food administration. "Each movement experienced its greatest success in its benevolent period."<sup>52</sup> The American suffragists, therefore, had no need for a group which they now considered an anachronism. Moreover, the W.C.T.U.'s antagonism of the liquor interests sometimes proved more of a liability than a help.

In Canada the W.C.T.U. did not outlive its usefulness until well after the 1910 turning point. W.C.T.U. membership, in fact, peaked at 10,000 in 1915 and began its decline only after that date, dropping in 1916 to 9,400, and in 1917, to 8,500.<sup>53</sup> Evidence suggests that the W.C.T.U. had just begun to lose prominence in the suffrage campaign in 1913, as this W.C.T.U.



Report indicates:

Counties which in the past have sent good reports, indicating a live interest [in suffrage] are this year entirely silent, possibly because of local suffrage societies being formed, which may have diverted activity in the department to these channels.<sup>54</sup>

The W.C.T.U.'s continuing strength and the slow climb to social prestige by Canadian suffragists can be attributed in part, to the lower level of industrialization in Canada. As prohibition was designed to reinstate Protestant, Puritan values and redeem a disintegrating social order, it lost popularity only when it began to appear inadequate to these tasks, when the problems of poverty, slums, immorality, disease, ignorance and irreligion seemed to demand a much broader approach to reform. Canadians had watched with apprehension the explosion of American urban centres but the plight of the Canadian city did not really come home until well after the turn of the century. Only then did the W.C.T.U.'s essentially rural philosophy begin to lose meaning. Prohibition no longer seemed the single panacea for society's ills.

The suffragists on the other hand, products of the city themselves, recognised the need for a more comprehensive social reform package. They offered a whole series of reforms designed to deal with the problem of the city and to reimpose order, stability, and the reign of the Protestant middle class. Because of the breadth of their programme, although the intentions were basically the same, woman suffrage appeared less selfish and less repressive and more essential to comprehensive societal reform.



As a result, it gained popularity at the same time as prohibition alone lost support.

The connection between prohibition and woman suffrage, like the connection with the social gospel, contributed to the esteem of the woman's movement and to the eventual suffrage victory. The temperance reformers remained a powerful group in early twentieth century Canada and their endorsement undoubtedly aided the women politically.

The close alliance between the W.C.T.U. and the suffragists and the actual overlap in the two memberships also convinced the men in power that the suffragists were really quite an inoffensive group. Woman suffrage ceased to alarm. It became only another, possibly a more effective, way of increasing the power and prestige of the native middle class.

As the movements merged the suffragists absorbed the ideology of the temperance and other reform groups. Because these "social reform" suffragists were committed to doing their share towards stabilizing a shaky social structure, the movement lost all identification with claims for a revision of sex roles. In this way the temperance suffragists helped transform the suffrage movement into a defender of the social status quo.



# Notes

1. The anti-slavery movement played a similar role in the United States. Flexner, op. cit., 41-52.
2. See Appendices V and VII.
3. According to Graeme Decarie support for temperance was strongest in rural Ontario and the leaders were predominantly Methodist and Presbyterian. But the cause, he notes, also attracted urban middle-class Protestants of all denominations. Malcolm G. Decarie, "The Prohibition Movement in Ontario, 1894 - 1916," Ph.D., Queen's University, 1972, Abstract.
4. Decarie, op. cit., passim.  
John H. Thompson, "The Prohibition Question in Manitoba," M.A., University of Manitoba, 1969. Albert J. Hiebert, "Prohibition in British Columbia," M.A., Simon Fraser University, 1969. Robert Irwin Maclean, "A Most Effectual Remedy: Temperance and Prohibition in Alberta, 1875 - 1915," M.A., University of Calgary, 1969.
5. Joseph R. Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement, U.S.A., 1963, 4.
6. Ruth Spence, Prohibition in Canada, Toronto, 1919, 38.
7. Decarie, op. cit., 7-11.
8. Born Letitia Creighton on a farm in Cobourg, Ontario, Mrs Youmans attended the Cobourg Ladies' Academy, taught school at the Burlington Academy in Hamilton for two years, and moved to Picton, Ontario, where in 1850 she became principal of a Picton school. That same year she married Arthur Youmans, a widower with eight children, and dedicated the next eighteen years of her life to bringing up the family. In 1870, still a devoted wife and mother, she began her involvement in temperance work. Letitia Youmans, Campaign Echoes, Toronto, 1893, 68, 91.
9. The Maritime Provinces had a single union at this date, as did the North-West Territories.
10. According to Joseph Gusfield, "in the Prohibition period, coercive reform emerges when the object of reform is seen as an intractable defender of another culture, someone who rejects the reformer's values and doesn't really want to change." Gusfield, op. cit., 7.



11. W.C.T.U., Toronto District Union, Report, 1905 - 1906, 28. Propertied widows and spinsters received the municipal vote in Ontario in 1883 but married women had to wait until 1915 for the municipal privilege.
12. The heads of Franchise Departments frequently joined suffrage societies, their long, unrewarded campaign convincing them of the immediate need for female enfranchisement. For example, Mrs Jacob Spence and Annie Parker in Ontario, Mrs Gordon Grant in British Columbia, Mrs D. V. Buchanan and Mrs Henrietta Muir Edwards in Manitoba, all one-time heads of W.C.T.U. Franchise Departments, became prominent suffragists.
13. Rev. Thomas Webster, "The Citizenship of Women," Methodist Magazine, January, 1894, 151.
14. Decarie, op. cit., 83.
15. Ontario W.C.T.U., Annual Report, 1894, 51.
16. Ibid., 1903, 49. Results of the 1902 Ontario plebiscite: 199,749 for prohibition; 103,548 against.
17. The deputation brought out a respectable entourage including the President of the Ontario W.C.T.U., Mrs S. G. E. McKee, Mrs Thornley, Mrs Sara Rowell Wright, the sister of Newton Rowell, Mrs A. O. Rutherford, President of the National W.C.T.U., Dr Augusta Stowe-Gullen, Rev. Nathaniel Burwash, Chancellor of Victoria University, Thomas Urquhart, Baptist Mayor of Toronto, Rev. A. C. Courtice, editor of the Methodist Christian Guardian, and the Hon. Adam Beck, a former Mayor of London, Ontario.
18. Ontario W.C.T.U., Report, 1906, 188. Mrs S. G. E. McKee, Jubilee History of the Ontario W.C.T.U., 1877 - 1927, Ontario, 1928, 85.
19. According to Albert Hiebert, "In the prairies, where many immigrants came from Central and Eastern Europe, the prohibition movement grew more quickly since in both religious and political circles it was thought urgent that an enforced minimum standard of morality was required to assist in 'Canadianization' of the foreigner." Hiebert, op. cit., 6.
20. Thompson, op. cit., 28.
21. The provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan came into existence only in 1905.
22. Emily P. Weaver, The Canadian Woman's Annual and Social Service Directory, Toronto, 1915, 82.



23. Maclean, op. cit., 25. The farmers' contribution to woman suffrage will be examined in Chapter 10.
24. Archives of Saskatchewan, J. A. Calder Papers, J. B. Musselman to J. A. Calder, March 6, 1916; Calder to Musselman, March 8, 1916. Emphasis added.
25. Flexner, op. cit., 337.
26. MacKenzie, op. cit., 41.
27. Nellie McClung, Purple Springs, New York, 1922, 78. According to W. L. Morton, Roblin's coolness to the temperance movement won him the valuable support of the liquor interests. W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Manitoba, Toronto, 1950, 31.
28. Castell Hopkins, Canadian Annual Review, Toronto, 1902, 384.
29. Youmans, op. cit., 206.
30. Waterloo Lutheran University Archives, Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook III, untitled clipping, Nov. 24, 1894, re. the formation of the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club.
31. Toronto World: April 23, 1911.
32. In 1916 the Manitoba P.E.L. called for "the Prohibition of the manufacture, import, or sale of intoxicants as beverages." In 1917 the Ontario Women's Citizens' Association supported "Dominion-wide prohibition." The Saskatchewan Citizens' Education Board, the successor to the P.E.F.B., passed a resolution in 1918 asking for "permanent prohibition throughout the Dominion of Canada." Winnipeg Voice: June 23, 1916. P.A.C., N.C.W. Papers, Pamphlet: The Ontario Women Citizens' Association, 1917. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 27, 1918.
33. Janet Giele, "Social Change in the Feminine Role: A Comparison of Woman's Suffrage and Woman's Temperance," Ph.D., Radcliffe College, 1961, 49, 50.
34. Ibid., 149-152.
35. Ibid. See Appendix XIII.
36. Of a sample of 19 W.C.T.U. leaders, 10 or 52.6% attended Ladies' Academies or received private tutoring compared to only 11% (17 of 156) of the female suffrage leaders.



37. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook IV, undated (c. 1877) letter to the editor of the Globe from E. Stowe.
38. Ibid., letters to Globe from Letitia Youmans and other members of the W.C.T.U.
39. Decarie, op. cit., 165, 340.
40. Ibid.
41. Quebec W.C.T.U., Report, 1885, 21; 1903, 47. Ontario W.C.T.U., Report, 1905, 58; 1907, 44; 1909, 27.
42. Although the upper class are never precisely identified, they seem to belong to an independently wealthy, Canadian aristocracy, composed perhaps of millionaires and established families. At any rate, the middle classes who filled the temperance societies saw themselves as a group distinct from this leisure class.
43. Dominion Alliance, Ontario branch, Minutes, 1896, -31. Benjamin W. Richardson, Public School Temperance, Toronto, 1887, 98.
44. See Appendix XIV.
45. See Appendix XV.
46. Toronto World: Oct. 19, 1915. McClung's address to the Toronto Women's Canadian Club.
47. Austin, op. cit., 400.
48. Hopkins, op. cit., 1911, 368-369. Louise Crummy McKinney, born in Ontario, educated at Smith's Falls Model School, began a teaching career at age eighteen. At twenty-six she began work as an organizer for the W.C.T.U. in Dakota where she lived for three years. In 1896 she married James McKinney and in 1903 moved to Alberta. There she became first President of the Alberta W.C.T.U. In 1917 Mrs McKinney was elected to the federal legislature as a Non-Partisan candidate.
49. Giele, op. cit., 190.
50. Ibid.
51. See Appendix XVI for a comparison of the occupations of Canadian and American suffrage leaders.



52. Ibid., Chapter V, passim. Joseph Gusfield comes to a similar conclusion about the W.C.T.U.'s declining social pre-eminence: "the socio-economic status of the local leadership has diminished during the period 1885 - 1950. There has been a relatively steady decrease in the percentage of professional people, proprietors, managers, and officials and a relatively steady increase in the skilled and unskilled groups." Joseph Gusfield, "Social Structure and Moral Reform: A Study of the Women's Christian Temperance Union," American Journal of Sociology, Nov., 1955-56, 228.
53. Decarie, op. cit., 312.
54. Ontario W.C.T.U., Report, 1913, 110.



## CHAPTER 7

## THE SECULAR REFORM MOVEMENT

Many of Canada's reformers grew up within the Church and many remained convinced and orthodox Christians. But there were also a growing number of secular social critics who were either indifferent to or who actually renounced orthodox religion.

The social vision of both religious and secular reformers was similar.

They all belonged to the native English-speaking middle class. Both were affected by the nationalist-imperialist fervour of the late nineteenth century and shared a messianic vision of a strong and healthy "super" race in Canada or in the Empire. They were all devoted to the Protestant virtues of sobriety, morality and industry and feared the social ills and unrest which accompanied industrial and urban growth.

Means, not ends, differentiated one reformer from the next. To an extent secular reform was a response to the Church's inability to cope with the contemporary social crisis. The secular reformers found the Church's programme of Sabbatarianism and temperance inefficient and ideologically inadequate. With T. H. Green, the philosopher of secular reformism, they felt that "mere religious agency does but touch the surface of our modern rottenness."<sup>1</sup> The negative, carping methods of prohibition disturbed them also. They studied causes not effects. They



wished to prevent poverty, disease, crime, and immorality by finding and removing their social roots and were not content simply to patch or punish after the damage had already been done. To achieve this goal they adopted a comprehensive platform of interrelated reforms including child welfare, education and prison reform, public health and pure food.

The secular reformers often appear cold and callous, devoid of a humanitarian impulse. Partly the problem was rhetorical. They couched their arguments in utilitarian language reminiscent of Bentham - "efficiency," "social good," "cost benefits of reform." They promoted a healthier, better educated population not on sentimental, altruistic grounds but in order to create a "productive," "prosperous" society.

In actuality the impulse behind secular reform was still essentially spiritual, at least in the beginning. In the midst of a swing away from Christian orthodoxy, men strongly felt the need for something to replace it. Humanistic idealism filled this role. T. H. Green's whole purpose was to construct a secular morality which he thought would fulfill the same function for modern society as had traditional religions in the past.<sup>2</sup>

One British reformer at least felt that Green had succeeded:

He gave us back the language of self-sacrifice and taught us how we belonged to one another in the one life of organic humanity. He filled us up again with the breadth of high idealism.<sup>3</sup>

"High idealism" permeated the Canadian movement as well.

Politically, the secular reformers showed a greater willingness to use state machinery than did the temperance and social gospel men. They



were simultaneously the products and the moulders of the New Liberalism. Of course, they still managed to retain a central role for the individual. The Old Liberalism was not dead. The motivation behind government intervention was simply to create equal opportunities prior to turning loose individual creativity and the natural, competitive impulse.

Although they were more aware politically the secular reformers still had difficulty coping with modern industrial life. They retained a romantic longing for the simplicity and security of the agrarian past but at the same time admired industrial efficiency and regimentation. Ideally they would have loved to retreat to the past but realistically they recognized the obligation to work within the existing system.

This schizophrenia coloured every part of the secular reform programme. The reformers eulogized the traditional family as the soul and foundation of the social structure and tried to strengthen it against the divisive effects of city life. At the same time they questioned the efficiency of the family as a character-forming influence and constructed a second line of defence, a complex system of institutions and agencies, to perform the task of socialization. Their "cradle to grave" reform strategy left nothing to chance.

Secular reformers became interested in woman suffrage for the same reason as their religious co-reformers: they hoped that giving the mother a vote would strengthen the position of the family. They wished to enlist woman's reputed purifying, civilizing, and stabilizing influence. W. F. Maclean, a Toronto municipal reformer, for example, wanted women to vote



because they had not been tainted by the "objectionable" methods of the past."<sup>4</sup> Another urban reform politician, James Armstrong, wished to use the moral force of the country's "industrious and educated and Christian womanhood."<sup>5</sup> The secular reformers generally included woman suffrage as part of their programme. Many, most notably H. C. Hocken, one of Toronto's reform mayors, William Houston, prominent in the Toronto education reform movement, and J. A. Dale, a member of Montreal's City Planning Committee, joined active suffrage societies.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, women who participated in one or more areas of secular reform quickly became aware of their political impotency. They might campaign or petition for child labour laws, a minimum wage or factory inspection, but without a ballot they could not force their programme upon the legislature. The many new uses for government outlined by secular reformers simply emphasized women's legal disability. Many of these women therefore became suffragists.

The suffrage movement attracted both types of reformer, men and women who came into the movement through the social gospel or temperance, and secular reformers who had no overt connection with the Church. Between 30 to 35% of Canada's suffragists belonged to the secular reform group, that is, those with no known religious connection. These consisted of municipal reformers, child welfare reformers, teachers and Public School Inspectors, Juvenile Court Judges and directors of reformatories, settlement workers, members of Humane Associations, Welfare Leagues, Parks and Playgrounds Associations, Municipal Ownership, City





AUNT SUFFRAGETTE (to Bachelor Whitney): "A nice mess you men folks make of running a House. I've come to look after things a little."

Toronto World, November 6, 1909.



Improvement, and City Planning Leagues.<sup>7</sup>

As the century advanced, secular reform assumed an increasingly important role and greater prestige within the general middle-class reform movement, due largely to the growing complexity of the urban problem.<sup>8</sup> For the same reason the secular suffragists came to dominate the suffrage movement numerically and ideologically. The suffrage platforms encompassed much of the secular reform package, including compulsory school attendance, factory legislation, and public ownership of public utilities. Unfortunately, due to the essentially defensive social philosophy of secular reform, the secular social reform suffragists proved equally reticent to challenge the conventional distribution of sex roles. Their premises and many parts of their programme supported the irrefutable conclusion that women had to stay within the home.

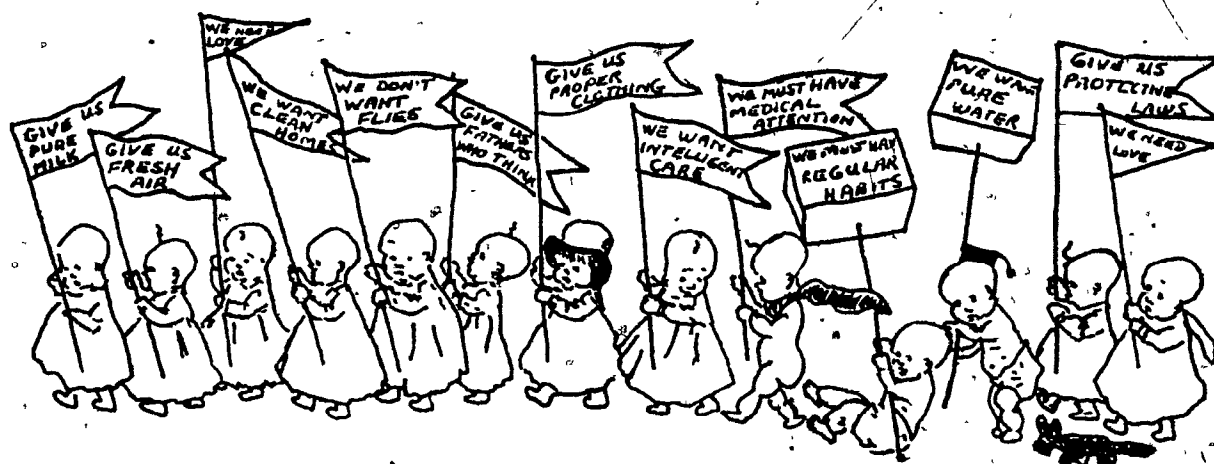
# I

Essentially the philosophy of secular reform aimed at producing a Utopia within Canada, a prosperous and productive society led by a great race of happy and healthy citizens. In the model for the reformers' Elysium, each individual filled a useful, productive role. None became public charges or drained the government's revenue. Their programme was designed to develop within each person the character, the physical vigour, and mental stability to allow him to play his part fully.



The child figured prominently in this model since he provided the best raw material for the new race of well-adjusted, productive citizens. As the motto of the suffragist-sponsored Montreal Child Welfare Exhibition proclaimed, "If we are to become a great nation, the well-being of our children must be our first care."<sup>9</sup> Much of the secular reform programme was "child-centred": their child welfare schemes, the "new" education, and the public health movement.

The high rate of infant mortality aroused particular anxiety because, in the reform philosophy, the nation's strength lay in its children and, if a disproportionate number died, the country committed genocide. The Ontario Commission on Unemployment revealed that for every one thousand births in Ontario, 103.7 babies died.<sup>10</sup> Child care became a patriotic imperative, particularly in a society "threatened" by immigrant hordes. Woman's maternal function correspondingly grew in importance. The secular suffragists responded to this concern by sponsoring Mothers' Unions.



"The New Movement - On Strike for Babies' Rights," Grain Growers' Guide, October 31, 1917.



and health talks on the care of the young.

The abolition of child labour became another popular cause, the general belief being that factory work ruined a child's mental and physical health and produced long-range weakness and disability for the race.

Dr Stowe-Gullen, representing the opinion of the majority of suffragists, opposed using children in the mills and factories because it crippled their bodies and dulled their minds. Ostensibly, her protest rested on a humanitarian impulse; however, she considered the effects on the race more important than the child's immediate privation. "Fortunately," Stowe-Gullen added, "four of five years of this infamous drudgery kills."<sup>11</sup>

Contemporary science drew a genetic connection between the child's health and the physical condition of the mother. As a result, the dress reform, physical culture and factory legislation movements all won the secular reformers' support. It was generally agreed that, if women were taught to take as little exercise as possible and to wear styles of clothing which impaired the functioning of their internal organs, the children they bore would be frequently dead or better off dead. Nor did long hours of factory labour by the mothers of the next generation in ill-ventilated, unsanitary surroundings bode well for the future of the race. In each instance, the motivation to reform was patriotic not feminist, to improve the vigour of the general population.

The secular suffragists' attitude toward factory legislation illustrates their prior commitment to nationalism. They conceived of factory women as a special group needing special protection, not for the



individual woman's welfare but for the good of the race. The Toronto Suffrage Association, for example, included among its list of reasons why women needed the vote

... because millions of women are wage workers and their health and that of our future citizens are often endangered by evil working conditions that can only be remedied by legislation.<sup>12</sup>

Granted, in the early days of sweatshop labour, some safeguards were necessary but the suffragists failed to consider that protective legislation burdened a working woman with a competitive handicap which made her less employable. Only a very few suffragists, notably Carrie Derick, the leader of the Montreal movement, argued the modern feminist position that restrictive legislation tended to drive women out of work they were well able to perform.<sup>13</sup> Ideally, the majority of the suffragists, good middle-class reformers, wanted women out of the factories altogether which scarcely constituted a plea for equal opportunity!

The secular reformers considered the child's moral health as important as, if not more important than his physical condition. In agrarian communities the family constituted the primary character-forming influence in the child's upbringing. All indications were that the city undermined familial authority. Marriage and birth rates declined in the city; illegitimacy, divorce, truancy, and delinquency rates rose.<sup>14</sup> The reformers argued that a child had a much better chance of "turning out" if he came from a healthy home environment and therefore they consecrated their efforts towards restoring the moral hegemony of the family. All



their attempts to increase woman's status, including the suffrage, must be seen in this context.

The campaign for Mothers' Pensions demonstrates this philosophy in action. Since the ratio of children raised in orphanages who became social delinquents was exceedingly high, the reformers wished the government to pay widowed and deserted mothers a pension so that they could stay home and look after their offspring. Not only would such action improve the moral character of the next generation, but in the long run it would be cheaper and therefore more economical and more efficient than supporting the children in reformatories and prisons once they matured. This attitude, of course, only reinforced the idea that a woman's place was in the home.

The secular suffragists became some of the strongest crusaders in the Mothers' Pensions campaign. "Urban life, delinquency and crime, it seems, worried them far more than a woman's need for extra-familial occupational opportunities. Rose Henderson, a Montreal suffragist, toured the country on behalf of Mothers' Pensions and all the suffrage societies included pensions as a plank in their platform.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Constance Hamilton's group, the National Equal Franchise Union, decided in 1914 to change the emphasis of its campaign from the vote to Mothers' Pensions, "a greater need," they argued, in war time.<sup>16</sup> At all costs, even if it restricted women to the home, family ties had to be preserved since they provided the cement which held the social structure together, "the greatest source of strength, morality, and stability of the social order."<sup>17</sup>



Unfortunately, the influx of foreigners and the breakdown of the family in the city made it increasingly difficult to guarantee a "suitable" home life for the majority of children. Susan Houston, in her study of Canadian juvenile delinquency, notes the growing middle-class anxiety at the "spectacle of an unprecedented number of other people's children surviving - and thriving - unrestrained in society at large."<sup>18</sup> Circumstances necessitated the construction of a second line of defence, a second chance to mould the child into a worthwhile citizen. "Not surprisingly," according to Houston, "the solution they devised was the creation of surrogate institutions for the lower classes appropriately analogous to middle-class family life."

The public schools provided the first and potentially most thorough means of transformation. The "new" education movement of the early twentieth century, very popular among Canadian reformers, had this aim in mind. It encompassed a series of reforms, including compulsory school attendance, kindergartens, and technical education, each in its place designed to produce useful, self-sufficient and dutiful citizens.<sup>19</sup>

Compulsory education was thought to be a necessary protection both for the child and for society. It provided the only means of transforming the immigrant child into a Canadian and prevented ignorant parents from withdrawing their children from school to help supplement the family income. The suffragists, members of an "intelligensia" and mostly good liberals, had a supreme confidence in the power of education. Every suffrage society passed a resolution calling for compulsory school



attendance.<sup>20</sup>

The kindergarten promised to extricate the child from an "unhealthy" home environment at the earliest possible date. James Hughes, Toronto's Public School Inspector and President of the Men's Women's Equal Franchise League, actually introduced kindergartens into Ontario. His wife, the former Ada Maureau of New York and another dedicated suffragist, became Ontario's first kindergarten teacher.<sup>21</sup> In New Brunswick, the suffragist, Mrs Ella B. Hatheway, became the President of the Free Kindergarten Association.

