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The Development of Literature in the Suffrage Movement: Western Successes from Eastern Lessons, 1848-1911

Michelle Dennehy



Women's Suffrage meeting, *Punch Magazine* (1911)

Female suffragists in the United States at the turn of the 20th Century fought to gain more protection under the law than the laws had granted women in entire history of the nation. The suffragist movement symbolically began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, in which the

“Declaration of Sentiments” dictated women’s precise requests for equality.⁴

This early industrialism-era suffrage campaign focused mainly on the East coast of the United States, while the nation expanded into the West.

Ironically, while the first generation suffragists experienced many failures in their efforts for suffrage, the second generation found many successes in the West and subsequently in the East. Western organizers effectively produced literature for segments of society that were the most receptive to giving women the ballot. Suffragists learned the best techniques, layouts, and rhetorical devices to use to and implemented these techniques with little failure, thanks to the experimentation of their predecessors. While many differences existed between the established cities in the East and the more rural areas of the West, many of the same rhetorical arguments applied in both regions, such as the use of revolutionary rhetoric, the argument for working-women and labor, and the argument that women would create a more virtuous government with the ballot.

Revolutionary Rhetoric

Many prominent suffragists linked their battle for enfranchisement to the American revolutionaries’ fight against oppression from England, as an

⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments,” *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: New Sage Press, 1995), 39-44.

History in the Making

appeal to patriots. These women argued that their fight was a modern struggle against oppression remnants from arcane English laws about women and property.⁵ Women rights organizers employed the Americans belief of natural rights to argue that equal suffrage would be the only way to achieve social and economic equality between men and women. Suffragists used similar rhetoric as found in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence to achieve this goal. To exemplify this correlation, suffragists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, peppered constitutional rhetoric in their speeches to evoke empathy from the males in the audience. For instance, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1848 speech at the Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York was one of the first occasions in which women's rights organizers utilized revolutionary rhetoric as a means to gain attention for their cause. Stanton began her groundbreaking speech with an altered version of the Declaration of Independence's famous introduction:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume... a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they

⁵ Rev. Father Gleason, "Extracts from the speech of the Rev. Father Gleason at Central Theatre, San Francisco," Los Angeles Political Equality League, California May 23, 1911, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to this document as: Gleason, "Extracts from the speech of the Rev. Father Gleason," in any future reference.

should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

Stanton altered the remainder of the Declaration to correlate with the women's rights cause and to provoke her audience. Stanton continued,

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men *and women* are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...⁶

Not all of the women at Seneca Falls supported the resolution for female suffrage; however, the resolution passed and launched the beginnings of the suffrage movement. Suffragists pulled many more of their arguments for the vote from famous statements made during the revolutionary period as this proved to be a successful tool,⁷ especially as the vote spread west.

One of the most prominent arguments used in suffrage literature in the West demanded enfranchisement based on the 1776 argument against governments enacting taxes without consent. Suffragists borrowed this sentiment, again, directly from the Declaration of Independence. One such suffragist who used this powerful rhetorical device was Alice Park, who was one of the most prominent leaders of the CESA's literature committee from

⁶Stanton, 39-44.

⁷ Ellen Carrol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 23.

History in the Making

1906 and 1911.⁸ Park authored and released many leaflets aimed at middle and working-class women. One particular 1910 leaflet by Park, entitled “Women Under California Law,” listed many of the injustices women faced under California law in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Park stated that “Taxation without representation is tyranny now as it was in 1776.” Park also argued that, a democracy is a government by the people for the people. Therefore, she surmised that California law did not consider women people, or, the United States was not a true democracy since half of the citizens could not legally vote.⁹

Many other California suffrage flyers argued against the fact that the government taxed women without allowing them direct representation. One brief 1911 leaflet, titled “Give the Women a Square Deal: They Want the Ballot, Why?” recognized taxation as one of its four main points behind why women needed the vote. Although this leaflet does not explore details as Park’s did, it did make taxation without representation a key element behind working women’s need to vote. The reverse side of this leaflet further demonstrated the interest women had in labor in California by

⁸ Sherry J. Katz, “A Politics of Coalition: Socialist Women in the California Suffrage Movement, 1900-1911,” in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale: New Sage Press, 1995), 252.

⁹ Alice Park, “Women Under California Laws,” California Equal Suffrage Association and the Political Equality League, n.d., Women’s Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of The Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to this document as: Park, “Women Under California Law” in any future reference.

recognizing Women's Organized Labor as the largest women's group with over 36,000 members.¹⁰ This number outweighed the organizers in the California Federation of Women's Clubs, who had 35,000 women, and encompassed California's largest civic groups.¹¹

Park, as a member and leader of suffrage organizations, mainly concerned herself with the plight of working-class women in California, while other renowned suffragists focused their efforts on broader audiences. The Political Equality League (PEL) released a leaflet in 1911 authored by Carrie Chapman Catt, Susan B. Anthony's successor as president of the National Women's Suffrage Association, which had a similar layout to Alice Park's leaflet. Her leaflet "Do You Know?" appealed to women nationally and possibly internationally, as it proclaimed that women suffrage commands "the attention of the whole civilized world". This statement illustrated Chapman Catt's interest in the international spectrum of suffrage, and as the leaflet indicated, Chapman Catt was the president of the International Women Suffrage Alliance in twenty-one countries. Related to her international position and to spark inquiry, Chapman Catt

¹⁰ "Women Who Want to Vote" and "Give Women of California a Square Deal," Los Angeles Political Equality League, California 1911, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of The Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: PEL, "Women Who Want to Vote" in any future references.

¹¹ Gayle Gullett, "Women Progressives and the Politics of Americanization in California, 1915-1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (February 1995): 71-94.

