



The winning of woman suffrage in Montana
by Doris Buck Ward

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS in History
Montana State University
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Abstract:

The debates of the Montana Constitutional Convention of 1889 on issues related to equal suffrage afford us direct insights into the intellectual setting of frontier society in Montana. Inherent in the suffrage issue were inter-related concepts regarding the proper role of woman and the locus of power in representative government. The delegates were keenly aware that their blueprint for statehood would mold social contours and determine access to political power. They decided that the political rights of their women should be tightly circumscribed.

Suffragists modified their ideology and strategy in successive drives for the ballot. In Montana, as elsewhere, they eventually compromised principles of equal dignity in order to secure a broad consensus for woman suffrage. The Victorian cyst of sexual inequality remained to perpetuate the "woman problem." To many, Jeannette Rankin personified the suffrage movement in Montana. She was a remarkable leader. But others had conducted admirably conceived campaigns under trying circumstances before her. The prospects for equal suffrage rose and fell, not only with quality of leadership, but with reform spirit (particularly with Populism in the 1890's and with Progressivism and Socialism later). But the reform spirit was a conservative one— to restore control of government to the people for social progress compatible with traditional values.

Adoption of the equal suffrage amendment to Montana's constitution in 1914, 25 years after admission to statehood, removed formal barriers to women's full participation in Montana government (except for jury duty). Conservative Montana lagged among western states in granting equal franchise. But in 1916, four years before the nation would have equal suffrage, Montana elected Miss Rankin to Congress.

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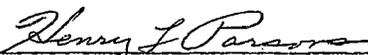
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Special appreciation is reserved for the author's family for tolerating anti-social behavior as one woman enlarged her "sphere." To many other persons, the author's thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| VITA. | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES. | v |
| ABSTRACT. | vi |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION. | 1 |
| CHAPTER II: CONCEPTS OF WOMEN AND SUFFRAGE FOR A NEW STATE . | 14 |
| CHAPTER III: WOMEN LIBBERS OF THE 1890'S | 31 |
| Suffragists and the WCTU, The Early Tie | 31 |
| Ella Knowles, Populist. | 34 |
| Awakening Queens. | 42 |
| Girded Women. | 48 |
| Enduring Suffragists. | 63 |
| CHAPTER IV: THE TARNISHED VISION | 75 |
| Turn-of-the-Century Doldrums. | 75 |
| Help Wanted in the Stables. | 80 |
| Incubation for Reform | 100 |
| CHAPTER V: SISTERS IN YELLOW AND WHITE | 107 |
| CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY. | 152 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY. | 158 |

LIST OF TABLES

| <u>Table</u> | | <u>Page</u> |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | House Votes on Related Reform Bills, 1897. | 61 |
| 2 | Vote on the Woman Suffrage Bill, 1905. | 99 |
| 3 | Homestead Entries in Montana, 1905-1919. | 104 |
| 4 | Development of Montana Population, 1900-1920 | 104 |
| 5 | Vote on the Woman Suffrage Bill, 1911. | 113 |
| 6 | Per Cent of County Votes in Support of Woman Suffrage (1914), Prohibition (1916), and Minor Parties (1914) . | 147 |

ABSTRACT

The debates of the Montana Constitutional Convention of 1889 on issues related to equal suffrage afford us direct insights into the intellectual setting of frontier society in Montana. Inherent in the suffrage issue were inter-related concepts regarding the proper role of woman and the locus of power in representative government. The delegates were keenly aware that their blueprint for statehood would mold social contours and determine access to political power. They decided that the political rights of their women should be tightly circumscribed.

Suffragists modified their ideology and strategy in successive drives for the ballot. In Montana, as elsewhere, they eventually compromised principles of equal dignity in order to secure a broad consensus for woman suffrage. The Victorian cyst of sexual inequality remained to perpetuate the "woman problem." To many, Jeannette Rankin personified the suffrage movement in Montana. She was a remarkable leader. But others had conducted admirably conceived campaigns under trying circumstances before her. The prospects for equal suffrage rose and fell, not only with quality of leadership, but with reform spirit (particularly with Populism in the 1890's and with Progressivism and Socialism later). But the reform spirit was a conservative one-- to restore control of government to the people for social progress compatible with traditional values.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historians have written prolifically about Montana's colorful early days--of Indians, trappers, and range barons; of mining camps, Vigilantes, and Copper Kings. Popular attention has turned, also, to the more contemporary exploits of "the Company" and to twentieth century political figures of Montana. However, the history of ideas in the state, of cultural values held by the people and how those concepts interplayed with social and political development, remains largely virgin area for study.