The psychology behind the kindergarten movement provides an insight into the suffrage and reform mind. Following the precepts of Froebel and Pestalozzi, the "new" education favoured giving children a free reign so that the natural creative energies of mankind could find an outlet.<sup>22</sup> The teacher as instructor took a back seat; discipline was frowned upon; children learned from playing and from one another. Typically James Hughes wanted to abolish coercion, to give children more appreciation and less criticism, and to encourage originality.

At the same time, however, the reformers wished the child to evolve in a socially desirable direction. The purpose of the kindergarten, despite all the talk about liberation, was socialization. It aimed to catch a child at a suitably young age and implant social controls within him, thereby making external discipline unnecessary. Good Hegelians in this respect, the reformers believed in "freedom in necessity." Hughes, for example, saw no real conflict between restraint and freedom. "Perfect spontaneity," he



argued, "and complete submission to law are fond lovers."<sup>23</sup> Although a number of threads and several discrepancies existed within the "new" education, every branch agreed on this need for moral instruction.<sup>24</sup>

In the schools' off hours, the parks and playgrounds took over the task of socialization. Even play had to be productive, according to strict Puritan teaching, otherwise the child developed habits of laziness which carried over into adulthood. Mrs John Cox, a Montreal suffragist, traced both delinquency and unemployment to the lack of a playground: "The boy without a playground is father to the man without a job. The habit of loafing begins in early youth."<sup>25</sup> The reform was preventive and aimed at discovering a more efficient and more economical social solution to the problems of poverty and crime, as this rhyme suggests:

Give them a chance for innocent sport,  
give them a chance for fun;  
Better a playground plot than a court.  
and a jail when the harm is done.

Give them a chance; if you stunt them now,  
tomorrow you'll have to pay  
A larger bill for a darker ill,  
so give them a chance to play.<sup>26</sup>

Technical education developed in response to another national exigency. The traditional apprenticeship system had disappeared, creating a need for a new type of vocational training.<sup>27</sup> While not enamoured of industrialism, the secular reformers generally realized that it had become a fact of modern life. They believed it preferable, therefore, to train a man rather than launch him unprepared into a depersonalized economic system. The "benevolent" industrialists, meanwhile, in need of a larger,



more sophisticated work force, allied themselves to the reformers in this particular cause.

Part of the motivation behind technical and manual training was very practical. Essentially it promised to create a productive, malleable citizenry. Manual training was believed to develop virtues most appropriate in a workman - "diligence, perseverance, love of order, neatness, dexterity, caution, a love of construction, a respect for the work of men's hands and a contempt for wanton destruction."<sup>28</sup> Emily Stowe believed that such training provided an efficient and humane way "to arrest the multiplication and manufacture of criminals."<sup>29</sup> Avid nationalists, the reformers also wished to equip workmen better in order to compete with foreign rivals.<sup>30</sup>

Technical education had a more idealistic side as well. James Hughes favoured it as a means of utilizing a student's practical talents "in order to motivate his interest in school and to achieve an all-round development of his character."<sup>31</sup> But the ethics of industrialism, division of labour, economy of scale, efficiency, and productivity, seem to have been the major impetus behind the movement.

As part of this same philosophy, technical education for boys meant domestic science for girls. After all, in the new Utopia, each individual would fulfill his most natural, most useful role and everyone agreed that for women this meant the home. Domestic science promised to serve several purposes, each a positive good in the eyes of the reformers. It would increase the comfort of the working-class home, thereby encouraging the men to remain there rather than seek vicarious pleasures in the brothels and



saloons. A content, stable and sober working class provided the foundation for a great nation. Domestic science also promised, through health and hygiene, to improve the physical condition of the population. Finally, it would strengthen the home by raising the status of housekeeping and counter the trend among ambitious, self-seeking young women to find fulfillment in a career. The pioneer of the Home Economics' movement in Canada, Adelaide Hoodless, was particularly concerned with the havoc the commercial spirit played with the home. According to her it had lured girls away from the "pleasures and duties of life in the home circle," and tempted them with greater glory and higher remuneration.<sup>32</sup> A steadily declining marriage rate confirmed her worst fear, that young girls were showing a disinclination to become housewives.<sup>33</sup>

The home economics' movement boomed in early twentieth-century Canada and became one of the reformers' most popular causes. Between 1893 and 1908 domestic science courses were established in the public schools of thirty-two Canadian cities. In 1894 the Hamilton School of Domestic Science opened and in 1900 a Hamilton Normal School for training teachers of Domestic Science was established, with government aid. Saskatchewan had government-sponsored Homemakers' Clubs and domestic science schools formed part of the Agricultural Colleges of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Macdonald College in Montreal opened a School of Household Science and in 1918 McGill announced a course for women leading to a Bachelor of Household Science.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of the suffragists accepted the reformers' analysis of the present needs of society and endorsed the domestic science movement.



Good nationalists, they agreed that the home had to help in the evolution of the race and that, unless women had a firm foundation in the knowledge of the laws of health, heredity, and hygiene, the race would fail. The Manitoba suffragist and journalist, Lillian Beynon Thomas, demanded that girls in public school receive a thorough training in domestic science because, in her words, "the health of the nation is largely in their hands."<sup>35</sup> A certain class bias doubtlessly motivated many who had difficulty finding domestic servants, particularly trained servants. Moreover, domestic science gave housekeeping a stamp of professionalization and a certain "scientific" standing which satisfied some of the women's status anxieties. In the eyes of the suffragist, Mrs Francis Graham, "Isobel" of the Grain Growers' Guide, home economics had dignified the old-time "kitchen drudgery" into a delightful and controlled science and changed utterly her conception of its standing among trades.<sup>36</sup>

A small feminist minority realized that domestic science restricted women to a purely domestic function. Alice Chown, for example, wanted every woman to receive a general Arts education before she chose an area of specialization.<sup>37</sup> Carrie Derick also thought it unfair to limit a woman's choice of occupation by making her education centre around cooking and sewing.<sup>38</sup> The social reform majority, however, set the goals for the movement and reinforced the cult of domesticity.

The Home and School Movement, the last phase of the "new" education, attempted to coordinate the efforts of parents and teachers, to forge a "Holy Alliance" between the two branches of the socialization pincer.



It hoped to humanize the impersonal education process and to provide the teachers with vital information about the home life of their charges. Thereby it completed the circle and guaranteed that the child which emerged from the system fitted easily into his assigned slot in the perfect, coordinated society.

Secular suffragists figured prominently in parent-teacher societies. James Hughes' Central Arts' Leagues were forerunners of the Home and School Association. Another Toronto suffragist, Mrs Ada C. Courtice, the wife of Rev. A. C. Courtice, editor of the Christian Guardian, founded the first branch of the Ontario Home and School Association in 1916.<sup>39</sup>

## II

All the reforms considered so far aimed at improving the next generation through training and educating the young. But the reformers still had to deal with the visible social failures of their own era. Their programme was essentially Utopian and future-oriented but they still managed to keep an eye on the present. They concentrated their efforts on redeeming the young and first offenders. To these cases they applied similar techniques of social regeneration, specifically technical training courses. Three suffragists at least dedicated themselves to rescuing juvenile delinquents. Mrs R. R. Jamieson in Saskatchewan and Helen Gregory MacGill in British Columbia became Juvenile Court Judges while Mrs Rose Henderson, a Montreal suffragist, served as a Probation Officer.<sup>40</sup> Predictably the suffragists also worked on behalf of female offenders.



They demanded the segregation of male and female prisoners, the introduction of police women, and separate courts for women.

For those who proved beyond salvation they recommended segregation to prevent contamination of the less criminal element. But they went further and advocated a whole series of humanitarian reforms tailored to make prison life more bearable - the abolition of straight jackets, cold showers, and striped suits.<sup>41</sup> The women condemned capital punishment and promoted the introduction of rehabilitation farms, revealing a definite humanist impulse.

Mental disease aroused considerable anxiety among suffragists interested in the abolition of crime. Social surveys and early psychological studies, for example, R. G. Dugdale's famous study of the Jukes family in 1874, traced a direct link between feeble-mindedness and crime. The suffragists seemed to view criminality, prostitution, and in some instances even poverty as a function of mental deficiency. Lillian Beynon Thomas blamed feeble-mindedness for 51% of all prostitution. Carrie Derick, an extremist when it came to race purity, considered alcoholism, venereal disease, and poverty all the results, not the causes, of feeble-mindedness.<sup>42</sup> Contemporary notions on heredity convinced her that sterilization of the mentally deficient provided the only real protection for the future. Most suffragists and reformers stopped well short of this extreme position, content with compulsory institutionalization, segregation of the sexes, and compulsory medical certificates proving mental as well as physical health before marriage.<sup>43</sup> Immigration restriction



based on physical and mental examination prior to embarkation provided yet another means of controlling the quality of Canada's future citizens.

Physical disease necessarily became another reform preoccupation since the strength of a nation depended upon the health of its citizens. Urban congestion magnified the danger of infectious diseases, particularly typhoid, tuberculosis, and venereal disease, and necessitated compulsory vaccination and compulsory quarantine. The reformers retained their preventive orientation and tried to discover and remove the causes of disease. Believing that poor ventilation and inadequate nutrition produced tuberculosis they campaigned to improve the living and working conditions of the poor. The "purity crusade" rested on the premise that immorality produced venereal disease.<sup>44</sup> Persons who had already contracted a disease could either be treated, if a cure existed, or segregated, to prevent transmission to others.

In order to treat disease, however, it had first to be detected. Compulsory medical inspection of school children provided the means to screen the population for illness. Carrie Derick supported compulsory school attendance primarily because she saw it as the only way to guarantee that all children were subjected to medical inspection.<sup>45</sup>

The success of these "causes" brought occupational rewards to the professionals in the suffrage and reform movements. Dr Mary Crawford, President of the Manitoba P.E.L., for example, led the campaign on behalf of compulsory medical inspection of school children and then proceeded to become medical inspector of Manitoba's public schools. Only a cynic would



suggest a conscious, premeditated link between the two events. But perhaps at a deeper psychological level the two are causally related. In a study of the American intellectual, Christopher Lasch suggests that both the American suffragists and urban reformers belonged to an intellectual elite which was trying to carve out a sphere for themselves in a crass, materialistic, anti-intellectual bourgeois culture.<sup>46</sup> The reforms they endorsed, says Lasch, public health, education, child welfare, provided them with two kinds of security, occupational, since the reforms placed a premium on their services, and psychological, since they gave them a position of respect in the community. The same observations might apply equally to Canada, particularly given the higher number of professionals in the Canadian suffrage movement.

### III

The secular reformers never hesitated to recommend state intervention if the need arose. They backed compulsory national schooling, advanced factory legislation, Mothers' Pensions, compulsory medical inspection, and compulsory vaccination. To them the government represented a benevolent, objective arbiter and a friend to the common man. Workers found strength and protection in unions, businessmen in monopolies and cartels, the middle men in a democratic parliament.

In order to curb the power of the large capitalists and industrialists they invoked the government's ultimate power, the ability to intervene in the marketplace and expropriate natural monopolies in the public interest.



The public ownership movement became very popular among Canadian reformers, especially among small businessmen who depended upon cheap power and transportation.

Several early suffragists participated in the municipal ownership movement. Dr Emily Stowe, her daughter, and a third Toronto suffragist, Miss Jessie Semple, organized a Women's Citizens' Association in 1895 to campaign for a municipal aqueduct.<sup>47</sup> Later, in 1907, during the crusade for Ontario Hydro-Electric, Flora Macdonald Denison gave a public address in its defence.<sup>48</sup> In 1913 the Montreal Suffrage Association tried to have the Public Utilities Commission take over the city's transport system, to punish the independent Montreal Tramway Company for refusing to reduce fares. The M.S.A. expressed a distinct anti-business ethic: "Make the Tramway Company the City's equal, and it becomes the people's master."<sup>49</sup> The suffrage societies generally included a plank in their platform asking for public ownership of natural monopolies such as railways, telephones, and telegraph services, especially in the West where the Eastern monopolies posed a particular danger.<sup>50</sup>

The same villain, Big Business, also had a hand in turn-of-the-century food adulteration scandals. The reformers reacted immediately because such practices as faulty weights and measures, price fixing and impure foods threatened the health of the community and bore heavily upon the poor, the reputed source of epidemics.

Suffragists confronted the food profiteers with an early form of consumer power. They realized that women controlled the larger part of the



purchasing dollar and could, if organized, use it to force manufacturers to live up to recognized health standards. Edmonton's suffragists organized a Consumers' League to crusade against overcharging and underweighing. A Calgary suffragist, Mrs E. P. Newhall, founded the Calgary Consumers' League.<sup>51</sup>

Although an interesting innovation, consumer power involved no fundamental change in woman's traditional rôle since it focused upon the organization of housewives within the home. It is not surprising, however, that this introduction to the world of political power blocs and lobbies convinced many women of their need for a ballot.

The city planning movement, another attempt to deal with urban sprawl, also drew city women into its ranks and expanded their political awareness. Expert opinion in the early twentieth century generally agreed upon the need for a larger vision in the plans for future city development. Urban reformers called for housing commissions, roads commissions, and parks commissions to set aside areas for public recreation.<sup>52</sup> Women took it upon themselves to deal with the more aesthetic side of the problem, a natural function, they argued, for the nation's housekeepers. Manitoba suffragists organized a Women's Civic League which worked, among other things, for the preservation of "Winnipeg the Beautiful."<sup>53</sup> Another suffragist, Mrs J. O. Perry, headed the campaign by the Vancouver Beautiful Association for the eradication of "can-strewn allys, untidy vacant lots, unsightly bill boards, and the smoke nuisance."<sup>54</sup>





"Canada Needs a 'Clean-up' Week," Grain Growers' Guide, May 12, 1915.



Despite their declamations to the contrary, in some ways the urban reformers actually served the needs of the business community. City Planning, which has been called "businessmen's socialism," did not restrain business but provided it with conditions conducive to its growth, "expansion, efficiency, economy, and enterprise."<sup>55</sup> Many of Montreal's great commercial bodies, for example, the Royal Architectural Society and the Board of Trade, endorsed the creation of a Metropolitan Parks Commission in 1909.<sup>56</sup>

The reformers criticized and condemned the powerful industrialists but simultaneously showed a fascination for their orderly and systematic techniques. In fact, they tried to apply similar techniques to the running of government by creating independent boards of experts which stood above the power of the electorate and which, they argued, could operate in a businesslike manner, free from the temptations of political patronage which plagued contemporary aldermen. Although efficient, the boards of experts threatened to become a dangerous bureaucratic instrument.

The reformers' willingness to surrender control into the hands of administrative experts is a symptom of a spiritual malaise in the movement, revealed in the soul-searching of several suffragists. At one level the women involved in secular reform were humanitarians who were genuinely distressed by the condition of the poor. Alice Chown, a Toronto woman who became involved in many anti-poverty schemes, explained that she turned to reform simply because she could not live with pauperism: "It is always the poor that I see... I am ill at ease with every luxury I allow myself."<sup>57</sup>



But the women seemed unable to overcome a paternalistic, patronizing attitude towards the poor. In the settlements, homes run by professors and college students in impoverished neighbourhoods, Chown found a "holier than thou" attitude. Even she found it difficult to overcome a certain distinct class snobbery.<sup>58</sup> Carrie Derick, the founder of the Montreal Girls' Club which later became the McGill University Settlement, had constantly to warn the college girls who worked there not to regard working women as "providential material for dispassionate study."<sup>59</sup>

The women were so plagued by the desire to do good and the inability to do so without assuming a superior attitude that Derick suggested turning over all philanthropy to an independent, objective body, the government. The service would be both more efficient, she explained, and detached, hence injuring no one's feelings.

The problem of the city simply became too large. Urban living continued to erode familial authority. Increasingly, the reformers had to rely on secondary institutions and agencies, on schools, social work centres, and reformatories, to assist in socialization. Under government supervision, these agencies became specialized and professionalized. The reformers gladly took the opportunity to relieve themselves of an increasingly heavy burden. Unfortunately, they failed to consider the danger and deficiency of impersonal, administrative charity. Christopher Lasch sees more complex reasons for their failure in the United States. The intellectual, he argues, wanted authority and prestige but, more than this, he wanted to be liked. The reform movement offered power at the



cost of popularity and, in time, the reformers simply refused to pay the price.<sup>60</sup>

The suffragists meanwhile found in the secular reform movement usefulness, recognition, and power among prestigious allies. Secular reform created occupational opportunities for female professionals and raised homemaking to the rank of profession, satisfying the housewives' status frustration.

The women, however, failed to realize the message that the movement carried for the majority of women, that is, the duty to remain within and defend the home. The secular reform programme upheld the traditional familial order and, in fact, made it more inviolable and sacrosanct than ever before. This created a problem for the secular suffragists. While the family may have served to keep women socially repressed, it also served to keep the middle-class social order intact and to create a strong race for a great nation. In the end they followed in the footsteps of their religious compatriots, responded to their class anxiety and their nationalist aspirations, shunned all demands for radically revised sex roles, and became preoccupied with the legal nicety of getting a vote.



Notes

1. Richter, op. cit., 33.
2. Ibid., 35.
3. Ibid.
4. Toronto World: Oct. 23, 1909.
5. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook III, clipping from Toronto Empire: Feb. 1, 1889.
6. H. C. Hocken actually founded Canada's only Men's Women's Equal Franchise League. J. A. Dale also headed Montreal's Parks and Playgrounds movement.
7. See Appendices V, VI, VII, VIII for a breakdown of the reform interests of the suffragists.
8. Refer Chapter 6, pg. 220.
9. Child Welfare Exhibition, Souvenir Handbook, Oct. 8-22, 1912.
10. Ontario Commission on Unemployment, Report, 1917, 27.
11. Toronto World: Nov. 10, 1907.
12. Victoria College Library, Emily Stowe Papers, Scrapbook VI, Printed flier, "Votes for Women! The Woman's Reason."
13. Montreal Gazette: March 27, 1912.
14. Morrison, op. cit., 28.
15. See Appendices IX and X.
16. Toronto Globe: Sept. 18, 1914.
17. Social Service Congress of Canada, Ottawa, 1914, 119-120.
18. Susan E. Houston, "Victorian Origins of Juvenile Delinquency: A Canadian Experience," History of Education Quarterly, Volume XII, No. 3, Fall, 1972, 254.
19. Selleck, op. cit., 307.



20. See Appendices IX and X.
21. Details of Hughes' life from Bruce N. Carter, "James L. Hughes and the Gospel of Education," Doctor of Education, University of Toronto, 1966.
22. Selleck, op. cit., 180.
23. Carter, op. cit., 256.
24. Selleck, op. cit., 307.
25. Woman's Edition, Montreal Witness: May 15, 1909, 27. Sponsored by the Montreal Parks and Playgrounds Association.
26. Toronto World: June 26, 1910.
27. Robert M. Stamp, "The Campaign for Technical Education in Ontario, 1876 - 1914," Ph.D., University of Western Ontario, 1970, 28.
28. Selleck, op. cit., 119.
29. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook III, undated (c. 1895) letter to editor of Toronto Mail from E. Stowe.
30. Selleck, op. cit., 103.
31. Carter, op. cit., 54.
32. N.C.W., Report, 1902, 117.
33. Relative rate per 1000 population of marriages in cities of Ontario:

	<u>1883</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1892</u>
Toronto	11.3	10.0	8.5
Hamilton	11.3	9.6	8.2
Ottawa	13.9	18.1	10.1
Kingston	11.7	9.6	7.9
London	13.6	10.4	8.7

Morrison, op. cit., 28.

34. Mary Q. Innis, The Clear Spirit, Toronto, 1966, 109. N.C.W., Women of Canada, op. cit., 110. Grain Growers' Guide: Oct. 14, 1914. McGill Daily: Oct. 1, 1918.



35. Winnipeg Free Press: April 8, 1916.
36. Grain Growers' Guide: Sept. 27, 1911.
37. Alice Chown, "The Supplement of Higher Education for Women," Methodist Magazine, Nov., 1901, 444.
38. N.C.W., Report, 1904, 121.
39. Lola Martin Burgoyne, A History of the Home and School Movement in Ontario, Toronto, 1935, Introduction.
40. Elsie Gregory MacGill, My Mother, the Judge, Toronto, 1955, 121.
41. See Appendices IX and X.
42. Winnipeg Free Press: July 3, 1915. Montreal Gazette: Dec. 21, 1915.
43. Saskatchewan P.E.F.B., Minutes, Feb. 12, 1918.
44. Discussed in greater detail in next chapter.
45. Montreal Local Council of Women, Report, 1893 - 1915, 15. For more detail on compulsory medical school inspection, refer to Neil Sutherland, "To Create a Strong and Healthy Race: School Children in the Public Health Movement," History of Education Quarterly, Vol. XII, No. 3, Fall, 1972, 304-333.
46. Lasch, op. cit., 161.
47. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook III, clipping, Toronto News: Dec. 31, 1895.
48. Dick MacDonald, Mugwump Canadian: The Merrill Denison Story, Montreal, 1973, 151.
49. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913.
50. See Appendices IX and X.
51. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 4, 1914.
52. In 1909 Montreal had a City Planning Committee and a City Improvement League which advised the government on the city's future needs. The suffragist, J. A. Dale, headed both organizations. W. H. Atherton, The History of Montreal, Vol. II, 1535 - 1914, Montreal, 1914, 672-673.



53. Winnipeg Free Press: May 2, 1914.
54. Woman's Edition, Vancouver Sun: March 19, 1913, 12, 20.
55. Brown and Cook, op. cit., 106.
56. Atherton, op. cit., 672.
57. Chown, The Stairway, op. cit., 37.
58. On one occasion, Chown confessed, "I am a snob, a first-class snob. The only difference between me and other snobs is that I am conscious I am a snob." Ibid., 285.
59. N.C.W., Report, 1901, 101.
60. Lasch, op. cit., 64.



## CHAPTER 8

## EUGENICS AND THE CRUSADE FOR SOCIAL PURITY

A nationalist impulse motivated Canada's late nineteenth century reformers, whether they envisioned a Christian "heaven on earth" or a perfect secular state. Many hoped to make Canada a regenerative force within the Empire. Nationalism and imperialism were analogous not antithetical.<sup>1</sup>

Several factors contributed to the apprehension that the British Empire was losing its power position in the world. Between 1870 and 1900 German and American population growth far outstripped the British.<sup>2</sup> By 1889 England faced the spectacle of Germany with a trade increment almost double her own and the United States almost equal. The quality of the population also seemed to be deteriorating. Social critics like B. Seebohm Rowntree and Charles Booth described the physical and mental degeneration of London's slum dwellers. During the Boer War the numbers of conscripts rejected for health reasons caused serious misgivings about the fitness of English youth.

Many late nineteenth century British social reforms had obvious utilitarian motives and aimed precisely at protecting Britain's international supremacy. Higher wages and reduced hours, improved work and living conditions, had a dual purpose, to increase output and improve



the general health of the population. "Social imperialism," as Bernard Semmel has labelled it, infected the Canadian reform movement as well.<sup>3</sup>

The biological sciences attracted particular interest among men committed to nation-state building and race regeneration. Several discoveries brought a new interest to bear on woman's contribution to the evolution of the race. Theories which stressed the importance of woman's physical and mental condition laid the groundwork for a complete transformation of the traditional conception of the ideal woman. In the end, however, the preoccupation with the race simply reinforced the idea that woman's biological function, her role as procreator and home-maker, superceded her development as an individual.

# I

In nineteenth century biology two creeds competed for academic approval, environmentalism or "euthenics" and genetic science or "eugenics." Environmentalism, sometimes described as the theory of acquired characteristics and a theory which remained unchallenged until the middle of the nineteenth century, suggested that a modification in the environment produced visible physical and mental changes in a man which were transmittable to the next generation. Or, in other words, give a person healthy surroundings, good food and a moral upbringing and his children will be healthier and more moral as well.