History in the Making

listed the twenty-one countries where women and men held equal voting rights or named countries and states where women had significantly more voting rights than their American counterparts.¹²

In returning to revolutionary rhetoric, Chapman Catt described the early English history behind men as the sole voters. She explained that in England, barons, noblemen and rich merchants had the power to vote as the financial supporters of wars. As time passed, this tradition depended less upon funding wars and grew into a social and political display of power and wealth. Later, as the institution of voting changed so too did its requirements. Adult property owning males, who were economically independent, inherited enfranchisement because governmental actions affected these property owners' interests.¹³

Chapman Catt continued to describe that American colonialists adopted this tradition by only permitting taxpayers, i.e. property owners, the right to vote. Chapman Catt dubbed the 1789 American government an

¹² Carrie Chapman Catt, "Do You Know?" California Equal Suffrage Association; Los Angeles Political Equality League, California, 1911(?), Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Chapman Catt, "Do You Know?" in any future references.

¹³ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 5.

“aristocracy of property,” not a Republic as it espoused to be and quoted the revolutionary battle cry “Taxation without representation is tyranny.”¹⁴

Chapman Catt used a particularly interesting argument to arouse interest in the suffrage movement by detailing the reasons why women were not voters, although they paid taxes. She noted that historically few women paid taxes independently from their husbands as the government considered her a dependant of her husband. Through this union of property and resources, the husband gained the right to vote on the women’s behalf. Chapman Catt stated that, under the law, a woman was her husband’s servant and therefore a woman could not be considered an independent member of society with legal rights equal to a man. As the nineteenth century progressed, state governments allowed women to hold property, society accepted a woman who worked outside the home, and all expected taxes paid on an equal basis – yet the federal government still did not allow women to vote!¹⁵

Chapman Catt utilized poignant terminology to recall memories of key points in American history to stir emotion and, hopefully, political action in leaflet recipients and readers. She began many of the statements in this leaflet with the phrase “Do you Know,” followed by a prominent

¹⁴ Chapman Catt, “Do You Know?”

¹⁵ Ibid.

statement about either the past plight of women or their current situation. Chapman Catt's use of American Revolutionary sentiment appealed to both men and women who drew vivid connections between the struggles for equality in the eighteenth century to women's struggle in the twentieth century. Suffragists ultimately used revolutionary rhetoric to build legitimacy for their movement. These activists knew that more people would accept arguments based on documents created by the founding fathers than arguments lacking that legendary source.¹⁶

Clifford Howard, a writer for the Southern California Political Equality League,¹⁷ also referenced America's colonial past in an argument for female equality entitled "Man Needs Woman's Ballot."¹⁸ Howard argued that women stood by men through the Revolution as equals where men trusted women to protect the home in those pivotal times, so why should women not be trusted with the ballot? Howard successfully illustrated this conundrum metaphorically by describing the trust men had in women in the colonial period by giving women their muskets, understanding women

¹⁶ Dubois, 23.

¹⁷ Ronald Schaffer, "The Problem of Consciousness in the Woman Suffrage Movement: A California Perspective," *Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 4 (November, 1976): 469-493.

¹⁸ Clifford Howard, "Man Needs Woman's Ballot" and "Mothers, Fathers, and all Good Citizens," Los Angeles Political Equality League, California, 1911(?), Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Howard, "Man Needs Woman's Ballot" in any future references.

knew to use it correctly, competently, and valiantly. He compared the social strife in the colonial time to the current “pioneer days”. Howard described these days as a “frontier of a new social world, a new democracy, faced with new and menacing problems....” However, in this new time of needed social change, Howard stated, the adversary attacked from within – in the form of graft, underdevelopment and disease unlike the outward threat of the American Revolution. Howard wrote that men needed the help of women in the early 1900s, just as they needed women during the Revolution. Howard concluded his argument poignantly, stating that the vote in women’s hands will replace the musket in this new revolutionary period, to combat societal ills that endangered America.¹⁹

Again, literature that represented different segments of the population displayed similar revolutionary rhetoric as that seen in Park and Chapman Catt’s work. The College Equal Suffrage League (CESL), based in San Francisco, published pamphlets aimed at the large farmer and fruit grower population in California. The author of this pamphlet, Milicent Shinn, was the first woman to receive a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkley in 1898.²⁰ As a leading UC Berkley intellectual, Shinn

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Elizabeth Scarborough and Laurel Furumoto, *Untold Lives: The First Generation of the American Women Psychologists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

History in the Making

argued that the revolution was not yet over until the government enfranchised women. She recalled:

[The] Embattled farmers' at Concord Bridge that made the first stand and fired the first shot against Taxation without Representation. The Battle Is Not Yet Fully Won. There is still one class of American citizens that is taxed without any voice of their own.... Your own mother, your wife and sister are of that class.²¹

Shinn argued that a farmer understood his wife's equal ability to care for the family farm better than any other man could comprehend due to their interdependent labor on the farm. Shinn further argued that the family's farm will be unprotected if the men died or became incapacitated because women of the family had no legal protection to hold or defend property, due to their inability to vote. Shinn as well as other suffrage authors' emotionally charged language directed at farmers as the first movers of the Revolution, assisted in the development of the large farmer support base for women's suffrage.²²

Californian Suffragists' petition to farmers contained similar approaches to those used by women' rights organizations in their petition to workers throughout the nation. The large size of the women's rights

²¹ Milicent Shinn, "To the Farmers and Fruit Growers of California," College Equal Suffrage League, California 1911, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Shinn, "To the Farmers and Fruit Growers of California" in any future references.