The woman suffrage movement in Montana affords a rich opportunity to fill part of that gap in understanding the state's past. Through successive campaigns for equal suffrage, spanning a quarter century (1889-1914), changes evolved in the status of women and in the locus of political power. The objective of women's rights, broadly conceived by Montana suffragists in the 1890's, narrowed to the goal of ballot in the Progressive period.¹ Montana suffragists, like their national counterparts, adopted political expedients in order to secure popular support. Their reversion to a modified Victorian image of

¹The woman suffrage movement always included male advocates so the term "suffragist" herein will apply to any supporter of woman suffrage. "Suffragette," however, will designate only militant women, who became influential in the final decade of the suffrage movement in the United States. "Feminism" will refer to the concept of equal rights and status of persons regardless of sex.

woman was central to the compromise. That strategy meant that some fundamental feminist reforms were laid aside--until today's resurgence of concern for women's rights. Thus basic elements of the current debate echo suffrage arguments of many decades ago.

Although historians have not overlooked Montana's story of woman suffrage, much has yet to be told. To many people Jeannette Rankin symbolizes that movement, and several biographers have dealt comprehensively with her suffrage work.² Admirers of Miss Rankin often seem unaware, however, that a great amount of work by many Montana suffragists preceded the final phase of the struggle for equal franchise in Montana under Miss Rankin's leadership (1911-1914). They fail to acknowledge that earlier suffragists had experimented with various ideas and techniques employed in the closing campaign.³ Jeannette Rankin

²John C. Board, "The Lady from Montana: Jeannette Rankin" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Wyoming, 1964), pp. 15-60; Ted Carlton Harris, "Jeannette Rankin: Suffragist, First Woman Elected to Congress, and Pacifist" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1972), pp. 39-95; Ronald Schaffer, "The Montana Woman Suffrage Campaign, 1911-14," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, LV, No. 1 (1964), pp. 9-15; Schaffer, "Jeannette Rankin, Progressive-Isolationist" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1959).

³Board prefaced his thesis with the remark that his work did not treat the suffrage campaign in Montana fully enough, still he summarized the pre-Rankin era with: "In the 1880's Montana had experienced a flourish for suffrage and the movement had died," and he added that Jeannette Rankin was not to let it die again (p. 34). Harris noted that suffragists formed several societies and held conventions in Montana before 1900, then he moved quickly through the next decade to his story of Jeannette Rankin's suffrage work (p. 46).

surely was a devoted and inspiring leader, but it does not diminish her distinguished contribution to learn about other eminent suffragists on the Montana scene. Two accounts of Montana's woman suffrage movement reach back to territorial days and trace the movement through ratification of the equal suffrage amendment in 1914.⁴ However, neither chronicle relied adequately upon primary research from contemporaneous Montana sources, and both emphasized the record of events rather than development of popular thought related to the suffrage issue.

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of Montana's character, an enlarged view of its people and their political expression. In a more restrictive but pertinent sense, it should inform today's citizens in their on-going search for human fulfillment by defining the course of women's rights. The author assumes that woman suffrage was desirable, if only as a principle of justice, and that, even though women bore the burden of the battle for change, repression of political equality stemmed from attitudes shared much alike by men and women.

⁴The older reference is a pair of volumes: Mary Long Alderson, "Montana," The History of Woman Suffrage, IV, edited by Ida Husted Harper and Susan B. Anthony (Rochester: Susan B. Anthony, 1902), pp. 796-801; Lucille Dyas Topping, "Montana," Ibid., VI, edited by Ida Husted Harper. (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1922), pp. 360-367. More recent is T. A. Larson, "Montana Women and the Battle for the Ballot," Montana, the Magazine of Western History, XXIII, No. 1 (1973), pp. 24-41. The HWS chapters depended heavily upon personal recall. Larson's access to archives outside Montana enabled him to relate suffrage events in Montana to national developments and personalities.

The history of an idea is woven into a complex social fabric, so time frames must be arbitrary. Montana at statehood seems a logical point at which to pick up the thread of woman suffrage thought. The Constitutional Convention of 1884 raised the issue of equal suffrage, but the journals do not indicate that those delegates gave the subject serious consideration. Montana's first significant public discussion of woman suffrage evidently occurred in the Constitutional Convention of 1889, and full records of the extensive debates are available.⁵ Deliberations by those prominent men over principles of suffrage reveal ideas of early Montanans toward political and moral control of their frontier society.