Sometime in the 1860's, an Austrian botanist and Augustinian monk, Gregor J. Mendel, published the results of his studies on the



hybridization of peas in the volumes of a local scientific society.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of his experiments with plants Mendel concluded that genetic composition completely determined the character and physical condition of one's progeny and that characteristics acquired during a person's lifetime were not passed along to his children.

In 1900 Mendel's forgotten work was rediscovered and in 1904 August Weismann published the Evolution Theory which completely rejected the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Many European and American scientists, notably Sir Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, C. W. Saleeby, Havelock Ellis, and Charles Benedict Davenport became apostles of the new eugenic creed.<sup>5</sup>

Environmentalism was a call to social action, to build for the future, but strict eugenics made social reform seem, at best, futile. It went further and suggested that by protecting the weaker elements reformers were actually contributing to the deterioration of the race. Some elements of Darwinism, natural selection and the survival of the fittest, seemed to support this conclusion.<sup>6</sup>

In reaction and in an attempt to preserve a role for human intervention, a school of idealists arose who discounted the application of the survival of the fittest theory to man. T. H. Huxley, the best known of these idealists, saw a sharp antithesis between the cosmic and the ethical process. In the former, the state of nature, "plants are selected by a competition of each against all. Those survive which are best adapted to natural conditions." In the latter, which Huxley compares to a garden,



plants are chosen by the gardener according to his taste and need. "They flourish because his skill and foresight create conditions favourable to them."<sup>7</sup> For man, argued Huxley, progress consisted in combatting, not surrendering to the cosmic process. Man is an ethical animal and his moral life ought to be an open repudiation of pitiless competitive struggle. "In civilized life the competition between individuals is drastically modified and in large part replaced by competition between societies in which the ethically superior survive."<sup>8</sup>

Huxley's Evolution and Ethics (1893) cleared the way for a moral idealism which found a popular, political expression in Benjamin Kidd's Social Evolution (1894).<sup>9</sup> Kidd attempted to extract the sociological value from Darwinism. He concluded that moral and religious forces, not pure physical competition promote social progress. Both Huxley and Kidd encouraged human intervention to keep the weak from deteriorating.

Even the eugenicist, however, was not absolute in his rejection of environmental change. An ambivalence ran throughout the eugenics movement as to where exactly heredity began and environment left off. The school had two approaches, negative eugenics, which aimed at preventing the propagation of the "cacogenic," those possessing hereditary defects, through sterilization or institutionalization, and positive eugenics, which strove to increase propagation among the "aristogenic," those who carried outstanding qualities in their genes. Since a healthy atmosphere, devoid of social problems and social burdens, allowed the aristogenic to concentrate on their own perfectibility, positive eugenics favoured



"fixing" the environment for them.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, a number of eugenisists argued that environmental reform had a beneficial effect during the "plastic age of childhood."<sup>11</sup> As the child's development followed the main stages through which the race had passed, it could, they argued, be caught at any stage. Stretched to its limits this corollary could be used to defend any reform which aimed at improving the circumstances in which a child was raised. As a result, eugenists expressed interest in child welfare, medical inspection in schools, more and better playgrounds and educational reform, all basically environmental reforms.

Partly as a result of this ambivalence and partly as a result of the discord within the scientific community, the public at large had a simplistic understanding of the laws of heredity<sup>12</sup> and no real knowledge of the differences between the two schools. They applied the term "eugenics" to anything remotely related to heredity, from sex education to health and hygiene. They knew only that somehow what their parents were affected them and what they were affected their children, and the uncertainty increased their apprehension.

Initially Canada's reformers, social gospel, temperance, and secular, feared and suspected Mendelism which, given their environmental orientation, seemed to compromise their cause. They refused to abandon their humanitarianism and their belief that they could affect the future through reforming man's environment. No longer able to ignore the discoveries of genetics, however, the majority compromised and made



eugenics and eugenics complementary rather than contradictory. They agreed to limit, through institutionalization, the propagation of those with hereditary defects but continued to stress the importance of environmental reform for the rest of the population. For example, the President of the Canadian Purity-Education Association, Dr Peter Bryce, called for reform in two fields. To satisfy the eugenists he recommended stricter government regulation of marriage and the removal of the feeble-minded to state-supported homes. In the field of eugenics he called for a "sanitary environment," improved housing, lessening of overcrowding, a reduction in local taxation and child labour, and lower costs for food and land. Although, he admitted, the Law of Heredity doomed men and women to carry their ancestral physical structure and character traits with them, the Gospel of Heredity mitigated the doom for, in environment, man had "the potentialities of almost infinite improvement."<sup>13</sup>

A spokesman at the Social Service Congress of Canada in 1914, R. L. Scott, an Ottawa lawyer, proposed a similar balance between eugenics and environmentalism. He approved the use of genetics to prevent the reproduction of mental defectives and of those with obvious hereditary disease. Beyond this, he felt, it was unsafe to go, "as men and women are something more than cattle." Criminals and delinquents, he argued, were victims of circumstances. Depending on their environment, men born with certain instincts could be developed into something good or bad.<sup>14</sup>

Among the suffragists, strict eugenists were few. Only Carrie Derick,



a student in McGill's Botanical Department between 1887 and 1890, and later a Professor of "Evolution and Genetics," supported the direct application of scientific principles to human conditions.<sup>15</sup> She condemned the "happy feeling" that education, pure air, good housing, proper food, and short hours of work may bring about a permanent improvement in men. She approved instead a "spirit of indifference" which "by masterly inactivity" allowed natural selection to remove the unfit.<sup>16</sup>

The majority of suffragists, like most reformers, placed more faith in environment than in genes. Emily Stowe, for example, blamed the environment rather than heredity for the production of the criminal. She predicted happy results if the money expended on negative, punitive measures, "to house, watch, detect, and punish our criminals," were used in the kindly, positive care and education of the young of that class. Reminiscent of Huxley, she advocated "making ethics a prominent feature of such instruction."<sup>17</sup> Flora Macdonald Denison similarly believed that "environment of a bad social condition produced social failures."<sup>18</sup>

Eugenics did not pass unnoticed, however. Ethel Hurlbatt, a vocal member of the M.S.A. and Warden of McGill's Royal Victoria College since 1907, saw the dilemma posed by eugenics and drew attention to the darker side of the picture which challenged the basic assumption of reform. She posed and answered the question:

...is social reform really incapable of effecting any substantial change, nay by lessening the selection death rate, may it not contribute to emphasizing the very evils it was intended to lessen?...



Through investigation they [eugenists] show that improvement in social conditions will not compensate for bad hereditary influences; that the problem of physical and mental deterioration cannot be solved by preventing mothers from working, by closing public houses, by erecting model dwellings; that the only way to keep a nation strong mentally and physically is to see that each new generation is derived from the fitter members of the generation before.<sup>19</sup>

Most suffragists followed the example of their reform allies and resolved the problem through compromise. They all agreed that certain defects could not be remedied through environmental reform and were, therefore, willing to regulate the propagation of the "cacogenic." The suffrage platforms readily endorsed institutionalization of the feeble-minded and requested compulsory certificates proving mental and physical health prior to marriage. Constance Hamilton included habitual drunkards among the unsalvageable and asked that they too be kept under restraint rather than leave alcoholic mothers "free to fill cradles with degenerate babies."<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, most of their reforms were euthenist and aimed at improving the living and working conditions of the poor, upgrading wages and the quality of nutrition and reforming delinquents and criminals. The majority stood much closer to Huxley than to Darwin and wanted to assist the weak, to give them a better chance in the struggle for survival. As members of the reform coalition they needed to retain a role for environment in order to justify their existence.



## II

The theories of heredity and evolution helped alter the traditional image of the ideal Victorian woman, the fragile and dull-witted "frail vessel." According to eighteenth and early nineteenth century reproductive theories, the womb simply constituted a garden where the man's seed which contained the essential physical and mental characteristics grew to maturity. On the other hand, the new genetics revealed that the mother contributed an equal share to the make-up of the new individual. This meant that for the future it mattered "at least as much how the mothers are chosen as how the fathers are...."<sup>21</sup> In this way women became a new potential power for good in the evolution of the race.

As things stood, however, the potential was rarely realized. The British author, Elizabeth Sloan Chessler, complained that "Ignorant, neglected, and diseased motherhood is poisoning the race."<sup>22</sup> The Victorian "clinging vine" could not produce the strong stock of a great nation. Women trained to be flighty and frivolous naturally produced moral weaklings.

Consequently it became part of a woman's duty to her race to be well, strong and intelligent. The age for regarding delicate women and girls as fashionable had ended. Now, women were encouraged to become healthy and vigorous. All the new women's colleges, for example, had large recreation rooms where women learned calisthenics. This same concern for women's health produced the dress reform movement. The destructive effects of the "corset curse" on the womb became an effective argument against outlandish,



irrational fashion.<sup>23</sup> The movement for women's higher education was also inspired, in part, by a desire to improve the mental discipline of future wives and mothers who, according to McGill's Principal, J. W. Dawson, imprinted "gentle but permanent tendencies" upon their offspring.<sup>24</sup>

The prophets of heredity supported every reform which promised to improve the mother's health. Equal pay for equal work became necessary, Frances Swiney explained, because "Starving mothers generally give birth to feeble, degenerate offspring."<sup>25</sup> Home economics also had genetic roots since the mother who possessed an adequate knowledge of hygiene and nutrition naturally brought out the best in the husband and children under her care.<sup>26</sup>

Even the woman's choice of husband assumed greater importance. If she exercised her "race choice" properly, that is to say, if she selected a suitably intelligent, moral, and sober spouse, she could remake the race. But to become more discriminating a woman required alternatives to marriage. Only an independent, self-supporting woman could afford to wait until the right man came along. Single women, some reformers argued, needed to learn a trade to give them this flexibility.<sup>27</sup>

In this mood eugenists were not far now from endorsing woman suffrage. The ballot obviously helped women help themselves and promised to increase woman's power and respect. It might also lead to higher wages and economic independence. On one level, therefore, "Eugenic Feminism" encouraged woman's mental and physical evolution. Yet in each case the reforms had a single purpose, the higher evolution of the race. If it



came to a choice between woman's development and the future of the race, the race came first.

In the early twentieth century eugenists and reformers infected with hereditarian ideas expressed concern about a declining birth rate among the "aristogenic," the very people they wanted to reproduce. The "cacogenic" seemed more prolific and seemed to threaten national deterioration. According to Elizabeth Chessler,

"... if the present birth-rate is maintained in these sections of society, every 1000 members of the educated and skilled worker classes will be represented by 687 descendants in three generations and every 1000 of the unfit and feeble-minded will be represented by 3,600. Thus will the unfit outnumber the healthy by 5 to 1 ....<sup>28</sup>

This consideration raised serious questions for the organized woman's movement. Several eugenists pointed out that the most intelligent women, those who should have been having the largest families, simply were not doing so. Many were seeking an education and a profession instead. Statistics indicated that a smaller proportion of college women tended to marry, that they married later in life and had fewer children, facts which seemed to substantiate the eugenists' charge.<sup>29</sup> To correct the imbalance, the well-known eugenist, Sir Francis Galton, was willing to cut back on women's educational opportunities to guarantee that they live up to their maternal obligations. "If child-bearing women must be intellectually handicapped," he explained, "then the penalty to be paid for race-predominance is the subjection of women," an unfortunate decision for women who had extra-familial ambitions.<sup>30</sup>



This conclusion raised a real dilemma for the suffragist. If the suffragist shared the concern for the future of the race, as most in fact did, what could she say to those who accused her of not doing her share?

Ethel Hurlbatt did some soul-searching over the issue:

If the philanthropists are right, there is no doubt that college women are contributing their share to movements which will secure better physical and moral conditions for the race. If the eugenists are right, are college women? Do college women maintain the same standard of physical efficiency as their less educated sisters? Do they as readily marry? Do they bring into the world as many children.<sup>31</sup>

If it became difficult to defend women's higher education in the face of the eugenic barrage, it became almost impossible to advocate occupations outside the home for women. Woman's first duty, the duty to the race, demanded that she dedicate her life to the procreation of healthy offspring. According to the eugenicist, C. W. Saleeby, women could scarcely be better employed than in the home. It was the father's duty, he believed, to support mother and children and therefore intolerable for a married woman to work, whether in a factory or a profession: "whatever the mother makes in the factory is of less value than the children who consequently die at home."<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Chessler wanted compulsory measures to keep women in the home and out of the factories for the simple reason that "if woman fails as mother, the development of the race is hindered." The true woman, she argued, would instinctively recognize where her destiny lay:



As the dove returned to the Ark, so will the true woman, after a brief flight and the dazzling allurements of intellectual and material freedom, return instinctively to the shelter and privacy of home life, as her natural haven of sweetness, happiness, and rest.<sup>33</sup>

This single message, the priority of woman's maternal function, ran throughout the reform ideology.

Most suffragists shared the late nineteenth century political concern for nation-state building. The majority agreed that women had a racial obligation to become dedicated wives and mothers. They endorsed the professionalization of motherhood and the study of health and hygiene for racial reasons. This call to redeem the race gave women a new sense of utility which partly dissipated the frustration and discontent which had originally led many into the movement. The few feminists who continued to press for equal educational and occupational opportunities became traitors to the national cause. More than any other single factor, eugenic nationalism robbed the suffrage movement of its revolutionary potential.

### III

One of the most striking developments in nineteenth century biology was the growth in knowledge of the origins and causes of microbic diseases. In 1838 Cagniard de Latour and Schwann proved that both fermentation and putrefaction were due to the action of living micro-organisms.<sup>34</sup> In 1855



Louis Pasteur confirmed these findings. The world entered the bacteriological era and a hysterical search to discover the causes of specific diseases began. The findings of heredity which suggested the transmission of disease from parent to child intensified public apprehension.

One particular disease, the infamous "social" or venereal disease, became a preoccupation of the Victorian era, offensive as the subject might seem to strict Puritan morality. Yet its threat to the race, the suggestion that it bore the seeds of physical and mental decay, prevailed over prudishness. In 1905 Fritz Schaudinn and Erich Hoffman discovered the spirochete which caused syphilis and proved that it could be transmitted from an infected to an uninfected spouse and that an unborn babe could contract the disease from an infected mother.<sup>35</sup> Subsequent studies revealed that syphilis produced other afflictions in the victim and in the victim's offspring, for example, insanity, paralysis, blindness, deformity, scrofula, meningitis, spinal and hip disease, and sterility.

Typically the public exaggerated these findings. Lillian Beynon Thomas, for example, blamed syphilis for more than 50% of all mental deficiency.<sup>36</sup> Charles Hastings, Toronto's public health inspector and presumably a more informed source, blamed gonorrheal infection for 20 to 25% of all blindness, 17 to 25% of all sterility, and 60 to 80% of all miscarriages.<sup>37</sup>

Statistical studies, a favourite authority of the early social scientist, revealed that syphilis and gonorrhea had reached staggering



proportions in the United States, where Canadian reformers often looked to forecast Canada's future. Dr Hastings quoted the ominous findings of the 1901 New York State Commission of Seven which concluded that one New Yorker in every five had venereal disease.<sup>38</sup> Indicating the deteriorating situation in Canada, Emily Murphy pointed out that one in three prisoners in the Provincial jail of Alberta had to be treated for syphilis or gonorrhea.<sup>39</sup>

Even more serious perhaps, while science could describe the many deplorable side-effects of venereal disease, it had yet to discover a cure. One treatment for syphilis, doses of mercury, used as early as 1497, killed many patients and made the medicine as dangerous as the disease.

Arphenamine or Salvarsen, a derivative of arsenic, used after 1910, proved more successful but clinical cure still required repeated injections over a period of one and a half years.<sup>40</sup> Some stages of later syphilis proved refractory to all forms of therapy. Gonorrhea in women was often curable only through a grave abdominal operation.

Without an easy cure, the reformers had no choice but to locate and root out the cause of venereal disease. Ideologically, of course, the reformers preferred a preventive orientation. They located the principal source of venereal disease in prostitution, called the "social evil," which was also on the increase in these years. Congested urban centres with a larger, more mobile population provided a larger clientele and anonymity, ideal conditions for the trade to flourish. Municipal authorities in Britain and in some American cities attempted to curtail



the spread of venereal disease by segregating the prostitutes and subjecting them to compulsory medical inspection. The British Contagious Diseases Acts, introduced between 1864 and 1869, constituted a test case of social supervision.<sup>41</sup>

Although Canada produced no similar legislation, ad hoc legalization and segregation of areas of prostitution existed in most major Canadian cities. In Nova Scotia, tolerated vice was limited almost wholly to Halifax, a naval centre.<sup>42</sup> In Quebec City, a 1870 by-law legalized prostitution while in Montreal, in 1874, Rev. W. J. Hunter reported that "with its population of some 220,000, there are 228 houses of shame known to the police."<sup>43</sup> In Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, prostitution existed in several areas. Winnipeg followed the policy of toleration which led J. S. Woodsworth to complain in 1911 that it had 150 houses of ill-fame together in one area.<sup>44</sup> Keepers of houses set up a section in Vancouver, while in the lumbering and mining camps of B.C.'s interior, colonies of segregated vice could also be found.

Those who favoured government supervision of prostitution, the "regulationists" as they were called, antagonized the Puritan reformers who argued that the state had no business sanctioning moral evil. Besides, and perhaps more importantly, regulation failed to check the spread of venereal disease. This discovery led Britain to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1886. Clearly, a new approach was needed.

For the "fallen," Canada's reformers could only suggest that they be prevented from transmitting the disease to others. They recommended



instituting Wasserman and bacteriological tests in public clinics and even in public washrooms to discover the "carriers" and advocated compulsory registration and quarantine of those found to be infected. They also insisted upon compulsory medical certificates prior to marriage to prevent the contamination of innocent brides.

These reforms did nothing to root out the source of the problem, however. The reformers located the cause of prostitution in promiscuity, primarily in male promiscuity. They decided, therefore, that in order to eliminate prostitution and venereal disease, the nation's morals needed a general reformation.

Several Canadian reform organizations joined in a crusade for national purity. Between 1906 and 1915 a Purity-Education Association staffed mainly by doctors operated out of Toronto.<sup>45</sup> A second group, the National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, founded in 1912, campaigned against the international trade in prostitutes.

But purity reform was not confined to a few specific societies. Most reform organizations had national purity as an underlying goal. The W.C.T.U., for example, had press and literature censorship committees and White Slave committees and committees dedicated to eliminating the "social evil." Purity reform, in fact, became the subsidiary theme underlying every other reform, "the moral cement that gave cohesiveness to otherwise disassociated reforms."<sup>46</sup> It served perfectly the dual motivation of the entire reform package, to perfect the race and to reinstate Protestant morality.



The reformers adopted several methods of rehabilitating the nation's morals. Many hoped to use education, a favourite device for social reconstruction. They promoted a version of sex education which aimed at discouraging rather than stimulating the enjoyment of sex. A Self and Sex series, consisting of eight volumes and published in the United States between 1900 and 1915, became very popular among Canadian reformers. Purity lecturers, notably Beatrice Brigden, William Lund Clark, and Arthur W. Beall, hired by the W.C.T.U. and the evangelical Churches, toured the country, imparting the secrets of life to the young.<sup>47</sup> The instruction they offered, filled with threats and warnings, encouraged continence and discouraged sexual activity. One of the Self and Sex books, What a Young Man Ought to Know, contained a sixty-page lecture on the frightful effects of venereal disease. Masturbation or the "solitary evil" also stood condemned because of the belief that male semen contained the vital energy of life which, once lost, could never be regained, an example of Victorian vitalist physiology.<sup>48</sup>

As a second remedy to the problem of the nation's morals, the reformers recommended increasing the power and influence of women, the traditional defenders of morality. They located the source of prostitution in the double standard of morality, the old idea that men are allowed to "sow their wild oats" while women are expected to remain virginal and celibate. To end prostitution and consequently curb venereal disease they wished to reinstate a single high standard of morality for both men and women. Since women were believed to be asexual or above sex, the purity



reformers hoped to enlist them to help impose the single standard on men, the more promiscuous sex. The revelation of police compliance in prostitution convinced many reformers that, to be truly effective, women needed a ballot. The reformers were certain that women's votes would produce purity legislation.

This conviction became one of the most compelling arguments in favour of woman suffrage. Each reformer who supported woman suffrage, whether in the social gospel, temperance, or secular reform movements, wanted women to have a vote primarily because he believed that they would help upgrade the nation's morals. This involved no radical change in woman's role or function. Purity reformers wished simply to capitalize on women's traditional perceived virtues, her conservatism and her chastity.

#### IV

The suffragists, in turn, strengthened the purity reformers' conviction that enfranchised women would promote their cause. Almost without exception, the women upheld a strict Victorian code of morality. Emily Stowe, a feminist leader, approved the "anti-sex" sex education. The cure to immorality, she argued, lay in teaching the young "all the consequences of the transgression."<sup>49</sup> In a similar vein Dr Amelia Yeomans issued a foreboding pamphlet entitled "Warning Words" which recounted all the dire effects of venereal disease. Lillian Beynon Thomas advised women to wear modest dress since she wished to curb anything designed to activate "animal desire."<sup>50</sup> Even within marriage, sex seemed more of a curse than



a blessing. Alice Chown, for example, one of the most radical suffragists on other issues, tried to limit sex relations to purposes of reproduction.<sup>51</sup>

The suffragists joined in the campaigns against prostitution and White Slavery. Dr Margaret Gordon called White Slavery the strongest reason which made her a suffragist.<sup>52</sup> Flora Macdonald Denison was even willing to violate cherished civil liberties to end the trade. She wanted the city to be divided into districts, each having an officer with the power to go into any home and find out about its inmates.<sup>53</sup> Each suffrage programme contained a plank in favour of raising the age of consent, ideally to age twenty-one, to offer legal recourse against slave traders who lured young girls, in some provinces only ten years old, into prostitution.<sup>54</sup> Every suffrage platform demanded that proprietors be held responsible for the order and respectability of their houses, an attack aimed directly at the brothel keepers.

Purity reform had a particular appeal for the suffragists since it provided them with an opportunity for revenge against one area of visible sexual discrimination, the double standard of morality. It angered them that the prostitute, the woman, consistently became the villain while the man got off with a nominal fee and returned home.<sup>55</sup> In their opinion, the prostitute was less guilty since she often fell through hunger or was driven into sin because she could find no job or because "some man" paid her starvation wages. But the client always went through choice.<sup>56</sup>

Lillian Beynon Thomas, therefore, wished to subject the men to equal



mortification by having the names of those found in houses in the red light districts published in newspapers.<sup>57</sup> It simply made no sense, she argued, to condemn only the woman for a breach of morality which required two people.

Similarly, the women showed a new compassion for the unwed mother, another victim of male licentiousness. The existing parental custody laws made the father the sole legal guardian of legitimate offspring but left the illegitimate child the sole responsibility of its mother. Nellie McClung condemned this injustice:

If a child is a treasure in a married happy home  
and clouds arise and a separation follows, who  
gets the child? The father! But who gets the  
illegitimate child that bears the brand of shame?  
The poor unfortunate mother...<sup>58</sup>

Equal parental rights over legitimate and illegitimate children became a popular cause among the suffragists.

The purity crusade answered yet another need, the women's desire to de-emphasize the physical side of male-female relations. The suffragists' anti-sexual attitudes must be seen in the context of the times in which they lived. In a nascent industrial society, physical strength still played a prominent role, in work, in defence, and in other social functions. In order to claim equality women felt they had to downplay the physical and emphasize the mental and the spiritual. They feared sex, therefore, because it accentuated the physical and placed women in a subservient position. As Alice Chown explained, "So long as woman accepts indiscriminate sex relations, so long will she be subject to man."<sup>59</sup>

Platonic, intellectual and spiritual, love rather than sexual, physical



love appealed more to the suffragists since the former seemed to place woman on a more equal footing with man. Moreover, as intellectuals, the women shared the current idealism which denigrated the physical, animal side of man. They constantly exhorted women to become friends and companions to men rather than sexual toys or dolls.<sup>60</sup> Nellie McClung, for example, saw in the "pleasant glowing amber" of comradeship and loving friendship "a warmer, more lasting, more comfortable heat" than in the "leaping flames of passion."<sup>61</sup>

The suffragists' attitude towards birth control confirms this hypothesis. The decline in the birth rate in the Western world between 1870 and 1900 proves that birth control methods were being used.<sup>62</sup> The subject, however, remained socially tabu, especially among "ladies." As a result few suffragists made any comment whatsoever on the issue. References to the limitation of family size generally implied the use of natural rather than artificial methods. The suffragists believed that artificial birth control devices simply facilitated male promiscuity. Natural birth control, that is, voluntary abstinence, not only controlled family size but freed women from their "distasteful" sexual obligations. Only after World War I did several suffragists, notably Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy, endorse artificial contraception which, they finally realized, released women from at least one aspect of male physical domination, constant pregnancy.