²² "California Farmers Give Vote To Women," *New York Times* October 13, 1911.

movement created the need to advertise differently to diverse groups in diverse regions.²³ While revolutionary rhetoric appealed to a majority of Americans, many other suffrage literature topics only appealed to somewhat narrow groups in varying geographical areas. For example, suffragists targeted laborers in Southern California as a large support base even though labor groups in San Francisco were not as supportive of the movement. Although suffragists used advertising tactics nearly perfected by their predecessors on the East Coast, the ability to gain the labor vote unilaterally in California proved to be a hard task for Western suffragists.

Labor and Pay

Clearly, one of the central arguments for female suffrage involved obtaining financial security and independence from men. The women at the Seneca Falls Convention unanimously resolved to gain equal rights in the workplace, education, and in the home. This led to their concluding request, although not unanimous, for equal suffrage rights as the means to the end.²⁴ Since not all women supported equal suffrage, some women worked for labor reform independently from those who worked for suffrage.

²³ Katz, 249.

²⁴ Stanton, 39-44.

History in the Making

Many politically active Californian labor-women ultimately recognized the advantage of using their political knowledge to help advance the suffrage cause, as Katherine Philips Edson did early on.²⁵

Notable Californian women worked to gain the eight-hour workday, improve the minimum wage for women and actively sought to revise the state's welfare system. Women like Edson experienced some political success under the Progressive Governor Hiram Johnson, who appointed Edson to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Industrial Welfare Commission (IWC) Edson researched working-women's wages and drafted as well as proposed minimum wage legislation to the California state legislature. Prominent clubwomen similar to Edson and Park promoted suffrage through improving labor conditions for people of both genders. This ultimately assisted suffragists, in gaining some support from male labor leaders who appreciated added female labor support in Northern and Central California.²⁶

The lack of strong unions in Southern California helped suffragists successfully focus their attention on gaining the working-class vote without much opposition. On the contrary, Suffragists faced opposition in San

²⁵ Rebecca Mead, "Let the Women Get Their Wages as Men Do: Trade Union Women and the Legislated Minimum Wage in California," *Pacific Historical Review*, 67, no 3 (August, 1998): 317-347.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 322.

Francisco where unions had a strong political and economic hold as well as a more diverse immigrant population who were less supportive of suffrage than European immigrants. These apprehensive unions thought suffragist demanded wage legislation might undermine labor victories in the fight for better pay. Some of the unions were also concerned that wage legislation would create more bureaucracy, especially under Edson at the IWC.²⁷ Ironically, middle and working-class organizations did not want their hard-won efforts reversed by women's special interest groups that worked for the same end.

Middle and working-class suffrage organizations fought to correct many of the same issues while representing different socio-economic segments of society. Park, a supporter of working-women, and Edson, a middle-class supporter, had similar points of contention against California's labor laws. After the passage of important labor legislation in 1911,²⁸ suffragist and labor organizations constantly revised their publications to include the most recent information to assure accuracy in their statements and to continue the battle for rights not won. For instance, a 1910 draft of Park's "Women Under California Laws" article discussed the need to for an eight-hour workday. After the passage of the eight-hour law on May 21, 1911,

²⁷ Mead, 337.

²⁸ Ibid., 325.

History in the Making

the Political Equality League (PEL) released a revised draft of the article to reflect the legal changes.²⁹ Although workers won this battle, Park continued to argue for equal pay in view of the fact that women received less pay for equal or sometimes more efficient labor than their male counterparts.³⁰

A leaflet, printed by the CESA, titled “JUSTICE – EQUALITY: Why Women Want to Vote” listed women’s many societal roles and appealed to each role individually. While many leaflets made efforts to stir more female involvement in the movement, this leaflet specifically focused its attention on men because their vote on October 10, 1911 ultimately decided the fate of women’s suffrage. The format used in this leaflet is particularly interesting in that it states women’s need for the vote, followed by a question regarding men and their need for the same legal protection.³¹

The first role listed in this leaflet is that of the “Working Woman” who needed the vote to empower her to gain control of her working conditions. A question posed to men followed this point; it asked if men

²⁹ This also included a new penalty for “girl stealing,” or kidnapping, that increased the punishment from five years to ten years.

³⁰ Park, “Women under California Law.”

³¹ “Why Women Want to Vote,” California Equal Suffrage Association, n.d., Women’s Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: CESA, “Why Women Want to Vote” in any future references.

thought they could protect male working conditions without the vote. The CESA next appealed to “Teachers,” who needed the vote to gain fair pay and social influence to keep stability in their schools. The CESA appealed to male administrators by asking if they could control their schools without the right to vote for the mayor, who nominated the Board of Education. Following the appeal to “Teachers” is an appeal to “Business Women” who needed the ballot to guarantee that their businesses received equal opportunities and fair treatment under the law. The CESA suggested after this statement, that men would not be able to protect their businesses from potentially harmful laws without the right to vote. The list of appeals to men to give working-women the ballot concluded with the familiar question “Do not MEN know that ‘Taxation without representation’ is tyranny?”³² Through this example, it is apparent that many similarities existed between different generations of literature distributed by suffrage organizations, especially repeated use of the most successful rhetorical devices.³³

Western suffrage organizations borrowed the successful rhetorical devices used by national organizations and also utilized the names of

³² Ibid.

³³ There is no date indicating exactly when “Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote” was published. However, it does call for the reader to vote for Amendment 8, which was on the October 1911 ballot.