A sense of community and agitation for statehood developed markedly in Montana during the 1880's. Governor Benjamin Potts brought administrative order and solvency to the territory during his 12 1/2-year tenure ending in 1883. The Indian menace declined rapidly after the Custer massacre of 1876 and the flight of the Nez Perce the following year. Railroads penetrated the territory, bringing settlers and expanding markets--the Utah Northern to Butte by 1881, the Northern Pacific across southern Montana by 1883, and the Great Northern with its northern route by 1893. The harsh winter of 1886-1887 spurred the

⁵Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention, 1889
(Helena: State Publishing Company, 1921).

end of the open range, and cattlemen increasingly became residents on fenced lands. Placer mining of gold, characterized by unstable camps of individual fortune-seekers, was superseded by quartz mining of silver by 1880. By the late 1880's copper had become the state's most valuable product. Although many mine operations were still small and independent through the 1880's, the new type of extraction required substantial capital, a large labor force, and associated commercial services. These changes meant greater economic permanence and communal awareness.

The Territory of Montana, anxious to develop, competed with a vast western region and Canada for settlers. Montana's non-Indian population more than tripled during the 1880's, from 39,000 to 132,000. In 1890 nearly one-third were foreign-born. Males outnumbered females nearly two to one, and the disparity was much greater among adults.⁶ The mobile, expansive conditions of the frontier evidently encouraged more open-mindedness and willingness to experiment than was the case later. Mary Curtis Knowles, wife of Judge Hiram Knowles, worried in 1910 that Montanans might become narrow provincials, "prisoners of conventionality." She recalled that in the 1870's Montanans had been

⁶Ellis L. Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864: An Atlas of Elections (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958), pp. 38, 62. Evidently Waldron's census figures prior to 1900 excluded Indians, although they numbered over 11,000 in 1890 (pp. 24n, 62, 91n). Proportions both of the foreign-born and of males had been higher in 1880 (Ibid., p. 38).

a cosmopolitan people. Their heterogeneity "compelled a charity regarding the opinions of others," and their territorial status kept them knowledgeable about national affairs.⁷

Legislatures of the 1880's experimented with broader political rights for women. Prodded by Robert Howay, Superintendent of Public Instruction, the 1883 legislature granted women the right to vote in district school elections and to hold the Office of Trustee and County Superintendent of Schools. Two women served as County Superintendents the following year. And territorial women with property had equal franchise on tax issues.⁸

The prospect of statehood seemed to inhibit the liberal, experimental tendency exercised by political leaders when dealing with territorial affairs. In shaping a permanent state, those with substantial stake wanted to secure their interests in a society of their ideal. This required careful definition of political structure and curbs against change. The constitutions fashioned by both the 1884 and the 1889 conventions proposed a weak executive and increased restrictions on legislative operations. The 1889 constitution changed apportionment of the senate from a populate base to equal representation of

⁷"The Making of the State," Montana Lookout (Helena), December 31, 1910, p. 10.

⁸James McClellan Hamilton, From Wilderness to Statehood: A History of Montana, edited by Merrill Burlingame (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1970), pp. 498-499; HWS, IV, p. 799.

counties and made constitutional amendment more difficult. The state's constitution provided not only a detailed framework for government, but prescriptive laws for 1889.

In this mood of conservative ordering, concepts of the status of women were central to debates over political privilege. Legitimacy of political privilege, as conceived by Montana's dominant leadership in this early period, did not rest on natural rights of individuals, but in practical politics. These men answered to frontier exigencies and tried to maintain control over a fluid society. Suffrage was an ingredient of power, so theories of political equality were not particularly relevant. A double standard of citizenship for men and women was inherent.

Under the majoritarian system of government, the right of franchise is fundamental to political potency. Montana's early leaders knew this well. Although territorial delegates to Congress exercised floor privilege in the House of Representatives, they lacked the clout of a ballot to defend the interests of their constituents. This weakness was a prime factor in Montana's agitation for statehood. While Montana's male politicians chafed at being "political eunuchs" under an infamous "colonial system," they failed to see the parallel political impotence of their women. Few of them empathized with women, a class of citizens disfranchised in the general public forum and limited to

means of persuasion which the men found inadequate. Montana's Founding Fathers still blocked equal suffrage.⁹