The move to liberalize divorce laws also aimed at freeing women from masculine control. The suffragists objected most strongly to the clause



which allowed a man a divorce on the grounds of adultery but which denied such a right to a woman unless she was forced to cohabit with her husband's mistress.<sup>63</sup> The option of divorce meant a woman no longer had to tolerate her husband's sexual whims, his promiscuity or his beatings.

The purity crusade appealed to the suffragists for several reasons. It reduced the importance of sexual love and freed women from man's physical superiority. It also promised them a position of power since it gave them an opportunity to force their standard of morality upon the men. Given the whole-hearted support of their male allies, the women had a chance to become the moral arbiters for the nation.

Yet the reform had limitations which many women failed to recognize. Because of its popularity, the suffragists allowed the morality issue to absorb most of their time and energy and much of their antagonism which drew attention from important issues, particularly the question of educational and occupational equality. Moreover, the alliance with the purity reformers tied the women to a conservative sexual ideology which rapidly became outdated in the new urban culture and prevented them from even considering the option of female sexual liberation.

The debate on heredity influenced the suffragists at two levels. It affected them both as women and as reformers. It threw the reform movement on the defensive by challenging many environmentally-oriented reforms. It also strengthened the traditional sanctity of the motherhood role by drawing a direct correlation between the mother's health and well-being.



and that of her offspring. Finally, by revealing the disastrous side-effects of venereal disease, it put a premium on woman's conservative, moralistic values.

Eugenic nationalism speeded up women's enfranchisement by equating woman's higher evolution and racial development and by converting the purity reformers into suffragists. But, of more consequence, it also reinforced conventional sexual stereotypes. Science may have raised woman's social importance but it scarcely liberated her socially.



Notes

1. Carl Berger, The Sense of Power, Toronto, 1970, passim. For further discussion of Berger's thesis, see Douglas Cole, "Canada's 'nationalistic' imperialists," and Robert J. D. Page, "Carl Berger and the Intellectual Origins of Canadian Imperialist Thought, 1867 - 1914," Journal of Canadian Studies, August, 1970.
2. Population Figures:
 

	<u>1870</u>	<u>1900</u>
Britain	31.8	41.9
Germany	41	56.3
United States	38.5	75.9

Selleck, op. cit., 82-86.
3. Semmel, op. cit.
4. Sir William Cecil Dampier, A History of Science and its Relations with Philosophy and Religion, London, 1961, 322.
5. Donald K. Pickens argues that, by 1905, Mendel was completely accepted in the United States. By this date, in Canada, there seemed to exist no unanimity among the intellectual elite as to the relative importance of genes and environment. D. K. Pickens, Eugenics and the Progressives, U.S.A., 1968, 50.
6. In actuality, Darwin believed in the adaptation to environment and the inheritance of favourable characteristics. Dr Rudolf Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, London, 1938, 96.
7. William Irvine, Apes, Angels, and Victorians, New York, 1959, 350.
8. Ibid., 351.
9. Mark H. Haller, Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought, New Jersey, 1963, 80-82.
10. Pickens, op. cit., 190, 191.
11. For example, David Starr Jordan (1851 - 1931) and G. Stanley Hall (1846 - 1924). Ibid., 60, 140.
12. For example, Mrs L. J. Harvie of the W.C.T.U. related how a beautiful and pure child was born to a mother who had read Scott's Lady of the Lake while she was pregnant. Toronto W.C.T.U., Report, 1878, 37.



13. Peter H. Bryce, M.D., "The Ethical Problems Underlying the Social Evil," reprinted from the Journal of Preventive Medicine and Sociology, Toronto, March, 1914, 13. Bryce was also the Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Immigration, Ottawa. Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects: Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada," Historical Papers, 1970, 96.
14. Social Service Congress, op. cit., 95.
15. McGill News, Vol. 10, No. 4, Sept., 1929, 17-18.
16. Montreal Witness: Feb. 23, 1912.
17. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook III, undated (c. 1897) letter from Stowe to the editor of the Toronto Mail.
18. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., Newspaper Clippings re. Woman Suffrage, Scrapbook I, clipping, untitled, June, 1898.
19. Montreal Witness: Oct. 12, 1910.
20. N.C.W., Report, 1912, 29.
21. C. W. Saleeby, Woman and Womankind, London, 1912, 2.
22. Elizabeth Sloan Chessler, Woman, Marriage, and Motherhood, London, 1913, 1.
23. Michael Bliss, "How We Used to Learn About Sex," Maclean's Magazine, March, 1974, 62.
24. Suze Woolf, "Women at McGill: The Ladies' Education Association of Montreal," unpublished History Paper, McGill University, Dec., 1971, 9.
25. Frances Swiney, The Awakening of Women OR Woman's Part in Evolution, London, 1899, 209.
26. Chessler, op. cit., 16.
27. The Montreal lawyer and suffragist, Charles Holt, wanted women to demand more of men "in the way of temperance, soberness, and chastity." "Political equality leading to greater economic independence," he argued, "will help them to do this." Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913, 3.



28. Chessler, op. cit., 207.
29. Haller, op. cit., 81.
30. Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform, Massachusetts, 1960, 46.
31. Montreal Witness: Oct. 12, 1910.
32. Saleeby, op. cit., 306.
33. Chessler, op. cit., 213.
34. Dampier, op. cit., 263.
35. William J. Brown, M.D., Syphilis: a synopsis, Public Health Service Publication, #1660, Washington, 1968, 9-11.
36. Winnipeg Free Press: July 3, 1915.
37. Social Service Congress, op. cit., 208.
38. Ibid.
39. Emily Murphy, The Black Candle, Toronto, 1922, 307.
40. William J. Brown, op. cit., 9.
41. Glen Petrie, A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler, New York, 1971.
42. Methodist Church Report, "Living Issues in Moral and Social Reform," 1911 - 1912, 39-45.
43. Rev. W. J. Hunter, Manhood Wrecked and Rescued, Toronto, 1894, 71.
44. J. S. Woodsworth, My Neighbor, Toronto, 1972, Chapter 8, passim.
45. Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects," op. cit., 104.
46. For an excellent study of the American purity reformers, see David J. Pivar, "The New Abolitionism: The Quest for Social Purity," Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1965.
47. Beatrice Brigden and William Lund Clark were hired by the Canadian Methodist Church. Arthur W. Beall lectured to the schoolboys of Ontario on behalf of the W.C.T.U. Methodist Church, Board of Evangelical and Social Service, Correspondence between Beatrice Brigden and Dr Albert Moore; also William Lund Clark Papers. Bliss, "Pure Books," op. cit., 104.



48. Bliss, "Pure Books," op. cit., 99-100.
49. W.L.U.A., Stowe Papers, op. cit., Scrapbook IV, undated (c. 1877) newspaper clipping.
50. Winnipeg Free Press: August 19, 1916. Local Council of Women of Montreal, Report, 1897 - 1901, 14. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913, 28. McClung, In Times Like These, op. cit., 44, 45.
51. Chown, op. cit., 114.
52. University of Toronto Archives, Denison Papers, op. cit., collection of newspaper clippings, Star Weekly: March 23, 1913.
53. Ibid., Unpublished typescript, "The White Slave Traffic," undated. Toronto World: Nov. 14, 1909.
54. P.A.C., N.C.W. Papers, op. cit., File on Women in Public Life, Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mrs Emily Cummings, April 17, 1915. Sask. P.E.F.B., Minutes, Feb. 18, 1916. See, also, Appendices IX and X.
55. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913, 24.
56. Sask. P.E.F.B., Minutes, Feb. 12, 1918. B.C. Federationist: Oct. 17, 1916.
57. Winnipeg Free Press: Oct. 7, 1916.
58. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 26, 1913.
59. Chown, op. cit., 114.
60. Grain Growers' Guide: August 14, 1912. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913, 17. Winnipeg Free Press: August 28, 1915. Toronto World: Oct. 31, 1909.
61. McClung, In Times Like These, op. cit., 42. In Painted Fires, as in the other McClung novels, the heroines arouse the friendship and respect rather than the passion of their future mates: "Not a word of love had passed between them [Helmi and Jack]. They were just two good friends." McClung, Painted Fires, op. cit., 142.
62. J. A. and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England, New York, 1964, passim.
63. Helen Gregory MacGill, Daughters, Wives, and Mothers in British Columbia: Some Laws Regarding Them, Vancouver, 1913, 31.



### Conclusion

The alliance between the suffrage and the larger middle-class reform movement had serious repercussions for the suffragists. It tied them to the fortunes and weaknesses of reform. It allowed the women, under the nebulous heading "reform," to dissipate their energy in multifarious causes. It bound them to a regressive philosophy which militated against genuine female liberation.

For several reasons the middle-class reform movement stagnated in the post-World War I era. The First World War destroyed the basis for philosophical idealism. The moralistic assumptions about politics made by mid-Victorian liberals seemed laughable to a generation who had survived a war, "ostensibly fought on the basis of the highest principles but subsequently revealed to be the result of stupidity and bad faith."<sup>1</sup> The war dampened the humanistic feeling of self-sacrifice which motivated many reformers. "Those who fought and survived found it difficult to believe that they owed anybody anything." The idea of continuous, inevitable progress, a necessary ingredient in the movement, seemed discredited. Idealism belonged to a time when "men's minds had not yet been disorganized by the constant presence or menace" of war, a time when men were actuated by hope rather than by fear.<sup>2</sup>

The reformers had been united by a nationalistic urge to create a New Jerusalem within Canada's borders. The conflict between "continental" and "Anglo" Saxons raised serious doubts about the destiny of the white race to lead the world.



Intensified industrial unrest, principally in the Winnipeg General Strike, created a second psychological dilemma for the reformer. The movement rested upon a paternalistic assumption that a distance separated the reformers from those they wished to aid. The rise of labour in its own right proved that labour needed no pious middle-class spokesmen. It also frightened reformers who had intended to "demilitarize" the labour movement with minor concessions and palliatives.

The reformers, it is true, achieved several victories, including prohibition and woman suffrage itself. But to most it was clear that the problems they had intended to eliminate persisted. Crime rates continued to climb. The problem of poverty grew ever larger. The government sanctioned the growth of large amalgamations during the war by giving them munitions contracts. Industrial unrest increased. The process of secularization continued apace in the cities. Their few triumphs allowed some reformers to claim success and retire gracefully from the fray. Those who refused to ignore the remaining problems began to question their methodology.

Growing unemployment figures, for example, disturbed Toronto's reforming Mayor, H. C. Hocken. He decided, in frustration, that the problem of the city had outgrown the city reformer and bequeathed the situation to a board of government experts.<sup>3</sup> Many reformers took this tack. Social experts promised to handle the matter with greater ability and efficiency and at the same time relieved the reformer of a burden he could no longer handle. Unprofessional, untrained reformers became



increasingly redundant.

The surrender to the experts or the professionalization of reform can be traced back to the Churches. Theological institutes were the first to offer sociology courses.<sup>4</sup> The universities took over the training of the social worker and the social scientist in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1916 the University of Toronto syllabus included courses in social economics, social psychology, social ethics, social hygiene, child welfare, immigration, and labour problems.<sup>5</sup>

The tendency during the nineteenth century to deify science and scientific methodology intensified this trend. Technological progress in the industrial world led people to believe that statistical surveys and scientific analyses held the clue to future progress. Scientific educationists, following the lead of Herbert Spencer, studied techniques for teaching various subjects, investigated memory, tested and measured intelligence, examined examinations.<sup>6</sup> Municipal reform politicians tried the same approach. H. C. Hocken asked the Social Service Commission to examine all the charities in Toronto and created a Bureau of Municipal Research headed by Horace Brittain to provide statistical surveys on social problems.

While the studies may not have led to an immediate solution, at least they gave the illusion that something was being done. Unfortunately, the impression of scientific and professional precision made the amateur reformer feel inadequate. At the same time the professionalization of reform had a regrettable dehumanizing side-effect as it moved reform from



a natural, family-based style toward a more impersonal planned approach.<sup>7</sup>

The suffragists followed the example of their reform allies and began to invest more and more authority in the hands of experts. In 1917 the M.S.A. asked McGill to establish a Department of Sociology. The Moose Jaw Equal Franchise League requested that the Saskatchewan Government establish a Provincial Bureau of Social Research. The Civic Committee of the University Women's Club of Winnipeg, chaired by a suffragist, employed social scientists to study the conditions of working women.<sup>8</sup>

A few, notably Mrs. Luther Holling, a Manitoba sanitary inspector, and Rose Henderson, a Montreal Probation Officer, managed to infiltrate the new expert elite. The majority, however, who tended to be amateur reformers, now found themselves out of a job. Denied this role, most women followed the reformers' exhortations and became professional housewives.

The ideology of reform consistently defended the home as woman's most natural, most useful domain. The whole movement, the social gospel, the temperance, and the secular reform branches, agreed on the need to resurrect the family to a position of authority. The whole movement also agreed that the granting of political power to women only strengthened the motherhood role. As a part of this movement, the attempt by a few feminists to restructure traditional sex roles had no chance to succeed.

The suffragists found it impossible to extricate themselves from the ties of class and of nationality. They shared the concern for their country which faced threats from intemperance, foreign hordes, mental and physical disease. They shared the status anxiety of the middle class.



Logically, they agreed to do their part to save the nation and the social order by subscribing to traditional social norms.

The suffragists' affiliation with other reform groups, therefore, while strategically and politically advantageous, restricted their social message for women. All the intellectual forces of the era, religious authority, reform politicians, even the supposedly innovative science, coalesced in a single injunction, the need to keep women in the home. Given their political and ideological heritage, the suffragists had to obey.



Notes

1. Richter, op. cit., 375.
2. Ibid.
3. H. C. Hocken, "The New Spirit in Municipal Government," Address to the Canadian Club, Ottawa, Dec. 19, 1914, 85 ff.
4. Marion V. Royce, "The Contribution of the Methodist Church to Social Welfare in Canada," M.A., University of Toronto, 1940, 217.
5. University of Toronto Calendar, Department of Social Service, 1916 - 1917.
6. Selleck, op. cit., 286.
7. Terrence Morrison, op. cit., 10.
8. M.S.A., Minutes, April 4, 1917. Report of the Civic Committee of the University Women's Club of Winnipeg, The Work of Women and Girls in the Department Stores of Winnipeg, 1914, 3.



### SECTION III: THE SUFFRAGE FRINGE: LABOUR AND THE ORGANIZED FARMER

#### Introduction

The organized farmers in the Prairie West, the Saskatchewan and Manitoba Grain Growers and the United Farmers of Alberta, and some elements of Canadian labour were among the earliest and staunchest advocates of woman suffrage in Canada. Yet very few farm or labour men or women managed to infiltrate the organized suffrage ranks. The suffrage societies remained predominantly urban and middle class. Farm and labour women preferred to work for the ballot through their own associations rather than join the suffragists who showed little real understanding of the problems of farmers or labourers. In fact, on several occasions, the suffragists and the women of the other two occupational groups had direct and serious confrontations because of their economic, social, and ideological differences.

As the twentieth century advanced and industrialism became more entrenched in Canada, society was splintered into several self-conscious occupational groups. The complexity and instability of modern living made the individual feel powerless. As a result, men in the same line of work cooperated in order to maximize strength and bargaining power. The "united we stand" philosophy or what Michael Bliss calls the "protective impulse"<sup>1</sup> is evident in businessmen's associations, professional societies,



labour unions, and farm cooperatives.

Occupational awareness and cohesion unfortunately created new tensions between occupational groups as each sought to defend its particular needs. Canadian farmers, for example, became absorbed by the necessity of a lower tariff, a reform which antagonized protected industry. On several occasions farmers and labourers tried to cooperate on the grounds that they were both primary producers and both the victims of "big business." But the alliance was untenable as economic interests divided them. The farmers were land-holders and had a greater stake in society than the average labourer. Labour demanded universal manhood suffrage and the abolition of the property qualification for the vote, something neither the farmers nor businessmen, both property owners, could endorse.

Despite or rather because of their differences, all three groups, the business and professional middle class, labourers, and farmers, favoured female enfranchisement. All three believed that giving a vote to their wives and daughters would bolster the political representation of their group. The coincidental endorsement of woman suffrage by three distinct, influential political blocks ensured the passing of the franchise reform with little or no opposition.

In this way the new occupational awareness of the era proved a boon to the suffrage campaign. But, at the same time, it had unfortunate divisive effects on the women in the movement. Although farm, labour, and middle-class women cooperated in several joint "female" ventures, they consistently placed their occupational allegiance above loyalty to their



sex. The suffrage societies represented a monolithic middle-class point of view which made it difficult for the women of the other two occupational groups to endorse their programme or to feel at home in them. The suffragists claimed to speak for all women but, in truth, their snobbery and ignorance and misconception of the real problems of farm and labour women intensified tensions between women of different classes. No real "female" consciousness evolved in this period. Predictably, once women received the ballot, they did not seriously modify traditional voting patterns since they continued to place their occupational and economic interests above those of their sex.



Notes

1. Michael Bliss, "The Protective Impulse: An Approach to the Social History of Oliver Mowat's Ontario," In Donald Swainson, ed., Oliver Mowat's Ontario, Toronto, 1972, 181.



## CHAPTER 9

## LABOUR AND THE WOMEN'S VOTE

Labour became one of the earliest supporters of female enfranchisement in Canada. Certain labour newspapers, for example, the Winnipeg Voice, began publishing articles in favour of the measure as early as 1902, the same year a British Columbia labour conference passed a resolution supporting the women.<sup>1</sup>

Labour, of course, was not a monolith. Broadly speaking, Canadian labourers adopted three different approaches to reform. Business unionists, the more cautious element in the labour movement, advocated arbitration, conciliation, and bargaining with employers for short-term gains such as wage increases; social democrats promoted independent labour politics along the lines of the British Labour Party; a few socialists called for revolution and the complete overthrow of the capitalist system.<sup>2</sup>

A labourer's political philosophy determined his attitude towards woman suffrage.<sup>3</sup> Business unionists and social democrats promoted it for pragmatic reasons, the former to protect their bargaining position against unskilled women workers and the latter to raise the number of working-class electors. Socialists defended the reform ideologically but, given their suspicion of political reformism, questioned the usefulness of simply extending the electoral franchise. Suffrage quibblers, argued the



socialist, only deflected interest from the more important goal of social revolution.

The labour-suffrage bargain, therefore, lacked real depth. Labour passed pious resolutions sanctioning woman suffrage but their motives were generally self-seeking and expedient. The middle-class suffragists meanwhile courted labour's support but had little real sympathy for the labour cause and feared too close an association with the unsavoury lower classes.

# I

Male unionists in Canada and elsewhere would have preferred to ignore the woman worker if they had had a choice. In the beginning most unions denied women membership, a tactic designed to drive them back into the home. They had obvious economic reasons for wanting to restrict woman's activities to the domestic sphere.

But, as industrialization became more entrenched, the numbers of women workers continued to increase. In 1901 over 70,000 and in 1911 96,000 women were engaged in manufacturing in Canada, a rise from 23.4% to 25.8% of the total factory labour force.<sup>4</sup> Reluctantly union leaders acknowledged that women were in industry to stay.

This realization forced a change in tactics. Now unionists actively encouraged women to join their associations. It had become safer to subject women to union control rather than leave them open to capitalist exploitation. The B.C. Federationist explained that it was now (1911)



"short-sighted" to exclude women from unions.<sup>5</sup> A few recalcitrants maintained that women could still be driven from industry altogether but these became a minority. As one woman worker observed, the unions now courted women for the same reason they had previously ignored them, for self-interest:

First she [woman] shall not joint the union as in the early days; then she must, because his interests are at stake ... Oh, Chivalry, thy name is man.<sup>6</sup>

The wages issue was crucial. Unorganized and untrained women were generally willing to work for less than men. As a result, they undercut the men's wages and weakened the union's bargaining effectiveness. Frequently, women served as scabs when the men went out on strike. All the male unions demanded that women receive equal pay for equal work, ostensibly a very liberal reform, for reasons of self-preservation.<sup>7</sup>

Since many unionists believed that political recognition would improve woman's bargaining position in the market place and make it easier for her to win equal salaries, they supported woman suffrage. In the mind of every unionist, the two reforms, woman suffrage and equal pay, were inseparable. In the United States the American Federation of Labour agreed in 1898 to promote woman suffrage on condition that it be tied to a demand for equal pay "which women wanted but men badly needed to cut down the competitive advantage of cheaper female labour."<sup>8</sup> The British Labour M.P., Phillip Snowden, explained that votes for women meant an end to the underselling of men's labour by "the cheapest labour of unorganized and unenfranchised women."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in Canada, in 1916, the President of the Canadian



Labour Congress, J. C. Watters, struck a blatant public bargain with the Toronto suffragist, Constance Hamilton, in which he promised to support votes for women in exchange for an agreement on the principle of equal pay.<sup>10</sup>

The unionists had other practical reasons for wanting women enfranchised. They hoped it might lead to the introduction of protective legislation which would restrict woman's hours of work and thus reduce her competitive advantage. Legislation improving women's working conditions in factories also promised to benefit the men since they had to work in the same buildings and since, to an extent, their hours depended upon the hours of their co-workers. After all, the factories could not operate with half the staff missing.

## II

Social democrats supported woman suffrage because they believed that, if working-class women had a vote, they stood a better chance of electing working-class representatives. Like the unionists, they hoped that capitalism could be reformed from within, in this instance, through Parliament. Often these men became so enamoured of the political process that they actually deserted labour's ranks to take jobs offered by the Liberals or Tories.

The labour sympathizers who joined outright suffrage societies were generally "hybrid artisans" of this type who do not, therefore, seriously modify the suffrage movement's homogeneous middle-class character. In



British Columbia, for example, Ralph Smith and his wife, Mary Ellen Smith, led the suffrage campaign. Smith began his career as President of the Trades and Labour Congress (1898 - 1902) but, by the time he became a suffragist, he had shifted his allegiance to the Liberal Party.<sup>11</sup> Two other labour suffragists, F. J. Dixon in Winnipeg and Allan Studholme in Ottawa, also joined the Liberals.<sup>12</sup> A. W. Wright, a member of the General Executive Board of the Knights of Labour during the 1880's and also a male suffragist, later became a Tory organizer.<sup>13</sup>

Sections of labour who had little confidence in political action or Parliament naturally doubted if woman suffrage, a purely parliamentary reform, would achieve anything. Mouthng Marxian rhetoric about the need to abolish the wage system, the Winnipeg Voice maintained that the woman's vote would have little or no positive effect since it rested on the belief that the "present system of wage labour and capital is all right if you give it a little tinkering."<sup>14</sup>

Since the property qualification was still intact in Canada, many socialists argued that the women's vote would simply strengthen the propertied interests. In New Zealand and in some states in Australia, where the strength of Labour was an important factor in the early enfranchisement of women, Labour endorsed female suffrage only after they had won the principle of universal manhood suffrage.<sup>15</sup> Labour radicals in Canada detected the suffragists' class bias and this made them even more dubious about the movement's usefulness. The Voice called the



Winnipeg Political Equality League "a left wing of the Liberal Party" and scorned them for their patronizing attitude towards working women. It was equally critical of their defence of property and dismissed them as "noisy advocates" campaigning for a "pet hobby."<sup>16</sup>

Since socialist theory included the principle of sexual equality several leftists gave the movement their blessing despite the women's obvious class affiliation. In Canada, for example, T. Phillips Thompson, a socialist, the author of the Politics of Labour and editor of the Labour Advocate, joined the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in 1883 and supported the movement throughout his lifetime.<sup>17</sup>

The strongest suffrage support, outside those few men who joined suffrage societies, came from two Western labour newspapers, the Winnipeg Voice and the B.C. Federationist. In the early part of the century both papers carried columns by women who defended women's right to vote. During the War, however, both papers changed their position, dropped the women's columns, and became openly critical of the suffragists. This rather strange behaviour is only understandable in the context of larger developments within the Canadian labour movement.