History in the Making

nationally renowned men and women to gain more legitimacy. To demonstrate this point, national suffragist Maud Younger authored the CESA pamphlet entitled, "Why Wage Earning Women Should Vote".³⁴ Younger worked as a spokesperson for the suffrage movement and generally fought for female equality, especially in the workplace.³⁵ Younger's passion to speak about women's need to demand better conditions is evident in this 1911 pamphlet that described the plight of working-women in a male dominated society. Younger introduced her argument with this bold statement:

More than seven million women in the United States daily leave their homes to go out into the world and fight beside men for their living. They work under greater disadvantages and temptations than men, they work for longer hours and lower wages, they bear the greater burdens of our industrial system, yet they have not the protection which men have of the ballot.³⁶

Younger argued that women, as mothers of future generations, needed better labor laws including shorter hours, more sanitary conditions, and

³⁴ Maud Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote," California Equal Suffrage Association, 1911(?). Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote" in any future references.

³⁵National Women's History Museum, "Rights for Women: The Suffrage Movement and Its Leaders. Maud Younger (1870-1936)," 2007 (<http://nwhm.org/RightsforWomen/Younger.html>), accessed February 1, 2008.

³⁶ Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote."

better protection against dangerous machinery. She noted that English workers suffered from “stunted growth and impaired vitality” due to their exploitation under deficient labor laws. Younger credited labor unions for achieving all of the workplace improvements women experienced.

However, she argued, unions could not provide *every* needed change for women in the workplace. Women must provide this civil luxury, which was only achievable through the vote, for themselves.³⁷

Younger, in fact, came from a wealthy background although she still found it necessary to fight for the working class, arguing that “If food is impure, trust prices exorbitant, dwelling houses unsanitary, public schools bad... the rich can pay for private services. The poor have no choice.” Younger noted that the working person could not afford to lobby the legislature for better conditions and that the vote and ability to elect legislatures was the key to securing better conditions for women. Younger also pointed out that working conditions for women had changed throughout time. Traditionally women worked and produced goods in the home, but the large growth of industry forced production out of the home and into factories where women earned money and paid taxes independently from their husbands. This allowed women to become somewhat self-sufficient and it changed their status in society. Younger

³⁷ Ibid.

History in the Making

contended that this new form of independence required a need for more female protection under the law, as societal progress necessitated legal progress. Younger also questioned women's rights versus new immigrant men who eventually gained the vote, while the government would never permit women to vote under current law.³⁸ Women across the nation constantly questioned their place in society as they saw African American men and many immigrant men gain the right to vote, while women even of the highest class could not cast a single ballot.³⁹

Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, another national suffragist and labor advocate, authored a statement for the CESA titled "Women and the Vote" which solely advocated the vote for working-women. Kenney O'Sullivan was deeply involved in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and especially interested in organizing women in Boston and Chicago in the late 1890s through the early 1900s. As a national leader in the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), Kenney O'Sullivan also concentrated her efforts on building trade unions for women.⁴⁰

³⁸ Younger, "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote."

³⁹ Wheeler, "Introduction," in *One Woman, One Vote*, 12-13.

⁴⁰ Kathleen Banks Nutter, *"The Necessity of Organization": Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, the American Federation of Labor, and the Boston Women's Trade Union League, 1892-1919* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

Kenney O'Sullivan tactfully produced her CESA "Women and the Vote" pamphlet for a male audience. She explained that more women entered industrial labor due to the higher cost of living and the want of a more comfortable lifestyle. Kenney O'Sullivan described the evolution of women's work as Younger, but revealed the detrimental effects this shift of labor had on male workers. She postulated that women could no longer produce in the home for decent pay, which drove women into factory work where they were paid much less than men. She claimed that women's low wages were a danger for both men and women who competed for the same work, causing women's wages to lower men's wages in similar fields.⁴¹

Kenney O'Sullivan argued that an increase in women's wages would lead to an increase in men's wages. This in turn would decrease the need for women in the workplace because the family would not need the women's wages. While this assumption is faulty, due to the reality that not all women worked outside the home solely to supplement their husband's income, it does offer a win-win situation that made female suffrage more appealing to men.⁴²

⁴¹ Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, "Woman Suffrage Co-Equal with Man Suffrage" and "Women and the Vote," California Equal Suffrage Association, 1911(?), Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Kenney O'Sullivan, "Women and the Vote" in any future references.

⁴² Ibid.

History in the Making

Suffragists used their resources to the best of their abilities, which is why they used known successful arguments throughout a majority of their literature. Suffrages also tried to use their physical resources to the maximal potential by printing on both sides of the leaflets they distributed. The reverse side of the Kenney O'Sullivan leaflet, entitled "Woman Suffrage Co-Equal With Man Suffrage," contained quotes from important male labor leaders who supported women's suffrage. Included in this list of leaders is Samuel Gompers, the first president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886.⁴³ The CESA also quoted John Mitchell, the president of the United Mine Workers of America between 1989 and 1908,⁴⁴ and Keir Hardie, a leading European labor and militant suffrage advocate who first led the Labour Party in the House of Commons in 1906.⁴⁵

Kier Hardie advised all American workers to fight for women's suffrage and John Mitchell stated, "[I]t would be for the good of US ALL for woman to be enfranchised."⁴⁶ It is evident that the CESA used these quotes in an attempt to gain more working-class male support for suffrage in labor

⁴³ Samuel Gompers, "AFL-CIO: America's Union Movement, 1850-1924," (<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/history/history/gompers.cfm>), accessed January 14, 2008.

⁴⁴ John Mitchell, "President, United Mine Workers of America 1870-1911," (<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/mitchell.htm>), accessed January 20, 2008.

⁴⁵ A. E. P. Duffy, "Differing Policies and Personal Rivalries in the Origins of the Independent Labour Party," *Victorian Studies* 6, no. 1 (Sep., 1962): 43-65.