Montana's founders acknowledged, too, that men universally valued the ballot. In competition for settlers, Montana enticed prospective immigrants with its liberal political privilege--for men. The 1884 constitutional convention proposed to enfranchise resident male aliens (predominantly Teutonic) provided that not less than four months prior to a given election the foreigner had declared his intent to become an American citizen. The constitution of 1889 was less generous to foreign voters; the national origin of immigrants was shifting to southern Europe, especially Italy. While those aliens already enfranchised would never be barred, the privilege for new aliens would terminate five years after adoption of the constitution. Neither the 1884 plan nor the 1889 constitution made any literacy demand. The Fathers were not motivated so much by a magnanimous concept of suffrage as by a hard-headed bid for rapid economic development. They did not see a need to court women politically; women would follow their men. Even though the nearby territories of Wyoming and Utah had granted full suffrage to women two decades before Montana became a state, Montana's

⁹See Clark C. Spence, "Beggars to Washington: Montana's Territorial Delegates," Montana, the Magazine of Western History, XXIV, No. 1 (1974), pp. 2-13.

lure of franchise was for men only.¹⁰ Presumably no immigrants, whether from the Old World or from older parts of the United States, had a tradition of equal suffrage, so woman's political status would rarely be a significant criterion in resettlement. Montana was not compelled to offer woman suffrage.

However, woman suffrage was recognized as a threat to the lifestyle of Montana's surplus males. These men found conviviality and politics in the saloon. Especially for the foreign-born, the saloon eased the newcomers' orientation in a strange community. Prior to 1889 the only organized promotion of equal suffrage in Montana had come from the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Its declared goal was not temperance, but prohibition, and it needed woman's vote as a weapon. Therefore, men associated woman suffrage with prohibition. But whether the woman voter would prove to be a prohibitionist or not, here dedication to build a home and society befitting a family called out a cluster of values quite different from those of the mobile, unattached males. Her ballot would increase the political effectiveness of the stable folk. The ambitious politician reckoned with the reality of his saloon constituents, who had the vote, and did not promote equal suffrage.

¹⁰ Alan P. Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), Ch. 1-2, develops the Wyoming and Utah cases.

Few of Montana's frontier leaders worried about abstract rights for women. They were caught up in practical concerns: land and tax policy, mineral and timber rights, railroad privileges, control of power, and statehood. By the late 1880's a few men (including William A. Clark, Marcus Daly, Samuel Hauser, and C. A. Broadwater) wielded remarkable economic and political power. It was the era of Social Darwinism, which theorized that social good derived from rugged competition, force, and inequality; the fittest rightfully achieved superiority (i.e., wealth and power), and society thus "progressed." In this dynamic, male-dominated frontier, what would full woman suffrage do for Montana? What could persuade political leaders to share their control of power?

Partial suffrage for women could be rationalized, outside the question of individual rights, as a social benefit. Woman's ballot and trusteeship in local school affairs constituted an extension of her traditional function, that of tending children and teaching morals. Her equal ballot on tax issues recognized sacrosanct property rights. Security of property was a prime purpose of government, and property offered assurance of the owner's stake in society. Woman suffrage, thus limited, posed little threat to conservative politics; its exercise seemed safe and predictable. Nor did it disturb social mores, since premise of individual equality was avoided.

When Montana's Constitutional Convention gathered in 1889, woman suffrage was not a new issue, nationally or in the West. A diligent corps of women's rights leaders had struggled for a generation (since the Seneca Falls convention of 1848) before Montana suffragists enlisted. The period of public ridicule and internal dissension was largely past by 1890. Pioneer feminists, all abolitionists, had sharply disagreed after the Civil War over strategy in regard to the Fourteenth Amendment--whether to accept it for the full citizenship it proposed for Negro males or to resist the amendment because it defied woman suffragists' expectation of equal political rights. From 1869 until 1890 participants in the women's movement aligned either with the aggressive National Woman Suffrage Association, led by New Yorkers Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Miss Susan B. Anthony, or with the conservative and compromising American Woman Suffrage Association under the leadership of Lucy Stone, her husband Henry B. Blackwell, and Henry Ward Beecher. The National maintained open membership for women (but excluded men) and worked for broad women's rights and a federal suffrage amendment. The American moved carefully among the more elite society and promoted state campaigns for equal suffrage. Its Woman's Journal, founded in 1870, served the suffrage cause long and influentially. By 1890 the factions of the suffrage movement had drawn together in respectable conservatism to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Urbanization and industrialization

were changing and polarizing American society. Suffragists, along with old stock Americans, saw a threat to their interests in new immigrants, urban masses, and political machines. Suffragists nationally were aligned with conservators of traditional values.