The First World War had a radicalizing effect on each segment of Canadian labour. Former defenders of business unionism became interested in independent political action, and traditional defenders of political action turned to direct action, that is, the general and sympathetic strike.<sup>18</sup> The movement divided regionally. Ontario labour became



involved in independent labour politics while the more radical elements in B.C. and Manitoba emerged as organization centres of sympathetic strikes.<sup>19</sup>

The Federationist and the Voice were both converted to the need for direct action. Woman suffrage, a measure useful only to those willing to work within the system, no longer seemed a pressing necessity.

In the East the converts to independent political action quickly added female enfranchisement to their platform for an obvious political reason, to place "the ballot in the hands of the workers of both sexes."<sup>20</sup> The Industrial Banner, the spokesman for independent labour politics in southern Ontario, became a vociferous champion of the woman's cause. Two incipient labour parties, the Independent Toronto and Hamilton Labour Parties, made provision for female membership and actually invited two suffragists with leftist leanings, Laura Hughes and Harriet Dunlop Prenter, to join their ranks.

The war also created a new defensiveness among some labour men because of the large numbers of women recruited for the production of munitions and war supplies. The war made a patriotic virtue of female industrial labour. Understandably many men feared for their jobs. This was especially true in the West where the unprotected nature of western output and the greater fluctuations in demand and price created greater insecurities of employment and wages.<sup>21</sup> In 1916 the Federationist editor complained that when the men returned from the war, they would have to accept what was offered to them since the women would probably insist on staying in industry.<sup>22</sup> The simple economic fact that both men and women



had to compete for the same limited number of jobs made it inevitable that they would remain rivals rather than allies.

### III

Despite the support they received from some labour quarters, the suffragists who were predominantly middle-class professionals generally shared the anti-labour attitudes of their class. True "paternalists," they found it difficult to let labour do things for itself. They opposed strikes and unionization and recommended palliatives like factory legislation to remove the most blatant evils of the industrial system.

Constance Hamilton, for example, rejected the idea of unions and argued that the solution to industrial unrest lay simply "in the shortening of hours of labour."<sup>23</sup> Emily Murphy believed that the "machinations of lawyers," her version of the outside agitator, drove workers to strike and that, if left alone, most labourers were quite capable of self-sacrifice and even of genuine affection for their employers. She added that strikes ought to be avoided at almost any cost since they punished the operator far too dearly "both in the expenditure of nerve and of money."<sup>24</sup>

Despite this political conservatism, these suffragists courted the support of labour for obvious tactical reasons, to win some powerful new allies and increase their chances of success. Hamilton, hardly a labour enthusiast, made the deal with Watters for this reason.

At the same time the suffragists generally ignored female labourers



since they had neither the organizational base nor the political strength to make them valuable allies. Before 1915 Canada possessed no national female union. Only the American-based Internationals, the Cigar-Makers and the Typographical Unions, admitted women, while the International Lady Garment Workers with a membership of 1500 in Montreal represented the only all-female union of any strength.<sup>25</sup> A few locals existed but these were weak and purely transient and consequently carried little political weight.<sup>26</sup>

In Britain and the United States, where women workers were better organized and their unions exerted some influence, the suffragists proved more willing to work with them. American suffragists actually encouraged the formation of women's unions and supported strikes through associations like the Women's Trade Union League.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile Canadian suffragists usually ignored the claims of working-class women. On one occasion, in 1912, Alice Chown, one of Canada's few radical suffragists, tried to elicit support among her fellow Toronto suffragists for the New York ladies' garment workers' strike. She failed. The women reacted favourably only when she had some tale of hardship to tell, a reaction which suggests the shortcomings of altruistic reformers. They refused, it seems, to support the strike because they feared that an overt association with such an unpopular cause as labour organization could conceivably jeopardize the whole suffrage campaign.<sup>28</sup>

Canadian suffragists made no effort to conscript working-class women into their associations. In fact, according to Flora Macdonald Denison,



they treated the working women who dared to attend their meetings like social pariahs, belittling them for their poor dress and ungrammatical speech.<sup>29</sup>

Only in the more radical political climate of British Columbia did one extraordinary woman, Helena Gutteridge, manage to acquire sufficient political prestige to surmount the class barrier and join a regular suffrage society. Gutteridge, the President of the Tailors' and Tailoresses' Union, rose through the ranks of B.C. labour to become a campaign organizer for the B.C. Trades and Labour Congress and a delegate to the Washington State Federation of Labour. The Pioneer Political Equality League, one of B.C.'s original suffrage societies, considered her a worthy ally and invited her to become a member, an honour Gutteridge dared not refuse.

Although she joined the League and wrote on its behalf in the Federationist, Gutteridge did not see eye to eye with the suffragists on several issues. Their differences of opinion revealed a basic conflict of class. Gutteridge ranked enfranchisement second in importance to unionization which she considered the working woman's only real defence against exploitation.<sup>30</sup> She continued to devote most of her attention to this more pressing industrial goal and left most of the suffrage campaigning to her middle-class associates.

Gutteridge also criticized the suffragists' stance on protective legislation for women. Like their reform allies, the suffragists favoured laws restricting women's hours and conditions of labour, primarily in order to protect the health of the mothers of the next generation. Gutteridge



pointed out that these laws made women less employable and drove them out of work they were well able to perform. She called the minimum wage "an experiment" the male labourers wished to try out on women.<sup>31</sup> Another working-class woman, Ada Muir, the author of a woman's column in the Winnipeg Voice, defended a similar position, arguing that shorter hours meant simply a reduction in factory women's wages.<sup>32</sup> Only one suffragist, Carrie Derick, seemed to understand that special privileges reduced women's competitive advantage and fulfilled the desires of the male-dominated trade unions.<sup>33</sup>

The ideological differences between the suffragists and working-class women are dramatically demonstrated in the confrontation between the suffragists and the Women's Labour League. This latter organization was a different type of working-class woman's society composed, not of women who themselves held jobs, but of the wives and daughters of trade unionists. Based on a British model founded by Mrs. J. Ramsay Macdonald, the Labour Leagues (by 1910 Canada had branches in Port Arthur, Fort William, Winnipeg, and Toronto) were really an extension of the male unions. The women in the Leagues encouraged working women to form unions primarily to protect their husbands and fathers from wage undercutters. They realized that their men and consequently they themselves would prosper only if women were organized along lines similar to the men.<sup>34</sup> The League leaders endorsed woman suffrage for the same reason their union husbands wished women to vote, to facilitate organization among working women and to win equal pay for equal



work. The Winnipeg Labour League campaigned consistently for votes for women from its founding in 1910.<sup>35</sup>

Although both the Leagues and the suffrage societies agreed on the need for a vote, the relationship between them was strained. The founders and organizers of the Winnipeg League, Ada Muir and Mrs A. W. Puttee, the wife of the Labour M.P. and editor of the Voice, Arthur Puttee, did not belong to the Winnipeg Political Equality League. On occasion they cooperated with the suffragists in a joint venture, for example, in the campaign for a Dower Law to guarantee married women a one-third interest in a deceased husband's estate. Usually the two groups worked independently of one another. Ada Muir maintained that the two had to be kept separate since the suffragists represented one distinct interest group, the professionals, while the Labour Leagues spoke for another, the working men and working women of the nation.

Muir considered the suffragists part of a professional monopoly which was trying, through the middle-class reform movement, to take effective control of the country. She argued that the public health, social welfare, and education reform campaigns were simply attempts on the part of the professionals (doctors, social workers, teachers) to make their services indispensable to the community and guarantee themselves an income. Since the professionals used the state to create conditions conducive to their occupational security, proliferating public schools, imposing compulsory health standards, and legislating morality, Muir and many other members of the working class suspected the state interventionist philosophy.



Muir considered the doctors the chief villains. She explained that, while professionalization may have improved the quality of service available to the public, it also made these services more expensive, a disadvantage for the labouring classes who could, in many cases, make do with cheaper, semi-professional service.<sup>36</sup> Muir painted a dark picture of doctors conspiring with the middle-class press and the Health Board "to control the health of the people as a vested interest."<sup>37</sup>

In 1907 Mrs Muir, her husband, Allan Muir, an active labour leader, and several other unionists cooperated in the formation of a Health League which attempted to confound this professional medical monopoly. The Health League opposed compulsory vaccination, the segregation of invalids and consumptives, and the compulsory medical inspection of school children, reforms, they argued, designed to control the lower-class threat to middle-class standards of health, cleanliness and efficiency.<sup>38</sup>

The suffragists lined up on the opposite side in this debate. Their platforms included all the reforms the working classes feared - compulsory education, medical inspection in schools, legislated health and morality. Occasionally they led the public health and education reform movements and at times profited personally from the occupational opportunities presented. Little wonder the Labour Leagues and the suffragists had difficulty working together.

The prohibition issue created additional tensions between these women. Many working-class men considered prohibition class legislation, designed to impose middle-class standards upon them. Prohibition legislation, they



complained, deprived the working man of his glass of beer but left the richer classes free to import large quantities of hard liquor. The suffragists, on the other hand, usually favoured prohibition. For a time the issue lay dormant. Then, in 1918, with the war nearing its end and class consciousness at a new high in Canada, the Winnipeg Women's Labour League publicly endorsed the sale of light beer and wine as a deliberate affront to the prohibitionist suffragists.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the same year, the suffragists revealed their class colours by giving their support to a group of Local Council women who acted as scabs during a Winnipeg strike.<sup>40</sup> The Labour League withdrew all support from the Manitoba Political Education League, the successor to the P.E.L., in protest which ended the tense period of toleration and accommodation between these two groups.

#### IV

A few suffragists tried to break free of their middle-class bonds and join the labour movement. Once more, the suffrage movement parallels the general reform movement where several social gospel clergymen, notably, J. S. Woodsworth and Salem Bland, left the Church because of their unorthodox political opinions and more specifically their support of the Winnipeg General Strike. The suffrage movement also had its deviants and, although a minority, these women represent an important ideological subdivision within the movement. Their attitudes illustrate the way in which the liberal interventionist philosophy could lead to radical



politics and suggest, at the same time, the limitations of that radicalism. For, despite their best efforts, these women continued to carry middle-class concerns and biases with them.

In 1915 the District Labour Council of Toronto hired the suffragist, Laura Hughes, to investigate conditions in local plants engaged in the manufacture of war supplies. Miss Hughes obtained a post, under cover, as a factory worker in the Joseph Simpson Knitting Company. She conducted an on-the-spot inspection and submitted her observations in a report which the District Council sent on to the Minister of Labour.<sup>41</sup> This experience converted Miss Hughes into an outspoken labour sympathizer. She became a popular lecturer at Toronto Labour Conventions and in 1916 was elected second Vice-President of the Greater Toronto Labour Party.

Despite her apparent radicalism, Hughes failed to break the bond of middle-class morality. Or, at least, she failed to convince one articulate working woman, Helena Gutteridge, of her sincerity. Gutteridge considered Hughes little better than a patronizing reformer and repudiated her for appealing to the "humanity of the employer" and for recommending clubs to "reform" working girls.<sup>42</sup> She also criticized Hughes for her obsession with political solutions. Hughes promoted independent labour politics,<sup>43</sup> while Gutteridge encouraged industrial organization and direct action, the tactics of the more radical wing of the labour movement.

A second Toronto suffragist, Harriet Dunlop Prenter, the President of a minor group called simply the Political Equality League, also joined the labour movement. She submitted articles to the London labour paper, the



Industrial Banner, and lectured on behalf of the Labour Lecture Bureau.

In 1920 she became the Assistant Secretary of the Toronto Independent Labour Party. Her social vision, however, did not differ significantly from that of the majority of suffragists. She endorsed equality of opportunity, a sound liberal goal, not the socialist alternative, equality of condition. She wanted to abolish property primarily "for the sake of the race." The means, not the ends distinguished her from the larger body of suffragists. She discarded "uplifting" and "committees," the traditional strategy of the female reformer, in order to cooperate with the "intelligent efforts" of organized labour.<sup>44</sup>

Rose Henderson, a Montreal suffragist and Probation Officer, agreed with Mrs Prenter that significant change would come about only if the newly enfranchised women joined forces with labour and marched together "to attain the emancipation of the toiling masses."<sup>45</sup> But middle-class assumptions also restricted her vision. Mrs Henderson led the campaign for Mothers' Pensions which aimed ultimately at removing women from the labour force and returning them to their homes, hardly a viable alternative for most working women. The health and character of future generations preoccupied her as they did the minds of her fellow-suffragists and fellow-reformers. To be more precise she endorsed factory legislation primarily because it promised to preserve "the potential fathers and mothers of our race" and not for the actual present-day suffering it alleviated.<sup>46</sup>



Even the radical suffragists failed somehow to escape the paternalism which characterized the movement as a whole. The suffrage women belonged to a class which, like labour, stood on the defensive in this period. The labour revolt directly challenged the station and status of the middle class and contributed to middle-class anxiety. The suffrage programme, therefore, tried to remove the causes of labour's unrest, not to increase its potency through organization.

Several labour leaders who saw in female enfranchisement a tactic to protect and possibly advance their own interests became suffrage supporters. Their's was a marriage of convenience not principle, however. Working-class women, the people the suffragists should have been helping if their claim to speak for all women was to have any meaning, were left to fend for themselves against the prejudice of male unionists and the harsh economic reality of low wages and intolerable working conditions.



Notes

1. Hopkins, Canadian Annual Review, 1902, 87.
2. Martin Robin, "Radical Politics and Organized Labour in Canada, 1880 - 1930," Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1966, 35.
3. Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden from History, New York, 1973, 99.
4. In 1901, 229,000 males worked in manufacturing; in 1911, 275,000. Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 59.
5. B.C. Federationist: Dec. 23, 1911.
6. Ibid., Jan. 16, 1914.
7. The Toronto Trades and Labour Council approved "equal pay for equal work" in 1882; the conservative American Federation of Labour, in 1883. David Morgan, Suffragists and Democrats, U.S.A., 1972, 64.
8. Ibid.
9. Woman's Edition, Montreal Herald: Nov. 26, 1913, 10.
10. Toronto Globe: Sept. 29, 1916.
11. Robin, op. cit., 13.
12. Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1912, 433.
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14. Winnipeg Voice: Oct. 1, 1915.
15. Peter Biskup, "The Westralian Feminist Movement," University Studies in Western Australia, October, 1959, 78. Robert Cooper, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in New South Wales," M.A., University of Sydney, 1970, 147. William Reeves, State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand, London, 1902, 80.
16. Winnipeg Voice: Dec. 20, 1912.
17. Maureen Hynes, A History of the Rise of Women's Consciousness in Canada and in Quebec, Toronto, undated, 4.



18. Robin, op. cit., 227, 228.
19. Paul A. Phillips, "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement," in A. W. Rasporich and H. C. Klassen, eds., Prairie Perspectives, 2, Toronto, 1970, 55.
20. Industrial Banner: August 28, 1914.
21. Phillips, op. cit.
22. B.C. Federationist: August 11, 1916.
23. See Appendix XVII for the Woman's Party Platform, composed by Hamilton.
24. Emily Murphy, Seeds of Pine, Toronto, 1914, 259..
25. Labour Gazette: April, 1913, 1079.
26. For example, the B.C. Home and Domestic Employees' Union, the B.C. Waitresses and Lady Cooks Union, and the Toronto and Winnipeg unions for cooks and waitresses.
27. Flexner, op. cit., 242.
28. Chown, op. cit., 146, 153.
29. Toronto World: Dec. 7, 1913.
30. B.C. Federationist: Oct. 17, 1913.
31. Ibid., Jan. 16, 1914.
32. Winnipeg Voice: April 3, 1908.
33. Montreal Gazette: March 27, 1912.
34. Winnipeg Voice: Feb. 18, 1910; Oct. 28, 1910.
35. Ibid., July 8, 1910.
36. Bliss, "The Protective Impulse," op. cit., 185.
37. Winnipeg Voice: Dec. 20, 1907.
38. Ibid., July 19, 1907.
39. Ibid., Sept. 18, 1918.



40. No details are available about the cause or nature of the strike. Lionel G. Orlikow, "A Survey of the Reform Movement in Manitoba," M.A., University of Manitoba, 1955, 188.
41. Industrial Banner: Nov. 26, 1915.
42. B.C. Federationist: Feb. 11, 1916.
43. Industrial Banner: Oct. 13, 1916.
44. Ibid., August 10, 1917; March 15, 1918.
45. Ibid., May 31, 1918.
46. Toronto World: Dec. 7, 1913.



## CHAPTER 10

## THE ORGANIZED FARMERS AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN THE WEST

Traditionally Canadians and Canadian historians have described the West, that is, the Prairie Provinces, as a single and separate entity exhibiting a distinct Western regional consciousness. It is true that between the settling of Manitoba in the 1870's and the creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, Westerners did begin to conceive of themselves as a group apart. They were united by a common sense of oppression, a feeling that they were dominated and exploited by the East, economically, socially, and politically.<sup>1</sup> Recent historiography, however, suggests that it is incorrect to think of the West in such a monolithic fashion and that geographical and class tensions undermined the West's homogeneity.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, an urban-rural conflict existed in the West, based upon an even deeper occupational rift between the farming population and the urban bourgeoisie. This same urban-rural antagonism is also evident in Ontario in organizations like the Patrons of Industry and the United Farmers of Ontario.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the suffrage movement illustrates both the sense of Western identity and the friction between city and country evident in the West. The suffragists from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta collaborated and disavowed the Toronto-based "national" associations, confirming the



idea of a Western regional consciousness. At the same time in the West as in the East the suffrage societies were strictly an urban phenomenon. The organized farm women also wanted a vote but for reasons very different from the women in the cities. They wanted primarily to strengthen the political representation of the agrarian sector. This obviously conflicted with the urban middle-class suffragists' motivation. Farm and city women cooperated in several joint ventures for female goals but, owing to their particular political and occupational allegiance, they generally preferred to work through their own organizations.

# I

Developments within the West encouraged the growth of a class or occupational consciousness among Canada's farming population. It may be true that the entire West felt constrained by the Eastern presence, but the farmers seemed to suffer more, and more vocally. They experienced specific economic grievances which did not affect the cities equally. The farmers, for example, bought in a protected market and sold in an unprotected one. The world wheat price fluctuated outside their control, yet at home the protective tariff compelled them to buy the necessities of life and much of their farm equipment at prices only partially competitive. Central Canadian banks loaned the farmers the capital necessary to launch their enterprise at high, fixed interest rates, often demanding repayment just before a harvest, when the farmer was at his weakest. The railways, again dominated by the East, provided inadequate



service for exorbitant fees and failed to supply additional cars during harvest time. At the same time grain elevators, owned and operated by Eastern interests, monopolized storage facilities.

Meanwhile, the Western cities began to approximate an Eastern urban appearance, which further alienated the farmer. Urban growth proceeded at a rapid rate in Western Canada, the urban segment of the population having risen by 1911 to 38% in Alberta and to 43.4% in Manitoba.<sup>4</sup> The natural consequence, rural depopulation, threatened to undermine the agriculturalist's way of life. The culture of the city alarmed the farmer. "Hotbeds of vice" and centres of "alien congestion," they represented the opposite of virtuous prairie farm life. Finally, the farmers began to fear the disproportionate political influence of the urban sector, particularly of the professional and entrepreneurial elite who ruled the cities. To protect their especial interests and strengthen their political voice, the farmers decided to organize class or occupational associations, the Territorial Grain Growers' (1902), the Manitoba Grain Growers' (1903), the United Farmers of Alberta (1909). Later in the century they turned to independent political action (the Progressive Party) to redress the balance in favour of the country.<sup>5</sup>

Studies of political developments in the West confirm the existence of an urban-rural rift. Thomas Flanagan shows, for example, that as early as 1911 the people of Alberta's major cities began to turn away from the Liberal Party because they associated it with agrarian interests. Similarly, he demonstrates that the United Farmers of Alberta (U.F.A.)



fared less well in the cities than in the agricultural heartland.<sup>6</sup>

The general reform movement which characterized the early twentieth century, introduced and analysed in Section II, absorbed both urban and rural reformers.<sup>7</sup> Several factors disguised or subsumed the differences between farmers and city dwellers making this alliance possible. The social gospel had infiltrated the Prairie farmlands and had provided one common denominator for the reformers. City preachers like J. S. Woodsworth and Salem Bland found a large, attentive congregation through the columns of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Guide. Moreover, most organized farmers belonged to the same Anglo-Saxon Protestant clique which led the urban reform movement. They had a common cause, the preservation of their culture and their religion, and endorsed the same reforms, notably prohibition and English-only instruction in the primary schools. The farmers also shared the urban reformers' distrust of big business and of party politics. Accordingly the farmers favoured all the popular panaceas of the day which were designed to restore government to the people, direct legislation, the single tax, public ownership of public utilities, and woman suffrage. Yet, despite these areas of agreement, the farmers still conceived of themselves as a separate group with special needs, especially where economics was concerned. Their attitude towards woman suffrage suggests the farmers' split personality.

The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' and the U.F.A. both passed resolutions in favour of woman suffrage in 1913, a few years before the organized suffrage movement actually got underway in the West. They supported the

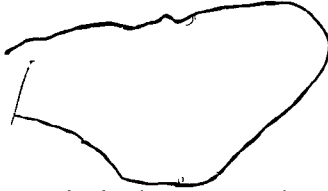


woman's cause both as reformers and as farmers. As reformers, they were convinced by the activities of the ubiquitous W.C.T.U. that giving a vote to good, Christian women guaranteed the introduction of prohibition. Other parts of the suffrage programme appealed to them as well, especially the clauses asking for direct legislation, a single tax, public ownership, and compulsory education. Several farm leaders became convinced that they should cooperate with the suffrage societies because of the similarity of many of their goals. George F. Chipman, the editor of the Grain Growers' Guide, actually joined the Manitoba P.E.L. to cement the alliance. The Direct Legislation League struck an open bargain with the Winnipeg P.E.L. and agreed to promote woman suffrage if the women in turn consented to campaign for direct legislation.<sup>8</sup>

The farmers, however, had other practical and political reasons for wishing to see Western women, particularly in this instance Western rural women, enfranchised. First, they hoped that giving a vote to women might make the West more attractive to them and slacken the exodus of farm girls to the city. The West needed women.<sup>9</sup> Characteristic of a pioneer community, a disproportionate number of single men engaged in farming, mining the West for a quick profit and creating an unstable social climate. Rural leaders who wished to create a settled community encouraged the formation of farm families and this required women. The farmers hoped that if they enfranchised women the Western provinces might appear more benevolent and more appealing to prospective female settlers.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the farmers conceived of themselves as a distinct class





because of their specific economic grievances. It seemed good strategy, therefore, to mobilize their total class strength by giving their wives and daughters a voice. In 1917 the U.F.A. President, Henry Wise Wood, explained this viewpoint:

Any organization of the farmers that does not include farm women will be weak and imperfect. Any attempt to mobilize our class strength and influence that does not include our women in our purely class organizations will fail.<sup>11</sup>

The facts of farm life made rural men and women natural allies. The strain and dislocation evident in the relations between men and women in the city did not exist on a farm. The problem of the "independent" woman worker never arose for two reasons: the low proportion of women to men guaranteed that almost every woman could find a husband and, in any case, a woman could not do the work of a hired hand.<sup>12</sup> Men and women in farm homes did not compete economically; they cooperated. A good wife was an indispensable asset, a helpmate and a partner in a successful farming venture. Her work, whether in the home or in her garden, growing vegetables to supplement the family's diet, contributed to the economic viability of the farm. Essentially a woman posed no threat to the farmers' economic or social status and this made it much easier to promote her enfranchisement.

In order for the women to prove useful politically, however, they needed politicization. At first the farmers invited their women to join their organizations; later they helped the women form coordinate auxiliaries. The very first farmers' associations, for example, the Patrons of Husbandry,



granted full membership rights to the wives and daughters of farmers. In the Canadian Dominion Grange, sex distinctions were reputedly wholly eliminated.<sup>13</sup> In 1913 and 1914 the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' and the U.F.A. initiated the formation of Women's Auxiliaries to awaken farm women to their common agrarian interests. The farmers were convinced that, once enfranchised, properly educated rural women would support the farmers' political programme.