⁴⁶ Kenney O'Sullivan, "Women and the Vote."

cities, like San Francisco, where the CESA noted that, “There are 50,000 Working Women in San Francisco alone. Will not a vote be worth as much to them as working men?”⁴⁷

The PEL similarly published articles that listed the labor organizations in support of women’s suffrage based on the CESA “Women and the Vote” leaflet. The PEL’s variation of this leaflet listed over thirty national and international organizations that adopted suffrage resolutions. It also noted that at least five hundred organizations endorsed women’s suffrage between 1904 and 1908. The PEL printed this list on the opposite side of Kenny O’ Sullivan’s one-page article.⁴⁸ Nearly one third of the organizations listed in this article consisted of women’s organizations, which prospered in California. Some of the other organizations included in this list were the American Federation of Labor, the Western Federation of Mine Workers, the United Mine Workers of America, the United Teamsters of America and the National Grange and State Granges in 16 states – including California.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Kenney O’Sullivan, “Women and the Vote.”

⁴⁹ The male and female organizations discussed here may or may not have been strictly exclusive to one gender. I only characterize them as men or women’s organizations to differentiate the organizations with a female designation in the name from the groups with no designation.

History in the Making

The large agricultural population in the West generally supported women's suffrage as is evident in David R. Berman's examination of voting patterns in the West. Berman concluded that western regions with high concentrations of farmers, native-born Americans, European-born immigrants and Mormons were exceptionally supportive of women's suffrage.⁵⁰ Berman did not examine the extreme importance of suffrage organizations in the West; rather he focused on the demographics of actual voter turnout. Berman's study indirectly demonstrated that suffragist organizations efficiently appealed to their agricultural bases. This confirmed the assertion that suffragists knew their target audiences and successfully focused their time and resources to maintain this vote.⁵¹ One shining example of the agricultural support base for women's suffrage is apparent in the actions of the National Grange and individual state Granges throughout the suffrage movement.

The agricultural organization known as the National Grange, also called the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry,⁵² supported women's

⁵⁰ David R. Berman, "Male Support for Woman Suffrage: An Analysis of Voting Patterns in the Mountain West," *Social Science History* 11, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 281-294.

⁵¹ Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, "Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866-1919," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 1 (February, 2001): 77.

⁵² Donald B. Marti, "Sisters of the Grange: Rural Feminism in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History* 58, no. 3 (July, 1984): 247.

suffrage, to some extent, in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Through suffragists, who twisted the stated position of the Grange to fit their needs, the Order became the largest rural extension of the suffrage movement. The Grange received this label from their large female base who demanded equal participation in administrative activities. Although not all the male participants in the Grange agreed with women in administrative positions, prominent Grange women forced the issue of equality. As proof of the Grange's commitment to supporting its female constituency, the Order's official Declaration of Purposes in 1874 stated that the organization aimed to instill an adequate appreciation of women into those who lacked it.⁵³

The Grange targeted this statement primarily at farmers and their wives, over whom the Order had the most influence. To substantiate this claim, the Grange noted that many farmers treated their wives almost as slaves, which left the wives with little sleep or leisure time while there was farm work to complete. This incessant forced-labor led to a life of "drudgery" for farmers' wives, who had high entrance rates into psychiatric facilities and diminishing intelligence, according to Revered Aaron Grosh, a contemporary observer.⁵⁴ Grosh argued that the Grange needed active

⁵³ Marti, 250.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 252.

women, who would focus more on domestic issues and not Grange politics. This assertion turned out to be false, however, as an increase in female Grange participants pushed to gain equal rights, socially and politically.⁵⁵

Milicent Shinn argued on behalf of the farmers' wives as the Grange had, although she requested equal suffrage and equal rights for women, unlike Grosh and other leading Grange members. To exemplify the similarities, the National Grange's language in its Declaration of Purpose resembled Shinn's argument for better female protection under the law, in that they both requested protection for women against exploitation. As stated previously, the Grange focused on educating farmers about the proper way to treat their wives to reduce the risk of women's work becoming "drudgery". On the contrary, Shinn argued that the best way to fix farmers' wives' exploitation was to allow women the right to vote.⁵⁶ Through the vote, women would gain equal protection under the law and could *create* laws to protect themselves rather than rely on their husbands.

The notion that the West was more egalitarian than the United States as a whole also contributed to more female social equality. Holly McCammon and Karen Campbell used the term "Frontier egalitarianism," or the idea that brutal life in the West forced women and men to work

⁵⁵ Marti, 261.

⁵⁶ Shinn, "To the Framers and Fruit Growers of California."

together more equally, as one reason behind why women were able to enter male dominated areas of society in the West more than the East.⁵⁷ The increasing need in the early twentieth century for better female labor laws grew out of the influx of women who moved into traditionally male positions. Scholars have discussed the many reasons behind this shift in the West and developed a few key theories.⁵⁸

McCammon and Campbell argued that the increase in women who occupied traditionally male professional positions somewhat distorted the border between male and female public roles in the West.⁵⁹ McCammon and Campbell further observe that women in the West sought higher education exponentially more than women in other areas of the country, where society at large did not accept women in predominately male colleges and universities. This again allowed for a considerable amount of societal acceptance of women in traditional masculine roles.⁶⁰ For example, highly educated women like Katherine Edson held powerful governmental

⁵⁷ McCammon and Campbell, 68.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 55-85.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

positions in areas women traditionally influenced, like welfare, but she also used her exalted position to influence broader areas of society.⁶¹

Women also played key roles as lobbyists and leaders of labor organizations that fought actively for legislative reform.⁶² The break from traditional gender roles, which influenced Californian workers to give women the vote, occurred much faster in the West than it did in the East. For this reason, much of the national suffrage literature focused on women as domestic moral leaders more so than as laborers who contributed economically to society.⁶³ Although many people active in farming and labor generally became receptive to female suffrage efforts, a significant amount of people still believed women belonged in the home. In order to appeal to these people organizations such as the NWSA, CESA, and PEL also campaigned under the theory that naturally honest and virtuous women would clean up the corrupt political sphere, essentially acting as the ‘mothers’ of society.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Norris C. Hundley, Jr., “Katherine Philips Edson and the Fight for the California Minimum Wage, 1912-1923,” *Pacific Historical Review* 29, no. 3 (August, 1960): 271-285.