A Guide referendum issued in 1914 strengthened this conviction. The Guide asked its readers, male and female, their opinion on the major political questions of the day which included the entire farmers' platform: the initiative, referendum, and recall; complete free trade with the Motherland in five years; reciprocal free trade in natural products with the United States; reciprocal free trade in agricultural implements with the United States; a direct single tax on land values, lands including all natural resources; a reduction in the Canadian customs tariff until it disappears; all railroads, telegraphs, telephones, and express services to be owned and operated by the public; and woman suffrage.<sup>14</sup> The women voted as high proportionately in favour of each reform as the men and convinced the farmers that enfranchising women would advance their particular political cause.<sup>15</sup> Coincidentally, the referendum indicated the degree of agrarian support for female suffrage. Although woman suffrage attracted the largest negative vote, it still passed with an overwhelming majority. The idea of enfranchising Western rural women gained in popularity as the conviction grew that farmers needed a party of their own. A farmers'



party did not emerge until after the War but the alternative of independent political action became increasingly appealing among Western farmers after the 1911 reciprocity defeat.

## II

Western farm women responded to the pressure and persuasion of their men and became strongly committed to agricultural needs. This produced a conflict of interest between the farm women and the urban professional women in the suffrage societies. The history of the formation of the farm women's associations and the Prairie suffrage societies confirms the assumption that Western women divided along urban-rural lines.

When the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' decided in 1913 to inaugurate a female auxiliary, the Secretary, F. W. Green, invited the suffragist, Francis Marion Beynon, to help. She did so by publicizing the meeting through her column in the Grain Growers' Guide. Several other suffragists, notably Nellie McClung, Lillian Beynon Thomas, and Cora Hind, attended the opening meeting of the Auxiliary.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in Alberta, Miss Jean Reed, a former British suffragette and a journalist, became the first President of the Woman's Auxiliary to the U.F.A.<sup>17</sup>

But once under way the wives and daughters of farmers took over the executive positions and the suffragists retreated back to their city-based societies. Violet Jackson MacNaughton, an English-born school teacher who arrived in Saskatchewan in 1909 and a year later married a local farmer, John MacNaughton, became the first Women's Grain Growers'



Association (W.G.G.A.) President. In 1915 Jean Reed retired in favour of a local farmer's wife, Irene Parlby, whose father, Colonel Marryat, had been one of the main instigators behind the formation of the Alix local of the U.F.A., and whose husband, Walter Parlby, became its first President. The suffragists continued to comment favourably on the new farm women's organizations but they no longer joined actively in the proceedings. The Auxiliaries now belonged to the farm women.

Meanwhile, the Western suffrage societies, like those in the East, were strictly an urban phenomenon, directed by professional men and women or the wives of professionals and businessmen. The Manitoba P.E.L. was ruled by a City Executive and operated out of Winnipeg and not the surrounding countryside.<sup>18</sup> Alberta never acquired a provincial suffrage body but in 1915 two local suffrage societies emerged in the two largest urban centres, Calgary and Edmonton.

Only in Saskatchewan did farm women initiate the suffrage campaign. In 1913 the Premier, Walter Scott, received over 170 letters and 109 petitions containing 2,500 names, all from country women.<sup>19</sup> This unusual situation disturbed Violet MacNaughton who felt that, unless city women became equally vociferous, the movement could hardly claim a broad national base.<sup>20</sup> In an attempt to stir the city women out of their lethargy she organized the Saskatchewan Political Equal Franchise Board (P.E.F.B.) in 1915 to coordinate the efforts of the W.G.G.A., the W.C.T.U., and the few small city suffrage societies which already existed. MacNaughton apparently underestimated the strength of the city leagues, however, for



they dominated the first P.E.F.B. meeting and introduced a method of selecting representatives which guaranteed their ascendancy at future meetings. Each city franchise league received one representative for every twenty-five members, while the W.G.G.A. and the W.C.T.U. received a restricted total representation of two members apiece. Representatives from the newly formed suffrage societies in Regina, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and Moosemin took over the P.E.F.B. executive, reaffirming the traditional pattern of the city-based suffrage association.<sup>21</sup>

MacNaughton had anticipated that city and farm women might have difficulty cooperating and for this reason had suggested that the Board act simply as a clearing house for ideas, along the same lines as the N.C.W. But soon the Board completely ignored its founder<sup>22</sup> and her advice and introduced a single platform for both city and country women. The programme repelled MacNaughton for two reasons. First, the Board showed too great a willingness to cooperate with Eastern suffragists. MacNaughton, a good barometer of farm sentiment, distrusted all Eastern associations and refused out of hand even to consider working with them.<sup>23</sup> Second, MacNaughton objected to the suffragists' obvious Liberal bias. Personally, she favoured the formation of an independent farmers' party. The farm women, alienated by these developments, declared that they no longer considered the Board representative of farm women's interests and in 1916 refused to endorse it. Except for the two token representatives who occasionally attended meetings, the Franchise Board now rested completely in the hands of city women.



Yet the organized farm women and the suffragists managed to cooperate in campaigns for several specific female reforms. For example, they joined deputations on behalf of equal marriage laws, equal conditions of divorce, equal homesteading privileges and a Dower Law. Generally, however, the women worked through their own associations which were divided sharply along urban-rural lines.

The reason for the dichotomy between the suffragists and the farm women was simply that economic and occupational interests separated these women the same way they separated their husbands. The life of a farm woman differed significantly from that of a Western city woman. The women interpreted their problems differently and posed different solutions.

According to Miss E. B. Mitchell, a British authoress who toured Western Canada in 1914, life in Western cities and towns closely approximated life in the East.<sup>24</sup> Most of the modern household inventions could be found in Western urban homes. The modern collective concerns, the bakeries, groceries, restaurants, and department stores, which relieved women of much tedious work, also existed in most Western cities. As a result, Western city women had the beginnings of leisure and luxury. Like women in the East the loss of many of their productive activities made them bored and frustrated. Mitchell argues that, in the city, housework lost the challenge of a fight for life and became plain drudgery. Women felt useless and dispensable and tried to find new, worthwhile activities to absorb their energy. Some became preoccupied with narrow,



purely "feminine" pursuits, with teas, clothes, and afternoon visiting; the more intelligent turned to the many reform causes of the early twentieth century, including woman suffrage.

Life for a woman on a farm was very different. A farm wife worked extremely hard but at least she had the satisfaction of feeling productive. Busy with the full-time job of feeding, clothing, and caring for husband and children, she had no time, says Mitchell, for the self-pity and discontent which led city women to demand a vote.<sup>25</sup>

Mitchell is correct in attributing part of the motivation for suffrage activity to the inactivity and frustration of city women. Canada's Western suffragists displayed a profound dissatisfaction with housework which they considered both demeaning and unrewarding. They often complained about the meaninglessness of the domestic routine, "pouncing upon scratches in silver or decorating the drawing-room with masses of flowers." Francis Marion Beynon maintained that she had never known a man who had any fondness for "washing dishes and scrubbing floors."<sup>26</sup> Her sister, Lillian Beynon Thomas, a journalist with the Winnipeg Free Press and President of the Manitoba P.E.L., found in her work and reform activities an escape from "cooking and dish washing and such like things, although they are supposed to be so womanly."<sup>27</sup>

The farm women on the other hand lodged no such complaints, probably because, as Violet MacNaughton points out, they were not restricted simply to housekeeping. Many farm women contributed to the economic upkeep of the home by growing vegetables or raising chickens, labour MacNaughton calls





DO YOU LOOK  
LIKE THIS BEFORE MARRIAGE      AND LIKE THIS AFTER?

Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 16, 1914.



"productive" to distinguish it from the "unproductive" daily toil of housework.<sup>28</sup> Western farm women also had community responsibilities as their husbands looked to them to bring the vestiges of civilization to an unsettled land. The W.G.G.A. and the United Farm Women of Alberta (U.F.W.A.) presided over the social and educational side of affairs, establishing libraries, reading rooms, and social centres, and improving rural schools and hospitals.<sup>29</sup>

The suffragists betrayed their ignorance of farm life by transposing their own dislike of housework into the farm setting, pitying the farm women in paternalistic tones for the hardships they faced. Beynon complained that farm women worked from sun up to sun down, usually with little or no remuneration. On the average, she added, they worked harder than the men, for longer hours, and under more trying conditions.<sup>30</sup> Nellie McClung's novels recount endless tragedies of farmers' wives, overworked and lonely, who break under the pressure and either die or go insane. She tells of the death of one farm wife who "never grumbled - never got mad - took it all. Stayed at home and fed pigs.... Had a baby every year and broke her heart when they died," and concludes "It is a great plan and a great world for men."<sup>31</sup>

The suffragists erred a second time in attributing the farm women's problems to their husbands. Beynon, for example, blamed the farmers for refusing to purchase the new kitchen conveniences to lighten their wives' work load.<sup>32</sup>

The farm women did not seem to see things this way. They placed



economic above sexual discrimination. They felt no more oppressed than their husbands with whom they faced a common oppressor, the Eastern interests. Tariffs, not men, were the real villains in their eyes and the real reason why farm women were overworked or grew old before their time.<sup>33</sup> Tariffs raised the price of farm machinery and left little surplus income for luxuries such as household labour-saving devices. Farm women wanted a vote for two reasons, to help protect women against the visible inequities of the system but, more than this, to help their men recast the economic structure in favour of the agrarian interests. The following poem is typical of several in this period which reveal the sense of common purpose between the farmer and his wife, something the suffragists simply could not understand:

We are the wives and daughters  
 of the men who till the soil,  
 We send the word to Ottawa  
 with us you must be square,  
 For if you don't do business right,  
 of us you must beware,  
 We are learning to cooperate  
 see farmers treated fair,  
 While we are farming the prairie.<sup>34</sup>

The conflicting attitudes of the farm women and the suffragists are demonstrated in their quarrel over the Homemakers' Clubs and the Women's Institutes, government-sponsored organizations designed to upgrade the farm women's domestic capabilities. The Women's Institutes were founded in Ontario in 1898 by Mrs Adelaide Hoodless at the suggestion of G. C. Creelman, the Superintendent of the Farmers' Institutes, and soon became



popular throughout Manitoba and Alberta. In Saskatchewan, the Agricultural College Department of the Saskatchewan Government launched a parallel association, the Homemakers' Clubs. Both groups had the same purpose, to improve the quality of homemaking among farm women by offering them instruction in cooking, sewing, health, and hygiene. Both also received financial assistance from their respective provincial governments. The Institutes received a grant of \$10 each year to assist them in holding their meetings and had access to the Department of Education traveling libraries and to literature from the Department of Agriculture.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, the Homemakers became a ward of the Saskatchewan government and received a stipend of \$3 yearly which the government claimed gave it the right to "super~~vise~~ and govern their activity."<sup>36</sup> The governments considered it a worthwhile investment to make farm life more pleasant in order to counter the trend towards rural depopulation and to raise "the general standard of health and morals of the people" which would contribute to the emergence of a powerful nation.<sup>37</sup>

As reformers, the suffragists were dedicated to improving the health and excellence of the race and they, therefore, enthusiastically promoted the new associations. They considered them the rural counterpart of urban domestic science courses. While this might seem incompatible with their hatred of housework, one must remember two things, that the instruction was not intended for them personally but for the women of another class and that they objected to housework primarily because it reduced them to the status of a domestic. Scientific housekeeping which seemed to offer



women the rank of professional mollified them somewhat. Several suffragists assumed prominent positions in the new societies. Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung became Department Heads in the Institutes while Lillian Beynon Thomas organized and directed the Homemakers' Clubs.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile the organized farm women were suspicious of the new organizations. They believed that the Liberal governments in Saskatchewan and Alberta feared the potential power of the organized farmers' movement and introduced these conservative women's societies to draw attention from the W.G.G.A. and the U.F.W.A. In the 1890's the Patrons of Industry in Ontario had accused Queen's Park of creating the Farmers' Institutes for a similar motive, to channel and quell rural discontent.<sup>39</sup> Violet

MacNaughton called the Homemakers' Clubs "an appendage of the Provincial Liberal Party," designed to compete with and to help suppress the politically dangerous farm women's associations.<sup>40</sup> Irene Parlby considered the Alberta Institutes nothing but "another political machine," bought and paid for by the government.<sup>41</sup> The Provincial Liberal Parties, it seems, despite their association with the Prairie reform movement, had not quite convinced farmers or farm women that they represented their interests. It was becoming increasingly clear that nothing but an independent farmers' party could speak for farmers.

The organized farm women also objected to the Homemakers' and the Institutes' "over-emphasis" on woman's domestic duties.<sup>42</sup> They had no intention of deserting the home, of course. According to Irene Parlby, even when women had a vote, their most important place would still be "not



at the polling booth, or in the Legislature, but in the Home, as the Mother of the Race."<sup>43</sup> But they enjoyed their extra-familial responsibilities and did not wish to see them undervalued in favour of more routine chores.

Paradoxically the suffragists, women who turned to reform partly because of their dissatisfaction with home life, made no complaint about the emphasis on housework. As reformers who were intent on preserving the middle-class social order which rested upon the family, they could hardly question the need to make women more proficient homemakers.

The Western suffragists and the organized farm women, therefore, while united in their desire for a ballot, were divided by party, occupation, and mentality. Within an emerging Western consciousness country and city vied for political influence. The Suffragists lined up with the reform-minded Liberals, the farm women with the organized farmers. The suffragists represented an urban professional and entrepreneurial elite; the farm women, a group of primary producers or petit bourgeoisie.

### III

The organized farm women had disagreements with Eastern as well as with Western suffragists and for basically the same reason, the incompatibility of agrarian and middle-class values. The Woman's Party of 1918 provides a good example. In 1918 Constance Hamilton and several other Toronto suffragists from the break-away "national" association, the N.E.F.U., established a Woman's Party, ostensibly to continue pursuing the elusive goal of sexual equality, following the granting of the vote to women.<sup>44</sup>



The Woman's Party, obviously dominated by the East, attracted little support in either the urban or rural West, but Violet MacNaughton and Irene Parlby, representing the farm element, became its most vociferous critics. They attacked three planks in the Party's platform which illustrate the different priorities of the agricultural West and the business-oriented East: War till victory, stronger Imperial ties, and opposition to labour unionization.

The W.G.G.A. and the U.F.W.A. exhibited a greater tolerance of Germany after the war than did the Eastern suffragists which suggests a lower degree of jingoistic sympathy among the farmers. Irene Parlby denounced the Woman's Party's pledge "not to buy, sell, or use any article made in Germany or by her allies," to withdraw all subject populations from Germany's jurisdiction, and to reduce her mineral and other war-like resources. She predicted perceptively that such behaviour simply guaranteed the antagonism which would produce yet another war at some time in the future.<sup>45</sup> Some important farm women had definite pacifist sympathies. During the war, for example, Violet MacNaughton corresponded with Laura Hughes, the head of the Toronto branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and continued a campaign for peace into the 20's.<sup>46</sup>

The W.G.G.A. and the U.F.W.A. both rejected the appeal for closer Imperial ties. The Woman's Party recommended that the "natural resources, the essential industries, and the transport system of the Empire be under strictly Imperial ownership and control." The economic implications of



this plan disturbed the farm women. They believed that the position of the farmer in Canada was unique, that even the federal government stood too far removed to understand his problems and that, therefore, no remote Imperial body could possibly hope to grasp his needs.<sup>47</sup>

Although, in this period, various attempts at farm-labour coalitions failed dismally, the organized farm women spoke of themselves as members of a larger producing class which included labour. They described farmers and labourers as brothers beneath the skin. For this reason they could not endorse the Woman's Party's patronizing attitude towards labour and its anti-union stance, which Parlby called a "knock-out blow" to democratic principle.<sup>48</sup> They timidly suggested that, despite its claim to speak for all of Canadian womanhood, in truth, the Woman's Party represented only the Eastern ladies of wealth and leisure, the plutocracy, and indirectly Eastern vested interests.

Beyond the platform, the farm women objected to the whole idea of a "Woman's" Party, a party founded on sex distinctions. In contrast they believed that economics moved people not the "antediluvian fetish of sex distinction and discrimination."<sup>49</sup> Some women, they argued, believed in free trade while others believed in protection, depending upon their class. Women, like men, fell into their respective occupational groups, manufacturers, retailers, labourers and farmers among others. The women labour class became a part of the labour party as a whole; farm women had a voice in "the platform of agriculture, etc., etc...."<sup>50</sup> It was foolish, therefore, ever to expect women as a group to unite on a national policy.



The President of the Woman's Party, Constance Hamilton, tried to argue that women constituted a class onto themselves and that they were quite justified in forming a Party: "if it is of advantage to agriculturalists to unite for their own special interests, then it is equally advantageous to unite women for their own special interests."<sup>51</sup> Under the heading "Special Women's Interests" the Party listed all the reforms which women had fought for during the past four decades, reforms women of every class agreed upon: equal pay for equal work, equal marriage laws including equal conditions of divorce, equality of parental rights, the raising of the age of consent, and equal homesteading privileges. But Hamilton failed to realize that other parts of the Party's platform, particularly those dealing with national economic policy, bore a distinct class bias. Stated simply, the suffragists owed their allegiance to another class, the urban bourgeoisie. Irene Parlby realized that this was so. In her opinion, the category "Special Women's Interests" simply provided a "sugar-coating" to the bitter pill of unsound economic policy which ran throughout the whole programme.<sup>52</sup>

Labour women also recognized the class bias of the Woman's Party. The lady editor of the Industrial Banner labelled it an "annex" to the Conservative Party. She pointed out that its organizers were the same women who had defended the Wartime Election's Act, who had worked for the re-election of Sir Robert Borden in 1917, and who asked the Trade and Commerce Minister, Sir George Foster, to become their mentor.<sup>53</sup>



Despite their common objectives women proved incapable of overcoming their class divisions. In part they were the victims of the heightened occupational awareness of the era. The quarrel over the Woman's Party, the disputes between Western city and rural women illustrated a single, painful lesson, that "It is possible for classes to unite on national policies but impossible for sexes."<sup>54</sup>



# Notes

1. George F. G. Stanley, "The Western Canadian Mystique," in David P. Gagan, Prairie Perspectives, Toronto, 1969, 6.
2. J. M. S. Careless, "Aspects of Urban Life in the West, 1870 - 1914," in A. W. Rasporich and H. C. Klassen, eds., Prairie Perspectives, op. cit., 28.
3. The Patrons of Industry, one of the early Ontario farm organizations, demonstrated the farmers' fear of the professional and entrepreneurial elite by barring the urban bourgeoisie, lawyers, doctors, merchants and managers from its membership. Although the same occupational antagonism occurred in Ontario, this chapter will concentrate on the Prairie Provinces because the strength of the organized farm women in those provinces makes it easy to contrast their attitudes with the urban suffragists. S.E.D. Shortt, "Social Change and Political Crisis in Rural Ontario: The Patrons of Industry, 1889 - 1896" in Donald Swainson, Oliver Mowat's Ontario, op. cit., 217.
4. Careless, "Aspects of Urban Life," op. cit., 25.
5. W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, Toronto, 1950, 5.
6. Thomas Flanagan, "Political Geography and the United Farmers of Alberta," in S. M. Trofimenkoff, ed., The Twenties in Western Canada, Ottawa, 1972, 138, 143.
7. Morton, op. cit., 15.
8. Winnipeg P.E.L., Minutes, June 27, 1912.
9. Number of males to 100 females, 15 years of age and over:
 

	<u>1911</u>	<u>1916</u>
Manitoba	132.8	120.5
Saskatchewan	174.4	146
Alberta	176.9	140.9

Census of Canada, 1921, Table 15.
10. Grain Growers' Guide: April 2, 1913.
11. Ibid., Jan. 31, 1917.



12. E. B. Mitchell, In Western Canada Before the War, London, 1915, 46, 47.
13. Clare Mary McKinlay, "The Honorable Irene Parlby," M.A., University of Alberta, 1953, 29.
14. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 12, 1913.
15. See Appendix XVIII for the results of the Guide referendum.
16. Grain Growers' Guide: June 26, 1918.
17. Eva Carter, The History of Organized Farm Women of Alberta, undated pamphlet, 19.
18. Manitoba P.E.L., Minutes, March 21, 1914.
19. June Menzies, "Votes for Saskatchewan's Women" in Norman Ward, Politics in Saskatchewan, Ontario, 1968, 84.
20. Archives of Saskatchewan, Zoa Haight Papers, Violet MacNaughton to Zoa Haight, March 30, 1914.
21. Saskatchewan P.E.F.B., Minutes, Feb. 13, 1915.
22. In 1916 Mrs MacNaughton condemned the Board for neglecting her: "So, I am still a member of this Board. Well, I have not received any minutes. There is certainly something funny about that Board."  
Archives of Saskatchewan, Haight Papers, op. cit., MacNaughton to Haight, April 24, 1916.
23. According to MacNaughton, neither of the Toronto-based National Suffrage Associations was really national in character; each simply wanted to secure the affiliation of the Western provinces because of their anticipated successes in the provincial suffrage field.
24. Mitchell, op. cit., 52.
25. Ibid.
26. Grain Growers' Guide: Nov. 13, 1912.
27. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., Mrs A. V. Thomas, to MacNaughton, Sept. 17, 1914.
28. Ibid., Subject File 72, undated speech entitled "The Pioneer Woman."
29. Archives of Saskatchewan, Haight Papers, op. cit., undated W.G.G.A. speech.



30. Grain Growers' Guide: April 2, 1913.
31. Nellie McClung, All We Like Sheep, Toronto, 1926, 191.
32. Grain Growers' Guide: April 2, 1913.
33. Ibid., Dec. 11, 1918.
34. Ibid.
35. Annie Walker, Fifty Years of Achievement, Ontario, 1948, 10.
36. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., Personal Correspondence, Irene Parlby to MacNaughton, March 14, 1916.
37. M. Viola Powell, Forty Years Agrowing: the History of the Ontario Women's Institutes, Ontario, 1941, 18. N.C.W., Report, 1903, 24.
38. Farm and Ranch Review: Feb. 21, 1916.
39. S.E.D. Shortt, op. cit., 234.
40. Archives of Saskatchewan, Haight Papers, op. cit., MacNaughton to Haight, July 23, 1914. Grain Growers' Guide: April 5, 1911.
41. Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 11, 1918. The Institutes tried to introduce a plan to divide the territory between themselves and the U.F.W.A., restricting the U.F.W.A. to areas where no Institutes existed. Parlby refused because she feared that, with government support, the Institutes would soon outnumber U.F.W.A. locals.
42. Violet MacNaughton criticized the Homemakers' Clubs for looking upon women "essentially as housekeepers." In the W.G.G.A., she argued, women had a usefulness far beyond housekeeping. Irene Parlby also felt that there was "too much of the housekeeping business" about the Women's Institutes. Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 15, 1911; April 5, 1911. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., Parlby to MacNaughton, July 29, 1917.
43. Farm and Ranch Review: Feb. 21, 1916.
44. See Appendix XVII for the Woman's Party's platform.
45. Grain Growers' Guide: Oct. 16, 1918.
46. Donald M. Page, "The Development of a Western Canadian Peace Movement," in S. W. Trofimenkoff, op. cit., 90.
47. Grain Growers' Guide: Oct. 16, 1918.



48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., Dec. 4, 1918.
50. Ibid., Nov. 13, 1918.
51. Archives of Saskatchewan, MacNaughton Papers, op. cit., Subject File: Woman's Party, 1918 - 1919, C. Hamilton to MacNaughton, Dec. 16, 1918.
52. Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 11, 1918.
53. Industrial Banner: Nov. 22, 1918.
54. Grain Growers' Guide: Dec. 11, 1918.



### Conclusion

The lesson of the Woman's Party, that "It is possible for classes to unite on national policies, but impossible for sexes," signalled at once the victory and the defeat of the suffrage movement. Women in Canada received the vote because several different classes of men felt it advantageous to see them enfranchised. Middle-class reformers hoped the women's vote would strengthen the family and the representation of the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant constituency. The farmers shared this desire but also believed that the particular interests of their occupational group would benefit from the enfranchisement of their wives and daughters, women who needed and wanted free trade just as they did. Labour, obviously not as significant a political force as either the farmers or the middle classes in early twentieth-century Canada, strengthened the chorus endorsing woman suffrage. Trade unionists felt that a vote for women would lead to equal pay for equal work and an end to the underselling of union labour by a cheap, unorganized body of workers. Labourers with political aspirations believed, like the farmers, that they had a better chance of success if working women possessed a political voice.

Women were equally moved by the new occupational awareness of the era, however, and this doomed any hope of a true "woman's" movement. The suffragists claimed to speak for all women but, in fact, represented only the urban middle classes. Farm and labour women realized this and refused to join the urban suffrage societies. They all wanted a vote but primarily for the same reason their men wanted them to have one, to protect the



economic and social) standing of their particular occupational group. They managed to cooperate for several female-oriented goals but ultimately responded to the particular needs of their class or occupational group. Once hailed as a signal victory in the long march towards female liberation, the suffrage campaign actually deferred that liberation by demonstrating and reinforcing the class distinctions which separated women into contending factions.

So ended the myth that women could overcome or ignore conventional class distinctions and cooperate as one for the good of the sex. After enfranchisement, women followed traditional voting patterns, determined by political and economic affiliations. Middle-class women continued to seek reforms designed to ease their particular discontents as did farm and labour women, but the larger vision of a united womanhood was lost.



## CONCLUSION

Some eight years after women received the vote, a former Manitoba suffragist, Anne Anderson Perry, analysed its effects. The franchise, she felt, had changed very little. Few women participated in politics, as workers or candidates. Most followed or deferred to men much as they had before. Women, of course, attended political conventions, decorated platforms, helped male politicians achieve victory but they continued to take a secondary place to men. There were certainly exceptions, women whose able contribution to public life made conspicuous the absence of larger numbers. Moreover, women seemed indifferent to the great issues which had preoccupied their pre-war interests - child welfare, industrial distress, social and moral reform. Female enfranchisement, she concluded, had simply doubled the electorate and had made no noticeable difference in its character.<sup>1</sup>

Nor did the vote affect a revolution in woman's social status. It added nothing to the "victories" of the nineteenth century - the release from confining garments, the freedom to appear intelligent, the right of the single woman to work. The social order accommodated only inevitable change or modifications which in no way threatened its existence. The Victorian "frail vessel" lost precedence to the physically fit, sensibly clothed woman due mainly to the discoveries of eugenics and the desire to evolve a perfect race. Higher education for women promised to develop



a woman's "mental discipline" and subsequently to prepare her to be a better wife and mother. Single women could work simply because economics demanded it: industrialism required a large, cheap work force and population statistics indicated that not every woman would be able to find a husband to support her.

After 1920 female employment figures continued to rise, even female professional employment, but the trend begun in the nineteenth century continued. Women filled the lower paid, less prestigious occupations. The categories "teacher," "nurse," and "office worker in professional service" made up a high proportion of female professionals while the numbers of female doctors and lawyers remained relatively static.<sup>2</sup> Women involved in manufacturing consistently received lower wages for the same work.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of married women in the labour force increased steadily,<sup>4</sup> a result largely of the pressures of a rising cost of living. Ideologically, however, married women were still not supposed to work. The family remained the basic unit in the social structure and woman's primary function continued to be that of homemaker and child-bearer. As in the case of the single working woman, acceptance would come after the fact, if at all.

In answer to the demand for a more intelligent, better disciplined womanhood, female college enrolment peaked in the '20's but afterwards the figures level off.<sup>5</sup> At the graduate level, 1930 recorded the highest female enrolment, 27.9%. By 1958 this had declined to only 16.9%. In 1930 women received 30% of the B.A.'s granted, 20.8% of the M.A.'s, and



11.5% of the Ph.D.'s. By 1958 these percentages had been reduced to 23.6%, 19.4%, and 9.2% respectively.<sup>6</sup>

The failure of the suffrage movement to achieve a significant social revolution for women can be attributed to several factors. The tendency on the part of the few feminists to become monomaniacal about the ballot and its power reduced the movement's social message. The take-over by middle-class reformers who were dedicated to the preservation of the traditional family bolstered the social status quo. The nationalist upsurge which demanded a healthy, moral citizenry re-emphasized woman's maternal and domestic role. The death of the reform movement in the post-World War I era deprived women of one last avenue to activity outside the home. And, fundamentally, the stubborn refusal of the social elite to acquiesce to any change which seemed to undermine their conception of order made it inevitable that the women's "victories" would be only minor concessions which really altered nothing.

Canada's first suffragists or at least those who established the first suffrage societies can legitimately be called feminists on the basis of their programme. They demanded complete equality of the sexes, including equal educational and occupational opportunities. These women, frequently well-educated professionals, challenged convention and risked notoriety. Labelled "women rightists" by the public at large, they were generally condemned for their "masculine" aggressiveness.<sup>7</sup> For these women, the vote stood only as a symbol of the equality they wanted. The Women's Literary



Society, for example, ranked the enfranchisement of women as one of several fundamental changes society would need to undergo in order to achieve full sexual equality.

Although strong ideologically, the first suffrage movement was weak numerically. Most people wanted nothing to do with the disreputable issue of "women's rights." After a brief stay of execution, therefore, the suffrage societies either stagnated or disbanded.

The first suffragists had a few successors in the second phase of the movement (1906 - 1918); a small band of resolute women who challenged the supposed blessings of wifehood and motherhood and demanded that labour and education be sexless. Running against the tide of public opinion, however, the feminists became an increasingly insignificant minority. Placed on the defensive, they tended to underplay those parts of their programme which attracted bitterness and hostility and to place greater weight on the ballot itself, the only goal which seemed within reach. For the first suffragists, the vote had only a symbolic value. Their successors invested too great a faith in its abilities, a faith that was bound to be disappointed.

Beginning in the 1880's and 1890's and continuing into the twentieth century, the English-Canadian suffrage movement experienced a change in personnel. During those years Canada experienced the beginnings of industrialization and began to display all the side-effects of industrial growth - urban concentration, slums, crime, immorality, rural depopulation,



and secularization. At the same time she received a heavy influx of immigrants from eastern, southern, and central Europe. This combination of factors created a feeling of alienation among Canada's native, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant middle-classes. The growth of industrial giants and the outbreak of industrial unrest challenged the social status of the middle class. Their nationalist aspirations made them paranoid about the observable social deterioration which accompanied industrialism and the sudden appearance of a large new body of foreigners with strange customs and different values.

In reaction, representatives from the professional and entrepreneurial elite instigated several reforms in an attempt to restore order and to install themselves as directors in a new social Utopia. Their programme included prohibition and other Canadianizing and Christianizing schemes, palliatives such as factory laws to answer the discontent of the labouring classes, direct legislation to remove the political process from the manipulation of Big Business, a "new" education aimed at creating happy, healthy citizens for the new Utopia, prison reform, pure food and public health laws and other legislation to protect the next generation from disease and insanity. Many reformers, male and female, concluded that the enfranchisement of the purest, most Christian element in society, Protestant, middle-class womanhood, would speed up the implementation of their programme. As a result, temperance men and W.C.T.U. women, social gospel clergy and their wives and daughters, and representatives of every branch of the secular reform movement flooded into suffrage associations. These



social reform suffragists, men and women who wanted woman suffrage as a means to achieve social reform, became a majority in the movement following the turn of the century when industrial growth and its consequences could no longer be ignored.

Subsequently, suffrage ideology underwent a revision and became respectable and conciliatory. The social reform suffragists wished to re-establish a degree of social order and stability by restoring the moral hegemony of the family. They, therefore, exhorted women to stay in the home. Furthermore, their vision of a great nation relied upon the creation of a strong and healthy young generation. Most of their reforms, for example, child welfare, mothers' pensions and domestic science, emphasized the child's upbringing and the need for a new professional approach to child care, once again accentuating woman's domestic role.

The female reformers were more concerned about the status of their class and the strength of their country than the interests of their sex and therefore abandoned any and all attacks on the patriarchal social structure which they now volunteered to defend. Instead of asking for equal occupational opportunities, they promised to fulfill more efficiently their role as wives and mothers. They argued that they needed a ballot only because society had intruded upon their sphere and they had an obligation to defend their homes against the evils which threatened them, immorality, disease, foreign domination, the same evils which terrified the male reformers. No longer a symbol of equality, the vote became simply the means by which middle-class women could help their men impose their



standards and desires on the whole population. The promise of a ballot also satisfied the women's craving for respect and usefulness. The bargain was struck. In return for political recognition, the social reform suffragists proselytized the cult of domesticity.

The change in membership and ideology took the sting out of the woman's rights issue. The anti-suffragists who argued that, if women voted, it would lead inevitably to their abandoning the home and subsequent social disintegration were answered by a chorus of men and women who pointed out that, in fact, woman suffrage meant just the opposite, doubling the representation of the family and increasing the power of woman within the home. It bolstered rather than threatened the social order.

In 1910 the National Council of Women endorsed woman suffrage, indicating its new respectability. More and more married but non-professional women, more philanthropists and well-known political figures now joined suffrage societies. The de-radicalization process snowballed until, in 1914, the social reform suffragists successfully overthrew the remnant of feminist leadership found in Dr Augusta Stowe-Gullen, Dr Margaret Gordon and Flora Macdonald Denison.

The actual granting of the franchise now became merely a matter of time and of political expediency. Once Manitoba led the way in 1916, politicians across the country began to compete to see who could give women the vote first, hoping of course that the women would remain faithful to their benefactors for one election at least. The political prestige of the middle-class reform coalition speeded up the women's victory. In



Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, the twin reforms of woman suffrage and prohibition passed almost simultaneously. Women's patriotic contribution to the war effort provided a final excuse for politicians seeking to rationalize their change of heart on the issue.

The absorption of the suffrage movement by the middle-class reformers had serious repercussions for Canadian women. It helped them win the vote but, in the process, it deprived the movement of the critical social perspective which characterized its early days. It also alienated the women of other classes. Speaking for labour, Ada Muir identified the suffragists as part of a "professional elite," specifically an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle-class elite which intended to impose its standards upon the working classes.<sup>8</sup> According to the organized farm women, the suffragists represented the city and had no real appreciation of the problems of the agricultural community. The suffragists' reform programme betrayed their class allegiance and made it impossible for them to defend the interests of women as a group. Finally, the alliance with the reformers tied the suffragists to the fortunes of the general reform movement. The sell-out to the experts in the post-1910 period and the death of reform in the years following World War I deprived many middle-class women of their extra-familial activities and left them with only the domestic sphere to absorb their time and energy.



The history of the English-Canadian suffrage movement is instructive for several reasons. It reveals the high degree of class or occupational consciousness of Canadians at the turn of the century. It also suggests that in a conflict of interests such as that experienced by the suffragists, class exerted the strongest pull. Moreover, the suffragists provide an insight into the ideological shortcomings of Canada's middle-class reform movement. Politically, they endorsed government intervention for the greatest good of the greatest number but consistently their legislative reforms rested upon the conviction that they had an insight into what the "greatest good" entailed. They possessed a Victorian confidence in the innate righteousness of their cause. At times they disregarded the fine line separating the good of the community from the rights of the individual. Prohibition provides the best example of their willingness to sacrifice personal liberty for a political objective. In actuality the middle classes were no more guilty of selfishness or illiberality than labour or the farmers. Each group acted in an egocentric fashion, to protect its own interests. But, because they suffered from the illusion that they stood above self-interest, the reformers could not understand why certain groups opposed them. Their failure to win over the whole population to their vision of Utopia discouraged them and they willingly surrendered to the experts when the opportunity presented itself.

Finally, the history of the suffrage movement suggests that genuine female liberation, that is, equal opportunities in every line of work and the freedom to keep working after marriage, is incompatible with a social



structure based upon the patriarchal family, particularly during a period of social upheaval. The only "victories" won by women in the era under study were either concessions made necessary by economic change, for example, work for single women, or modifications which actually bolstered the status quo, for example, domestic science education for women. Woman suffrage itself became law simply because it had been successfully transformed from a movement critical of the patriarchal social structure to one which defended that structure against its critics.

This thesis attempts to answer three questions: who were Canada's suffrage supporters? why did they espouse the suffrage cause? what arguments did they use to persuade the public? It concludes that the suffragists were predominantly members of Canada's beleaguered, Protestant middle classes who endorsed woman suffrage as part of a larger reform programme designed to reinstate Puritan morality, Christianity, the family, and the rule of the professional. The suffragists converted the public with cautious, conciliatory arguments: first, that women had no intention of abandoning the home; second, that women were the ideal spokesmen for home interests; and third, that female enfranchisement while innovative politically could actually be used to harness change and limit social revolution.



Notes

1. Anne Anderson Perry, "Is Women's Suffrage a Fizzle?" Maclean's Magazine, February, 1928.
2. The 1941 Census records 165,140 female to 98,783 male professionals. The following breakdown indicates where the female professionals congregated:

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
School Teachers	21,474	63,192
Nurses	198	36,135
Legal Stenographers	48	3,882
Nuns and Sisters	-	5,238
Surgeons and Physicians	10,062	367
Lawyers	7,183	102

Census of Canada, 1941, Volume VII, 772.

3. Average annual earnings, male and female wage earners, manufacturing industries:

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
	\$	\$
1935	966	570
1940	1,202	655
1945	1,739	984
1950	2,419	1,376
1955	3,267	1,833
1959	3,929	2,419

Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 100.

4. Percentage of female work force who were married: 1946 - 28<sup>8</sup>%; 1950 - 29<sup>5</sup>%; 1955 - 36<sup>8</sup>%; 1960 - 47<sup>4</sup>%. Buckley and Urquhart, op. cit., 66.
5. Percentage of full-time undergraduate enrolment in Canadian universities who were women: 1925 - 21%; 1930 - 23<sup>5</sup>%; 1935 - 22<sup>2</sup>%; 1940 - 22<sup>7</sup>%; 1945\* - 28<sup>7</sup>%; 1950 - 20<sup>4</sup>%; 1955 - 21<sup>5</sup>%; 1958 - 22<sup>2</sup>%.

\* The high percentage in 1945 is due to the war.

Ibid., 601.



6. Ibid., 602, 603.
7. In an 1882 letter to Elizabeth Smith, her sister, Mauritana, referred to an encounter with Dr and Mr Stowe. She derogatorily called Emily Stowe "the biggest man of the two." University of Waterloo Archives, Smith-Shortt Papers, op. cit. Correspondence, Mauritana to Elizabeth Smith, Feb. 12, 1882.
8. Winnipeg Voice: Dec. 20, 1907.



## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I

## CANADIAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATIONS, 1877 - 1918\*

I National

1. Toronto Women's Literary Society, 1877 - 1883

President: Dr Emily Stowe

2. Canadian Woman Suffrage Association, 1883 - 1889

President: Mrs Jessie McEwen

3. Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association, 1889 - 1906

President: 1889 - 1903, Dr Emily Stowe

1903 - 1906, Dr A. Stowe-Gullen

4. Canadian Suffrage Association, 1906 - 1918

President: 1908, Flora Macdonald Denison

1910, Dr Margaret Gordon

5. National Equal Franchise Union, 1915 - 1918 (formerly National Union of Woman's Suffrage Societies of Canada)

President: Mrs L. A. Hamilton

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\* All that could be located. Not intended to be exhaustive.



6. Men's Equal Franchise League, 1913 - 1918

President: Dr James L. Hughes

7. Suffragists' War Auxiliary, 1916 - 1918

President: Mrs A. B. Ormsby

II Provincial

1. Nova Scotia Equal Franchise League, 1917 - 1918 (outgrowth of  
Halifax Woman's Suffrage Association)

President: Dr Eliza Ritchie

2. New Brunswick - none

3. Quebec - none

4. Ontario Woman Franchise Association (subsidiary of N.E.F.U.)

President: Mrs A. B. Ormsby

5. Manitoba Provincial Equal Suffrage Club, 1894

President: Dr Amelia Yeomans

Political Equality League of Manitoba, 1912 - 1916

President: Dr Maria Crawford

6. Saskatchewan Provincial Equal Franchise Board, 1915 - 1916

President: Mrs F. A. Lawton

7. Alberta - none



8. Political Equality League of British Columbia

President: Mrs Gordon Grant

III Local (by Province)

1. Nova Scotia

(a) Halifax Suffrage Association, 1895

President: Mrs A. H. LeOnowens

(b) Halifax Woman's Suffrage Association, 1914 - 1919

President: Mrs E. M. Murray

2. New Brunswick

(a) St John Woman Suffrage Association

President: 1894, Mrs Edward Manning

1898 - 1914, Mrs Emma J. Fiske

1914, Miss Clara O. McGivern

1917, Mrs W. F. Hatheway

3. Quebec

(a) Montreal Equal Suffrage League, 1910 - ?

President: Mrs Mildred Bain

(b) Montreal Suffrage Association, 1912 - 1919

President: Carrie Derick



4. Ontario(a) Toronto

(i) Toronto Suffrage Society, 1908

President: Dr Margaret Gordon

(ii) Toronto Equal Franchise League, 1912

President: Mrs L. A. Hamilton

(iii) Toronto Political Equality League, 1915

President: Mrs Hector (Harriet Dunlop) Prenter

(iv) Toronto Junior Suffrage League

President: Miss Amyot

(v) Women's Political Club

President: Helen Cunningham

(vi) Provincial Legislative Suffrage Association, 1910

President: Miss Olivia Smith

(vii) Toronto Women Teachers' Franchise Club

President: Miss J. A. Melville

(viii) Beaches' Progressive Club.

President: Mrs C. J. Campbell

(ix) East End Suffrage Club

President: Mrs C. J. Campbell

(x) Foresters' Suffrage Club

President: Mrs Dora M. Morrison

(xi) Headquarters' Suffrage Club

President: Flora Macdonald Denison



## (b) Ottawa Equal Suffrage Association

President: Mrs Cox

## (c) Fort William - West Algoma Equal Suffrage Association

President: Dr Clara Todson

## (d) Brantford Equal Suffrage Club

President: Mrs Mary E. Secord(e) London

## (i) London Suffrage Society

President: Sara Rowell Wright

## (ii) London Women Teachers' Suffrage Association

5. Manitoba

## (a) Icelandic Woman's Suffrage Association

President: Mrs Margaret J. Benedictssen

## (b) Roaring River Woman's Suffrage Association

President: Mrs Gertrude Richardson

## (c) Winnipeg Political Equality League

President: Lillian Beynon Thomas6. Saskatchewan

## (a) Prince Albert Equal Franchise League

President: Mrs William Trail

## (b) Yorkton Equal Franchise League

## (c) Moose Jaw Equal Suffrage League

## (d) Moosemin Political Equality League

## (e) Saskatoon Equal Franchise League

## (f) Regina Equal Franchise League



7. Alberta

- (a) Calgary Women's Suffrage Association

President: Mrs George Kerby

- (b) Edmonton Equal Franchise League

President: 1914, Mrs Broadus

1916, Prof. W. H. Alexander

8. British Columbia

- (a) Vancouver Equal Franchise League

President: Helen Gregory MacGill

- (b) Vancouver Pioneer Political Equality League

President: Frances Sibbald McConkey

- (c) Victoria Political Equality League

President: Mrs Gordon GrantIV Canadian Anti-Suffrage Associations

1. Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in Canada

President: Mrs H. D. Warren



## APPENDIX II

## MONTREAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION, 1913 - 1919

Adam, Rev. George: b. Scotland, 1880; ed. Edinburgh University; arrived in Canada, 1917; Congregational Minister, Emmauel Church; Vice President (V.P.) of M.S.A., 1918.

Botting, Miss Esther: journalist, Mtl. Witness; Recording Secretary, Mtl. Women's Club; member of Press Committee of M.S.A., 1913.

Byers, Mrs Archibald F. (Marion Taber): McGill Arts graduate, 1905; husband, president of a contracting company; Corresponding Sec. M.S.A., 1914; V.P. 1918.

Cartwright, Miss Ethel M.: resident, Physical Director, Royal Victoria College, 1913; on Executive of M.S.A., 1913.

Cochrane, Mrs Hugh (Grace): journalist; editor World Wide, Montreal.

Cole, Mrs F. Minden (Florence Trenholme): daughter Judge Trenholme, Court of King's Bench; mother, Grace Low, director of Y.W.C.A. and Mackay Institute for Deaf and Blind; husband, Lt.-Colonel Cole, Insurance broker and real estate agent; Anglican; member Press Committee M.S.A.



Dale, J.A.: b. Eng. 1874; ed. Oxford; Macdonald Prof. of Education at McGill since 1907; one of first members of Workers' Education Association in England; Pres. Protestant Teachers Ass. of Que; instrumental in founding University Settlement; member City Planning Committee; member Parks and Playgrounds Association; on Legislative Committee M.S.A.

Derick, Carrie: b. Claranceville, Que., 1862; ed. McGill, M.A., 1896; Harvard, 1891 - 1893; Professor of Botany, McGill; Anglican; Liberal.

Dickie, Rev. Robert W: b. Ont, 1873; ed. University of Toronto and Edinburgh; Presbyterian Minister, Crescent St. Church; chairman Protestant Board of School Commissioners, 1917 - 23.

Drummond, Mrs Wm. Harry: daughter of Dr O. C. Harvey of Jamaica; husband, M.D., poet, author of "The Habitant"; Anglican.

East, Miss Edith Mabel: McGill graduate, B.A., 1903; M.A., 1907; on Press Committee, M.S.A., 1918.

England, Dr Octavia Grace Ritchie: b. Mtl., 1868; ed. McGill, B.A., 1888; M.D., Bishops; post-graduate, Glasgow and Vienna; physician; father, a lawyer; husband, a physician and professor at Bishops; Episcopalian.

Fairly, Miss Grace: b. Scot; ed. Edinburgh, M.A., 1893; father, a Free Church minister; principal Trafalgar Institute, 1889; Cor. Sec. M.S.A., 1918.

Gordon, Mrs Charles Blair: b. Seaforth, Ont; husband, Montreal millionaire and philanthropist.



Griffin, Rev. Mr F. R.: Unitarian Pastor of the Church of the Messiah;  
on Executive M.S.A., 1915.

Hart, Dr E. I.: Methodist Pastor, Dominion Square Methodist Church;  
V.P. of M.S.A., 1918.

Hendrie, Miss L. M.: headmistress, Montreal High School for Girls;  
member Advisory Committee, M.S.A., 1916.

Henderson, Mrs John Alexander (Vesta Viola Hersey): b. Boston, Mass.;  
ed. Mtl. General Hospital; m. 1897, J. A. Alexander, physician,  
professor of anatomy, McGill; V.P. of Montreal Local Council of  
Women; participated Child Welfare Exhibit; member Executive, M.S.A.,  
1913.

Hodges, Mrs S. Wilkins P: McGill graduate, Arts, 1902; on organizing  
committee of University Settlement; member Executive, M.S.A., 1914.

Holt, Mr and Mrs Charles M: Mr Holt, b. Que., 1862; ed. Bishops and Laval;  
a lawyer; Mrs Holt is Mabel, daughter of Senator Cochrane; Mr Holt  
was on the Council of the Mtl. Parks and Playgrounds Ass; also, V.P.  
of the Charity Organization Society and the Tubercular League;  
Presbyterian.

Hurlbatt, Miss Ethel: b. Eng; ed. Oxford, M.A., T.C.D.; Warden, Royal  
Victorian College, since 1907; honorary sec. of the Ass. for promoting  
education of women in Wales until 1898; V.P. National Union of Women  
Workers; on Legislative Committee, M.S.A., 1913.



Langstaff, Mrs Annie McDonald: McGill graduate, Law, 1914; refused right to practise in Quebec.

Laski, Mr and Mrs Harold: Harold Laski was a lecturer in History at McGill in 1915 - 1916; he and his wife became members of the M.S.A. in 1915.

Lewis, Mr Lansing: b. Mtl; ed. Mtl. High School and Dr Carpenter's private school; business man and philanthropist; Anglican; belongs to Council for Social Service of Church of England; V.P. of M.S.A., 1914.

Lyman, Mrs Walter Ernest (Anna Marks Scrimger): b. Mtl. 1877; ed. Trafalgar Institute; McGill, B.A., 1899; daughter of Rev. John Scrimger, Principal of Presbyterian College; husband, Major Lyman of Rolland, Lyman, and Burnett; Presbyterian; on Executive, M.S.A., 1915.

McIntosh, Mrs A. Douglas (Bella Marcuse): McGill graduate, Arts, 1900; M.Sc., 1903; husband, Ass. Prof. of Chemistry, McGill, 1901 - 1915; On organizing committee of University Settlement; V.P. of M.S.A., 1914.

Mc Naghton, Prof. Russell Elliot: ed. Cambridge, B.A.; Classics Professor at McGill from 1904.