⁶² McCammon and Campbell, 85.

⁶³ Katz, 245.

⁶⁴ Schaffer, 475.

Domestic Women

Women across the United States obtained varying degrees of suffrage rights before 1911, dependent upon the state in which they resided. Although no national consensus existed in reference to suffrage, many American and traditionalist immigrant men and women agreed that women naturally belonged in the home as housekeepers, caretakers and the like.⁶⁵ Because of this consensus, women who worked outside of the home on the national market generally found employment in the domestic sphere.⁶⁶ The majority of American's ability to accept women as domestic caretakers became a key point of suffrage literature throughout the movement. Suffrage organizations developed arguments surrounding women's ability to act as political housekeepers if given the right to vote. The other main argument that stemmed from the image of women as caretakers dealt with women's inability to keep their homes clean without influence over external factors of the world.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ DuBois, 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁷ Schaffer, 475-477.

History in the Making

Domestic arguments existed in some fashion in a majority of suffrage literature released from Californian equality and suffrage organization.⁶⁸

The National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) also released leaflets about women's domestic role in the home and society. One such article by an unknown author, amply titled "Women in the Home," explored women's helplessness in controlling the cleanliness of her home when she had no social or political influence to change the corrupt and filthy world. The article began by listing women's domestic responsibilities including "cleanliness of her home," "wholesomeness of the food" and the health and morals of the children. The article postulated over the amount of control a woman actually had over these domestic factors and concluded that women actually had little control.⁶⁹

Women could not protect their children adequately from the uncleanly actions of neighbors, unwholesome food, potential infections from filthy streets or an immoral environment outside of the home, without political equality. The author noted that the city was responsible for providing adequate conditions in the interest of the voters. Consequently, men were responsible for children's outcome, not women. Men as the only

⁶⁸ I found these arguments in over 80% of the suffrage literature at Claremont College's Denison Library.

⁶⁹ "Women in the Home," California Equal Suffrage Association, 1911, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: NAWSA, "Women in the Home" in any future references.

legal voters, created the public atmosphere in which children grew. The author argued that women should have the right to influence their children's surroundings because women were the ones held responsible for children and their outcome. The final statement in this leaflet, "Women are, by nature and training, housekeepers. Let them have a hand in the city's housekeeping, even if they introduce an occasional house cleaning," conveyed the domestic argument plainly to all readers.⁷⁰

The CESA produced a similar but broader leaflet that appealed to the many aspects of women, including their roles as mothers and housekeepers. The CESA argued that housekeepers and mothers needed the vote "to regulate the moral [and sanitary] conditions under which their children must be brought up."⁷¹ This argument did not include the detailed description of the NAWSA's argument regarding the many detrimental external influences a mother could not shield from her child. Instead, the "Justice – Equality" article detailed the other positions women held in society and their exploitations in those segments, as previously discussed under "Labor and Pay". While the arguments for women's suffrage differed

⁷⁰ NAWSA, "Women in the Home."

⁷¹ CESA, "Why Women Want the Vote."

in the other labor-related categories,⁷² both the “Housekeepers” and “Mothers” arguments asked men solely if they thought they would be able to protect their children from the vices of the world without the power of the vote.⁷³

This simple argument, like the NAWSA’s more complicated argument, merely suggested that women needed the vote to protect their children.⁷⁴ These arguments demonstrated women’s domestic competency as homemakers and mothers, a position that men comfortably accepted. Suffragists used this aspect of the domestic argument to encourage men to visualize women utilizing their homemaking skills in the political sphere to improve domestic conditions.⁷⁵

The other aspect of the domestic argument focused on women as the moral compasses of society. Under this theory, suffragists argued that women would bring high moral standards and civility into politics, which badly needed these positive qualities.⁷⁶ Reverend Father Gleason, a Catholic priest, expressed these sentiments in a speech he gave on May 23, 1911, at

⁷² The other categories included Working Women, Business Women, Teachers, Tax Paying Women, and lastly all women in general. CESA, “Why Women Want the Vote.”

⁷³ CESA, “Why Women Want the Vote.”

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Katz, 245.

⁷⁶ Schaffer, 479.

the Central Theatre in San Francisco, California. Through this speech, Father Gleason attempted to unite all women to stand for equal suffrage and gain more male support for the movement.⁷⁷

The PEL published this speech to expose significantly more people than those present to Father Gleason's message. Father Gleason discussed working-women in his argument, as well as the many other key points found throughout suffrage literature, though his argument mainly focused on women as domestic and virtuous members of society. Father Gleason initiated his argument by stating, "A woman is the mother of mankind. A woman is marked out to bring the rest of mankind into the world, and the old saying was that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Although he followed this statement by a short discussion of women's dignified efforts in labor and business, this statement set the tone for the remainder of his speech.⁷⁸

Father Gleason cited annual reports by the Department of Labor and the United States Commissioner of Education to demonstrate women's equal ability and success in education and labor. He noted from these statistics that strong and educated women formed the values and character of the next generation of children, while those same women had no voice in

⁷⁷ Gleason, "Extracts from the speech of the Rev. Father Gleason."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

History in the Making

education administration beyond teaching. Father Gleason again argued that women, who possessed “the nobler sentiment, the clearer sight, the more loving heart,” were the people who could advance society morally. He noted that men must recognize morality as their weak point and accept women as the source of improvement in the metaphoric, “one great family”.⁷⁹ Father Gleason recognized the anti-suffragist argument, that women would abandon or abuse their families and homes if they received the right to vote, and developed a strong argument against these accusations. Father Gleason argued that mothers would not abandon their families and would actually be better, more careful, voters since they had their children’s futures and best interests in mind. To exemplify his description of the ills children faced in society without the vote of women, Father Gleason exclaimed that:

There is a surging and a boiling going on i[n] our midst, the people are stirred to the depths, and you can notice a scum coming up from the bottom. You see anarchy, you see tendencies of every kind, that have only one finish, one object, and that is the pulling down of everything noble, everything pure, everything high-minded and decent in our American ideals. There is only one way to obviate all of that... let every man here cast his vote that his wife and mother and sister may be as much as he is in the eyes of the law... give nobility and decency and honesty a chance.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Gleason, “Extracts from the speech of the Rev. Father Gleason,” p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

This description of 1911 society may not have been very different from the truth at the time in San Francisco. A large graft scandal surfaced in 1906 around San Francisco Mayor Eugene Schmitz, the hero of the 1906 earthquake,⁸¹ and political boss Abraham Ruef. Newspaper reports about the scandal included links between the two prominent San Franciscan figures and prostitution, extortion, and an incredible amount of bribery. In total, a grand jury brought sixty-five indictments against Ruef for bribery in relation to the gas rate, the Home Telephone franchise and the overhead trolley ordinance.⁸² One of the most damaging accusations of the trial exposed Boss Ruef's attempts to benefit financially from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, to the city's detriment.⁸³

The public obviously felt a sense of disenchantment in San Francisco's government and the public utilities after the series of graft prosecutions that indicted many prominent San Franciscans between 1906 and 1911.⁸⁴ Father Gleason used this type of disillusionment to his advantage

⁸¹ Walton Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 122.

⁸² Bean, 188-197. The vice president of the Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph Company also faced nine indictments for ordering bribery payments.

⁸³ Bean, 123.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 256-267.

History in the Making

in his plea to gain more support for women's suffrage. The relevancy of Father Gleason's argument in this political climate was abundantly clear to his audience. Father Gleason pleaded his constituency give women the vote in the October 1911 election, to end prejudice, and follow in the Christian ideal that promoted female equality. The Reverend concluded his speech by asking women and men to convince non-supporters of the benefits of equal suffrage, no matter how resistant they appeared.⁸⁵ Suffrage organizations in California and across the country used the domestic argument to prove that women's moral standards in the home could easily extend into the public sphere. While prominent men like Father Gleason spoke about the ways women *could* improve society, few suffrage advocates understood this importance first-hand more than Jane Addams.⁸⁶

Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House, worked to improve the social ills in labor-entrenched Chicago. To accomplish her goals Addams provided comfortable accommodations for many immigrants, poor mothers and children through her settlement at Hull House. Addams and her partner Ellen Gates Starr created educational programs through Hull House and fought for better sanitary conditions on Chicago's streets. As an active

⁸⁵ Gleason, "Extracts from the speech of the Rev. Father Gleason."

⁸⁶ Jane Addams, "Jane Addams Wants to Vote" *Ladies Home Journal*, reprinted by California Equal Suffrage Association, January, 1911, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Addams, "Jane Addams Wants to Vote" in any future references.

member of society, Jane Addams supported female suffrage as a necessity to help improve city conditions and stop corruption.⁸⁷

The CESA published a leaflet in 1910 that contained an article authored by Jane Addams, entitled “Jane Addams Wants to Vote.”⁸⁸

Addams acknowledged the widely accepted notion that women’s primary roles were those of housekeepers and caregivers. Addams noted that she did not foresee a day when this would change, although she argued, women at the turn of the twenty-first century began to abuse their responsibility as homemakers. Addams based this argument on her observation of a majority of women who took an inactive role in life outside the home. This social inactivity prohibited women from being completely responsible for the home, as children and husbands brought potentially hazardous outside conditions into the home.⁸⁹

Addams established her argument on circumstances in Chicago, an overcrowded city where many families lived in tenements – dependent upon the government for the standards in which they lived. While this description of living conditions did not particularly pertain to life in the

⁸⁷ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 89-118.

⁸⁸ Addams, “Jane Addams Wants to Vote.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

West, the general concept of the city government as the responsible entity for housing protection and cleanliness was not lost. Addams argument in dealing with inadequate building codes and unsanitary garbage disposal was similar to the NAWSA's argument directed at residents of the western United States.⁹⁰

Addams plunged much deeper into the issues women faced in an increasingly modern society. She expressed her concern over women's working conditions, including long hours and unsanitary conditions, as a threat to the home when women between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two, exited the work force and tried to build families. Addams argued that dangerous workplaces caused injury to many working-women to varying degrees. These injuries restricted women from completing their household obligations to the best of their ability and could have possibly posed reproduction problems. In closing, Adams posed the question "May we not fairly say that American women need this implement [suffrage] in order to preserve the home?"⁹¹ Jane Addams, as living proof of what women could accomplish when they forced issues, was a great spokesperson for the national suffrage cause.

⁹⁰ Addams, "Jane Addams Wants to Vote."

⁹¹ Ibid.

Other organizations, like the PEL, reiterated Addams' sentiments and included new arguments about the "Commercialized Vice" that infiltrated society.⁹² Clifford Howard stated that women needed the vote to protect children from vice and corruption implanted by corporations. Enfranchised women would elect virtuous men, Howard argued, who would lead society in the right direction and protect children against these ills. The argument that enfranchised women would act as mothers in society did not appeal to all women and men equally throughout the country. Some suffragists and many anti-suffragists took issue with the assertion that women needed to use their virtuous nature to clean the political sphere.