McNaughton, Mrs W. G. (Marguerite): b. Ont; ed. McGill, one of first to receive an Arts degree; husband, a manufacturer's agent; lecturer on drama; Anglican; helped Mrs Reid organize the Mtl. Women's Club; member Montreal Local Council since its founding; on Executive Committee (Ex. Comm.), of M.S.A., 1913 - 1915.



Meldrum, Miss Margaret: journalist for Montreal Gazette; hon. treasurer, Institute of journalists; on Press Committee, M.S.A., 1913.

Mitchell, Mrs Allister F.: husband, a chartered accountant and manager; Pres. Ladies' Benevolent Association; V.P. Mtl. Local Council; on Executive M.S.A., 1913.

Norris, Miss Amy: teacher, President Mtl. Prot. Women's Teachers' Association; on Ex. Committee, M.S.A., 1915 - 1918.

Odell, Mrs May S.: businesswoman, commercial traveller.

Ogden, Mr Charles J.: barrister of Surveyor, Ogden, and Coonan.

Pedley, Rev. Hugh: b. Eng.; ed. McGill, B.A., 1876; Pastor, Emmanuel Congregational Church; V.P. Lord's Day Alliance; author of "Looking Forward" (1913); on Ex. Comm. M.S.A., 1918.

Reed, Mrs Hayter (Kate Armour): professional interior decorator for C.P.R. Hotels; husband, manager hotel department, C.P.R.; member Mtl. Women's Club; on Ex. Comm. M.S.A., 1913.

Reid, Miss Helen Richmond Young: daughter of Mrs Robert Reid, founder of the Mtl. Women's Club; ed. McGill, B.A., 1889; Unitarian; lecturer in McGill Social Service Department, 1920 - 1930; director of Charity Organization Society; Hon. V.P. of M.S.A., 1914.



Scott, Mrs John (Eleanor): b. Glasgow, 1855; ed. Glasgow Free Church Normal School; came to Canada, 1874; Presbyterian; member Montreal Local Council, Montreal Women's Club, Montreal Northern District W.C.T.U.; Quebec Woman's Missionary Society; V.P. of M.S.A., 1914.

Shanly, Miss Eleanor: McGill graduate, Arts, 1913; M.Sc., 1914; V.P. of M.S.A., 1916.

Smith, Rufus D: general secretary Charity Organization Society; Ex. Member, M.S.A., 1913.

Symonds, Rev. Herbert: b. Eng., 1860; ed. McGill, Trinity, Queens; Anglican Vicar, Christ Church Cathedral; advocate of social gospel and of Church Unity; Chairman Protestant Board of School Commissioners, 1914 - 1919; Pres. Mtl. Prot. Ministerial Ass., 1905; V.P. Prisoners' Aid Ass.; V.P. Children's Aid Ass.; member of Committee of Sixteen against Commercialized Vice; Hon. V.P. of M.S.A., 1914.

Vaudry, Miss Mary Olive: b. Shefford, Que.; ed. McGill, M.A., 1900; taught two years in Chicago; principal Lennoxville Academy, 1902 - 07; Pres. Bishop's College Alumnae Ass.; Pres. Lennoxville W.C.T.U.; strongly in favour of church union; member Literature Comm., M.S.A., 1918.

Walton, Frederick Parker: b. Eng., 1858; ed. Oxford and Edinburgh; Dean McGill Law Faculty, 1897 - 1914; m. 1892, Mary Taylor, associated with Playgrounds Movement; member Legislative Committee, M.S.A., 1913.



Weir, Mr Recorder (Hon. R. Stanley): ed. McGill, Law, 1880, 1897;  
advocate, Westmount; joint recorder of Mtl. City Hall; Unitarian;  
supported formation of a Juvenile Court; Director Mtl. Parks and  
Playgrounds Association; member M.S.A., 1918.

Weir, Mrs William Alexander (A. Stewart): sister-in-law of above; wife of  
Supreme Court Judge; Prot.; husband believed in compulsory voting and  
strong Government control over all public franchises.

Weller, Mrs Harry Wray (Katherine Crawshaw): husband, mechanical, civil,  
and electrical engineer; Prot.; Sec. Children's Aid Society;  
Hon. V.P. of M.S.A., 1915 - 1918.

Williams, Francis Fenwick: author and journalist; Ass. Ed. The Owl,  
Montreal; member Ex. Committee, 1913.

Wood, Mrs H. W. Whitney: daughter of Hon. Wm. Alex. Weir (see above);  
husband, electrical engineer; member M.S.A., 1913.



## APPENDIX III

## MANITOBA POLITICAL EQUALITY LEAGUE, 1913 - 1916

Beynon, Francis Marion: born Ontario; came to Manitoba, 1889; educated Hartney, Manitoba; received second class teaching certificate; taught for a time; became a journalist and professional advertising agent; wrote for Grain Growers' Guide, 1912 - 1917.

Clendennan, May Stuart: journalist, "Dame Dibbin" of the Farmers' Advocate.

Crawford, Dr Mary: born England, 1876; her father was a master mariner and her mother was principal, Ottawa Presbyterian Ladies' College, 1889; educated by her mother and at Trinity; graduated M.D., 1900; became medical inspector of Winnipeg schools in 1909; succeeded Lillian Beynon Thomas as President of the Manitoba P.E.L.

Dixon, Mr F. J.: born England, 1881; came to Canada, 1903; educated English National Schools; elected Independent Labour M.P., 1914, for Winnipeg.

Dixon, Mrs F. J.: formerly Winona Flett of the Manitoba P.E.L.



Gordon, Rev. Dr James Logan: born Philadelphia, 1858; came to Winnipeg, 1904; educated privately; pastor, Central Congregationalist Church; author; strong temperance supporter; member Manitoba Social and Moral Reform Council; Honorary President, Manitoba P.E.L.

Haig, Miss Kennethe W.: journalist for Winnipeg Free Press.

Hample, Mrs Jane (A.G.): Manitoba P.E.L. started in her home; became its first Treasurer in 1912; 1916, elected as school trustee in Winnipeg.

Hind, Cora E.: born Toronto, 1861; educated, Collegiate Institute, Orilla, Ontario; came to Manitoba, 1887; trained to become a teacher; typist for law firm in Winnipeg for 10 years; 1891, opened her own stenographic business; 1901, joined Free Press staff; Presbyterian; member, W.C.T.U.; member in 1894 of Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club; died at age 81.

Holling, Mrs Alice A. (Luther): sanitary inspector for the city of Winnipeg; became President of the Manitoba Political Education League, the successor to the Manitoba P.E.L.

Perry, Mrs Anne Anderson (William C.): journalist for the Saturday Post; sister of Dr Susanna Boyle of the D.W.E.A. in Toronto; daughter of the ethnologist, Dr David Boyle, a pronounced radical in favour of universal suffrage and movements to improve the conditions of the working classes.



Thomas, Lillian Beynon (Mrs A.V.): born York, Ontario, 1874; educated

Wesley College, Manitoba University; 1906, received a Teachers'

Certificate; taught in public school for a time; became a journalist,

"Lillian Laurie" of the Winnipeg Free Press; married, 1911, A. Vernon

Thomas, another Free Press journalist; President of the Manitoba

P.E.L., 1912.



## APPENDIX IV

## DATES FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF POLITICAL EQUALITY\*

(Dates given are those on which  
Royal Assent was granted)

Province,	Suffrage	Eligibility to hold office
Manitoba	January 28, 1916	January 28, 1916
Saskatchewan	March 14, 1916	March 14, 1916
Alberta	April 19, 1916	April 19, 1916
British Columbia	April 5, 1917	April 5, 1917
Ontario	April 12, 1917	April 24, 1919
Nova Scotia	April 26, 1918	April 26, 1918
Dominion of Canada	1) Wartime Act September 20, 1917	Dominion Elections Act, 1920
New Brunswick	April 17, 1919	March 9, 1934
Prince Edward Island	May 3, 1922	May 3, 1922
Newfoundland	April 13, 1925	April 13, 1925
Quebec	April 25, 1940	April 25, 1940

\* Claverdon, op. cit.



## APPENDIX V

## FEMALE SUFFRAGISTS: REFORM BREAKDOWN

Sample: 156

Temperance only	:	19	25.6%
Temperance and other reforms	:	21	

Other reforms*			
(no mention of			
temperance)	:	56	35.9%
Not ascertained	:	60	38.5%

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\* Refer to the following Appendix to see the type of reforms the suffragists were interested in.



## APPENDIX VI

## FEMALE SUFFRAGISTS: REFORM ASSOCIATIONS

Sample: 156 members\*

Occupations

Judge, Juvenile Court	2
Probation Officer	1
Medical Inspector of Schools	1
Sanitary Inspector	1
Female Inspector of Factories	1
Superintendent Girls' Reformatory	1

Interests

Several members and associations expressed particular interests in each of the following areas of reform:

Prison Reform

Public Health

Mothers' Allowances

Mothers' Pensions

Free medical and dental treatment for school children

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\* Many repetitions. Includes W.C.T.U. women as some had other reform interests.



Public baths

Purity

White Slave Crusade

Homes for Fallen Women

Factories for blind

Segregation of feeble-minded

Industrial homes for boys and girls

Compulsory Education

Vocational Training

Classes in stenography for working girls

Public ownership

Municipal Election Work

#### Clubs

Beaches Progressive Club	1
Progressive Thought Club	1
Single Tax	2
Progressive Club	2
Working Girls' Association	1
Working Girls' Club	1
Y.W.C.A.	4
Household League	1
Social Science Club	1
Charity Organization Societies	3



Children's Aid	1
Women's Civic League	6
University Women's Club	7
People's Forum	1
Women's Forum (Ratepayers' Association)	3
Vancouver Women's Building	2
Women's Press Club	11
Winnipeg Humane Society	2
Creche	1
Protection of feeble-minded	1
Foundling and Baby Hospital	1
Children's Hospital	2
World Children's Humane League	1
Free Kindergarten Association	2
Board of Education	3
Board of Health	1
Board of Mental Hygiene	1
National Council of Child Welfare	1
Child Welfare	7
Children's Aid	1
Parks and Playgrounds	3
Home and School Movement	1
Association for Promotion of Technical Education	1
Canadian National Economic Association	1



Toronto City Relief Association	1
Montreal Women's Club	7
National Council of Women (or a Local thereof)	19
Red Cross	2
Victorian Order of Nurses	1
Women's Cooperative Guild	1
University Settlement	2
Calgary Consumers' League	1
Canadian Charities and Correction Association	1
International Business Society	1
Anti-T.B. Society	1
S.P.C.A.	1
Canadian Purity Education Association	1
Canadian National Council against V.D.	1



## APPENDIX VII

## MALE MEMBERS OF SUFFRAGE ORGANIZATIONS: REFORM BREAKDOWN

Sample: 44 members\*

<u>Reform</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Prohibition	12	27.2%
Social Gospel	8	18.2%
Urban Progressives	13	29.5%
Rural Progressives	6	13.6%
Educationists	11	25%
Laborites	3	
General Reformers	2	
Unknown	1	

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\* Members appear in more than one category as many of the reform interests overlap.



## APPENDIX VIII

## MALE SUFFRAGISTS: REFORM ASSOCIATIONS

Sample: 44 members\*

Prohibition

Dominion Alliance	2
Royal Templars	3
Honorary Member W.C.T.U.	1
Canada's New Party	1
Unspecified	5

Social Gospel

Social Service Council	2
Headed Training Class in Social Service	1
Social and Moral Reform Council	1
Lord's Day Alliance	2
Unspecified	2

Urban Progressives

Playgrounds Associations	4
Child Welfare	3

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\* Many repetitions as members frequently belonged to a number of societies.



Prisoners' Aid	1
Childrens' Aid	1
Boys' Home	1
Charity Organization Societies	2
Associated Charities	1
City Improvement League	1
City Planning Committee	1
University Settlement	1
Ontario Safety League	1
Toronto Humane Society	1
Toronto Reform Association	1
Public Ownership League	1
Single Tax	1
People's Forum	1
Progressive Club	1
Superintendent of Neglected Children	1
Judgeship of Juvenile Court	1
Committee re Juvenile Court	1
Committee re Municipal Government,	1
Free Hospital for Consumptives	1
Tubercular League	1
Committee Against White Slave Traffic and Commercialized Vice	1



Rural Progressives\*

Single Tax	6
Direct Legislation	5

Educationists

School Commissioners	2
School Board	2
Central Arts' League	1
Home and School Movement	2
Dominion Education Association	1
World's Congress of Elementary Education	1
Teachers' Associations	1
Inspector Public Schools	1
Association for Promotion of Technical Education	1
Teachers' Institutes	1
Free Public Library Board	1
Workers' Education Association (England)	1

Laborites

Labour Representation Committee	1
Ontario Socialist League	1
United Workman	1
Secretary Trades and Labour Council	1

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\* Those rural progressives who belonged to single tax associations usually favoured direct legislation as well.



## APPENDIX IX

## SASKATCHEWAN PROVINCIAL EQUAL FRANCHISE BOARD, 1917\*

1. Securing of Federal Franchise

## 2. That as a Board we take no part in party politics:

Proven to be a factor in the production of graft and various other evils, which are, to a great extent, responsible for the deplorable economic conditions which exist in all lands where party politics predominate. This cannot be accomplished in a year, but by having this as our objective, agitation will ultimately bring about the result.

3. Social and Moral Reform

(a) Co-guardianship of parents: At present the mother is only the natural parent and has no legal standing as such, except in cases of illegitimate children when she is solely responsible.

(b) Equal property rights for men and women.

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\* Violet MacNaughton Papers, Equal Franchise League, 1914 - 1919. Plan of Work.



- (c) Investigation and revision of laws regarding the responsibility of parents of illegitimate children.
- (d) Equal wage for equal work.
- (e) Minimum wage for women and girls.
- (f) Maximum hours of labour per week for girls and women.
- (g) Mothers' pensions: In cases where father dies and leaves a family dependent upon the mother, she should receive sufficient income from the Government to enable her to remain at home, instead of going out to labour and placing children in institutions or allowed to run the streets.
- (h) Maternity allowance: A fixed sum should be available for every prospective mother.
- (i) The absconding of either parent to be a criminal offence.
- (j) Municipal nurses
- (k) Rural nurses
- (l) State registration of nurses
- (m) Protection of persons of young womanhood to age 21 years, making life at least as valuable as property.
- (n) Proprietors' responsibility for the order and respectability of their houses.



(o) Prohibition of the manufacture, import or sale of intoxicants as beverages.

(p) Certificate of health required before marriage license secured.

#### 4. Criminal Code

(a) Investigation and revision of criminal code with the view of doing away with precedents which are hindering progress and reform.

(b) All sentences except for murder to be made indeterminate.

(c) Abolition of death penalty.

(d) Straight jackets and cold showers to be prohibited and prison methods generally corrected.

(e) Provision made for the payment of wages to state prison convicts, part of which would be applied to the support of their families and balance banked.

(f) Abolition of striped suit.

#### 5. Prison Reform

(a) Investigation of prison conditions in the Province

(b) Reform - with the aim of saving the young and all first offenders from being contaminated for life, also giving a chance for reform to all prisoners.



- (c) Prison farms.
- (d) Industrial farms where the socially unfit, vagrants, etc. could be segregated.

6. Education

- (a) Uniform system of Government schools.
- (b) English only in primary schools.
- (c) Bible read in schools.
- (d) Curriculum to provide for practical education according to endowments, irrespective of sex.
- (e) Teaching of parenthood in our schools by fully qualified instructors - physicians and nurses.
- (f) Teaching duties of citizenship.

7. Revision of Franchise: a standard of efficiency required for eligibility.

8. Eligibility of Candidates

- (a) Revision of laws providing for eligibility of candidates for legislature and parliament.
- (b) Free representatives only.



9. Members Subject to Recall.
10. Nationalization of Public Utilities such as banks and transportation systems.
11. Nationalization of Natural Resources.
12. International Relations
  - (a) An international council of arbitration composed of men and women to ensure permanent peace among the nations.
  - (b) International navy patrol of the high seas.



## APPENDIX X

## ONTARIO WOMAN CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION, 1917 - 1918\*

1. Securing Federal Franchise
2. Abolition of Patronage
3. Social and Moral Reforms
  - (a) Equal guardianship of children.
  - (b) Segregation and training of feeble-minded.
  - (c) Investigation and revision of laws regarding responsibility of parents of illegitimate children.
  - (d) Protection of minors - either sex - from moral dangers. Age of consent raised to 21.
  - (e) Property owners responsible for the order and respectability of their houses.
  - (f) Equal wages for equal work.
  - (g) Minimum wage.
  - (h) Maximum hours of labour per week for all.

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\* P.A.C., N.C.W. Papers, Volume 65. Pamphlet: Ontario Woman Citizens' Association, 1917 - 1918.



(i) Endorsement of movement for protection of women in industry and better protection for industrial workers... appointment of more women factory inspectors.

(j) Mothers' pensions and maternity allowances.

(k) Making the absconding of parents a criminal offence.

(l) Dominion-wide prohibition.

4. Criminal Code: abolition of death sentence.

5. Prison Reforms

(a) Juvenile Courts to be conducted by men and women jointly.

(b) Payment of all prisoners' labour, part applied to support of families and balance banked.

(c) Abolition of garb which marks persons as prisoners. ✓

(d) Substitution of industrial farms for present-day existing prisons.

6. Eligibility of Candidates: subject to recall.

7. Education

(a) Vocational training for boys and girls.

(b) Teaching of elementary agriculture in our public schools, rural and city.



(c) Teaching of domestic science to all girls in the public schools.

(d) Normal Schools to give courses in sex hygiene.

8. . Study International Relations.



## APPENDIX XI

## FEMALE RELATIVES OF MINISTERS

Wives of Ministers

5

3 Methodist

1 Quaker

1 Anglican

Daughters of Ministers

6

3 Methodist

2 Presbyterian

1 Free Church

Daughters-in-law of Ministers

2

1 Methodist

1 Presbyterian

Wife and Daughter of Ministers

2

1 Methodist

1 Unknown

Wife and Grand-daughter of Minister

1

1 Methodist

16 of 156 or 10.3%

Methodist 9

Presbyterian 3

Anglican 1

Quaker 1

Free Church 1

Unknown 1

16



## APPENDIX XII

METHODIST CHURCH: WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY, A REFERENDUM, 1921Summary of Conferences

	For	Against
Toronto	652	999
London	721	1038
Hamilton	681	1026
Bay of Quints	522	592
Montreal	672	773
Nova Scotia	231	279
New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island	223	219
Newfoundland	152	173
Manitoba	410	297
Saskatchewan	561	234
Alberta	510	227
British Columbia	<u>419</u>	<u>362</u>
TOTAL	5754	6219

Members declining to vote: 387

A number who declined to vote expressed fear that any decision in favour of women becoming ministers would interfere with the consummation of Church Union with the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches.



## APPENDIX XIII

GIELE: OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS OF 49 AMERICAN TEMPERANCE  
AND 49 AMERICAN SUFFRAGE WOMEN BY %\*

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Suffrage</u>	<u>W.C.T.U.</u>
literary (author, journalist, poet)	16.3%	18.4%
lawyers	8.1%	4%
physicians	0	2%
minister	8.1%	4%
philanthropist	22.4%	26.5%
lecturer, organizer	26.5%	34.6%
all round reformer	8.1%	6.1%
mother or wife	4%	4%
not ascertained	6.1%	0
	100%	100%

\* Giele concludes that a slightly higher percentage of suffragists were professionals, i.e. lawyers and ministers.



## APPENDIX XIV

## OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN WOMEN:

Comparison of the 40 female  
suffragists who belonged to the  
W.C.T.U. to the 116 suffragists who  
had no temperance affiliation by %

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Straight Suffrage</u>	<u>Suffrage + W.C.T.U.</u>
literary	28.4%	15%
physicians	13%	10%
lawyers	0	2.5%
educators	14.6%	15%
civil servants	6%	0
miscellaneous	8.6%	10%
unknown	29.3%	47.5%
	100%	100%



## APPENDIX XV

## EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Comparison of the 40 suggragists  
who belonged to the W.C.T.U. to  
the 116 who had no temperance  
affiliation.

<u>Education</u>	<u>Straight Suffrage</u>	<u>Suffrage + W.C.T.U.</u>
MA <sup>+</sup>	22.4%	17.5%
BA <sup>+</sup>	12.9%	5%
Collegiate	6%	12.5%
Normal School	7.7%	10%
Miscellaneous	7.7%	7.5%
Unknown	<u>43.1%</u>	<u>47.5%</u>
	100%	100%



## APPENDIX XVI

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>U.S.A.</u> (49 Suffrage leaders)		<u>Canada</u> (114 executive members)	
	No.	%	No.	%
journalist, editor, author	8	16.3	27	23.6
physician	0		16	14
minister <sup>1</sup>	4	8.1	0	
lawyer <sup>2</sup>	4	8.1	0	
educationists	0		18	15.7
civil servants	0		3	2.6
lecturers, organizers	13	26.5	2	1.7
philanthropists	11	22.4	2	1.7
business women	0		3	2.6
mother or wife <sup>3</sup>	2			
all round reformer	4	18.3	38	33.3
not ascertained	3			
miscellaneous <sup>4</sup>	0		5	4.3

<sup>1</sup> No Canadian Church allowed women to become ministers in the period under study.

<sup>2</sup> The question of the woman lawyer was relatively new in Canada. See page 44.

<sup>3</sup> As the occupation housewife is seldom mentioned, it is difficult to say how many of those for whom no occupation could be found fall into this category.

<sup>4</sup> In Canada: 2 agriculturalists, 2 artists, and 1 pianist.



## APPENDIX XVII

## THE WOMAN'S PARTY

Ontario, 1918\*

## Victory, National Security, and Progress

1. War till victory, followed by a peace imposed upon the Germans and their allies which, by withdrawing subject populations from their control and by reducing their mineral and other war-like resources, will make it physically impossible for the Germans to wage another war with any prospects of success.
2. The adoption of more radical and vigorous war measures, with a view to securing complete and speedy victory.

The Workers and Industry

The problem of industrial unrest to be dealt with by guarantee to the workers that conditions of labour and the money return for their labour shall be in accordance with justice and the interests of the nation. The solution of the problem of industrial unrest to be looked for in this direction and, above all, in the shortening of hours of labour, rather than in the direction of "control of industry by the workers."

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\* P.A.C., Robert Borden Papers, Pamphlet #84570.



### Increased Wealth Production

### Full Prohibition Throughout Canada

### Special Women's Questions

Absolute recognition of women by the Government.

Equal pay for equal work.

Equal marriage laws, including equal conditions of divorce.

Equality of parental rights as between mother and father,

the interest of the child in every case to be supreme.

The age of consent to be raised, so that the girl's person is  
as fully protected as her property.

Equal opportunity of employment.

Equality of rights and responsibilities in regard to the social  
and the political service of the nation.

Canadian women to be allowed to take up homesteads on the same  
terms as men.

Immigration laws to be amended as to allow women from the British  
Isles to settle in Canada on equal terms with men.

### Maternity and Infant Life

The community to guarantee, where necessary, to the expectant and  
nursing mother the food and other conditions required to enable the  
bearing and rearing of healthy children.



### Education

Every child to be guaranteed by the community, from birth until it becomes a fully grown and self-supporting member of society, the material conditions of life, the medical supervision and treatment, and the general education followed by specialized education, necessary to render the child a worthy citizen.

### Housing Question

### True Liberty

The Woman's Party maintains that the internal dangers that threaten the existence of democratic nations at the present time are due to a failure to realize that freedom does not mean the absence of control and self-discipline. The Woman's Party is of opinion that, in the mind of every Canadian man and woman, a sense of national duty and responsibility must go together with the sense of individual political and economic rights.



## APPENDIX - XVIII

## GUIDE REFERENDUM\*

Do you favour:

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Initiative, Referendum, Recall	WOMEN	2,492	20
	MEN	3,990	38
2. Free trade with Great Britain	WOMEN	2,531	57
	MEN	4,083	73
3. Abolition of Canadian Customs Tariff	WOMEN	2,336	175
	MEN	3,732	336
4. Direct Single Tax on "Land" Values	WOMEN	2,171	221
	MEN	3,520	416
5. Public Ownership of Railways, etc.	WOMEN	2,415	117
	MEN	3,885	210
6. Woman Suffrage	WOMEN	2,454	131
	MEN	3,667	422

\* Grain Growers' Guide: Feb. 4, 1914.



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