The Anti-Suffrage Argument

Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge, the President of the National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage (NAOWS), argued that women and men were specialists in their own separate spheres and that creating political equality would be a step back for women.⁹³ Dodge noted that education and labor

⁹² Clifford Howard, "Mothers, Fathers, and all Good Citizens," Los Angeles Political Equality League, California 1911(?), Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges.

⁹³ Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge, "Woman Suffrage Opposed to Woman's Rights," *Annals of American Academy* (n.d.), 99-104, Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges. This document will be referred to as: Dodge, "Woman Suffrage Opposed to Woman's Rights" in any future references.

History in the Making

reform was not government's only responsibility and that social pressure by women would create the need for change without actually giving women the vote.⁹⁴ Women entered higher education and professional positions without the vote, Dodge argued, and the positions she could not enter endangered her welfare. Furthermore, Dodge argued that labor organizations would not become more efficient and that the plight of young women in industrial positions would not improve.⁹⁵ Dodge's six-page article listed over a dozen reasons why women should not vote, including the argument that voting would be a burden to women.

Similar NAOWS literature released in California may not have been as successful as literature released by pro-suffragists for many reasons. A majority of the anti-suffrage literature found at Claremont College's Ella Strong Denison Library were long essay-format articles.⁹⁶ These articles did not attract immediate attention to the key arguments. On the other hand, suffragists used an array of fonts, colors, and pictures to draw the reader's attention. Anti-suffrage literature plainly described their points in paragraph form. At a glance, the reader could decipher suffragists' main

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵ Dodge, "Woman Suffrage Opposed to Woman's Rights."

⁹⁶ Prestonia Mann Martin, "An Anti-suffragist's Reply to Mr. Bryan's Reasons for Advocating Woman Suffrage," National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, New York, n.d., Women's Suffrage Collection, Ella Strong Denison Library, Libraries of the Claremont Colleges; and Dodge, "Woman Suffrage Opposed to Woman's Rights."

purpose and the action they asked the reader to take. A person would have to read a multi-page pamphlet to discern the anti-suffragists' proposition.⁹⁷

Western Success

Suffragists in the United States embarked on the mission for equality, symbolically, at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. Sixty-nine years later, women in Seneca Falls, New York gained the right to vote by the passage of a New York state constitutional amendment; three years before the nation ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. The United States legislature voted on the Women's Suffrage Amendment multiple times between its introduction in 1878 and its passage in 1920. Thirty states individually, some after multiple attempts, and the Alaskan territory granted suffrage to women before the U.S. legislature passed the Nineteenth Amendment, named the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, in 1920.⁹⁸ Sadly, pioneers of the suffrage movement, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone-Blackwell did not live to see the fruits of their labor on a

⁹⁷ Ibid.; and Dodge, "Woman Suffrage Opposed to Woman's Rights."

⁹⁸ Wheeler, Appendix One: "The Electoral Thermometer," in *One Woman, One Vote* (Troutdale: New Sage Press, 1995), 375-377; and Wheeler, Appendix Two: "Chronology of Congressional Action," 378.

national scale, although protégés Carrie Chapman Catt and Harriett Stanton Blanch did witness the victory.

Nearly fifty years before congress passed the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, developing state governments in the West led the nation in granting women suffrage rights. For instance, women in Wyoming and Utah gained the right to the ballot first in December 1869 and February 1870, respectively. National suffrage organizations did not directly open the path to suffrage for these women, as was the case in California and Washington. Similarly, no extensive anti-suffrage organizations existed in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado or Idaho— the four states to grant suffrage before the close of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, these budding state governments used women suffrage, and other social reforms, as tools to draw investors and settlers to their states.⁹⁹ Other western states, like California, did not use suffrage as a tool to entice settlers, rather suffragist settlers fought for the vote to increase female equality— socially, economically and politically.

Suffragist organizations in California succeeded in persuading men to give women the ballot through effective fund-raising and organizing. With money and an army of devoted volunteers at their disposal, suffrage

⁹⁹ Beverley Beeton, “How the West Was Won for Women Suffrage,” in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, (Troutdale: New Sage Press, 1995), 99-115.

organizations saturated Western cities with a barrage of information that appealed to a wide range of groups including labor interests, agricultural workers, educated and professional men, as well as traditional men who saw women as the moral backbone of society.

Western suffrage leaders' ability to learn from Eastern organizations' successes and failures saved the western organizers valuable time and resources, which may be one of the reasons suffrage passed first in the West. For example, Massachusetts suffrage organizers learned after their costly 1895 attempt for the ballot that pro-suffrage literature needed to be universally acceptable while it also targeted specialty groups.¹⁰⁰ This was a tactic Western organizers perfected. Powerful anti-suffrage segments of society defeated the early Massachusetts movements as suffragists spread their resources too thin. This loss spurred the development of the CESA, who used precise techniques to attract followers and rebuild links between suffrage organizations. Ties between suffrage groups in the East with labor leaders, progressives, and powerful ethnic groups created large alliances that also helped the suffrage campaign in the West.¹⁰¹ Overall, the rhetorical and organizational techniques sharpened in Eastern movements coupled

¹⁰⁰ Sharon Hartman Strom, "Leadership and Tactics in the American Woman Suffrage Movement: A New Perspective from Massachusetts," *Journal of American History* 62, no. 2. (September, 1975): 300

¹⁰¹ Hartman Strom, 304.

with a more receptive audience in the West created an optimal atmosphere for suffrage organizers.