Suffragists were working from a sophisticated philosophical base for women's rights, not just for political equality. They lifted much of their thought from Lockean ideas of natural and inalienable rights and of government as a social contract validated by consent of the governed. Therefore, they argued, American government in practice violated fundamental principles of justice revered in the Declaration of Independence. Women generally gave no consent to government, could not sit on juries, and were taxed without representation. Many in the women's rights movement (especially the Quakers and Unitarians among them) challenged the subordination of women as taught by orthodox religions. The feminists saw God-given equality of rights and capacities, which social custom thwarted. They subscribed to faith in progress. Equal justice would continue to advance under republicanism. Already political aristocracies of birth, of property, and of race had yielded to democratic principles, and class discrimination against women would fall. With political equality women would contribute to greater morality in public affairs, and men and women together--and only together--could fashion a utopia.

By 1890 seventeen states had accorded women equal school suffrage, three had extended tax suffrage, and Kansas had granted them the municipal ballot. And in the West three territories had instituted full woman suffrage: Wyoming since 1869, Utah from 1870 until Congress denied it in 1887 (over the issue of polygamy), and Washington from 1883 until 1887 when court action invalidated the privilege. Thus the principle of woman suffrage was neither radically aligned nor novel when Montana's Constitutional Convention debated the issue in 1889.¹¹

¹¹For interpretations of the woman's rights movement see Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York: Atheneum, 1970); Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1971); and William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971). For particular views of woman suffrage see Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage; and Ross Evans Paulson, Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1973). For an inside account of the women suffrage movement see National American Woman Suffrage Association, Victory: How the Women Won It: A Centennial Symposium, 1840-1940 (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1940).

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTS OF WOMEN AND SUFFRAGE FOR A NEW STATE

Montana's territorial legislatures had exercised unrestricted power to extend franchise as they saw fit. But the Constitutional Convention of 1884 drew a rein on legislative discretion regarding woman's vote. While that constitution would have provided no direct suffrage for women, it allowed the legislature to grant them only the local school ballot and the right to serve as school trustee. Judge W. J. Stephens of Missoula did propose equal suffrage, but evidently the convention readily accepted the Suffrage Committee's cryptic rejection--on grounds that it was "not expedient to grant to women general suffrage."¹ Because Congress, in political impasse, denied statehood to Montana, the 1884 constitution was not implemented. Five years later another Constitutional Convention met in Helena (from July 4 through August 17) and fashioned the constitution which served Montana until 1973.

The 1889 convention fought a preliminary skirmish over woman suffrage when Henry Blackwell of Boston, secretary of the American Woman Suffrage Association, arrived in Helena on July 17. A huge western region of the United States was in transition to statehood, and suffragists nationally hoped to bring many of these new states into the

¹Records of the Montana Constitutional Convention, 1884
(Historical Society Library, Helena), proceedings of January 23, 1884.

Union with feasible prospect for equal suffrage. Under territorial governments, in constitutional conventions, and in state legislatures, broader suffrage provisions could be obtained by a simple majority vote. Experience had already demonstrated to suffragists that the process of constitutional amendment was a formidable barrier to their cause. Skeptical of achieving the prize of constitutional provision for equal suffrage, Blackwell meant to persuade the various constitutional conventions to structure their governments so as to allow response to progressive change, specifically to permit legislative expansion of suffrage.

Although the public-spirited McAdows, Perry and Clara, had arranged for Blackwell's stopover in Helena, resentment flared among the convention delegates and in the press that the Bostonian should intervene in Montana's deliberations. He was an intellectual in his mid-60's, who had fully agreed that Lucy Stone should keep her own name and continue her women's rights work when they married.² These personal factors did not mesh well with the masculine ideal in Montana. Also, territorial experience with Washington politics had taught Montanans

²Their wedding ceremony, in 1855, included the reading and circulation of a signed "Protest" against laws which promulgated male domination and advantage in marriage. An 1847 graduate of Oberlin College, Lucy Stone was instrumental in bringing Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe, and Frances Willard into the woman suffrage movement. The couple's daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell, also devoted her life to equality for women. (NAWSA, Victory: How the Women Won It, pp. 39-40, 42f.)

to be wary of outsiders' solutions to frontier problems. Why should Blackwell try to impose reforms in Montana that the East had rejected? A chronically cantankerous delegate, John C. Robinson, protested "even dignifying the application of men from outside" since those convened were perfectly capable of managing their own affairs. Judge Hiram Knowles sought to restrain the xenophobia by contending that the question of equal suffrage widely interested prominent men, and Blackwell was an able advocate; only hear him. "Let us not by a sneer or by narrowness, or by wrapping ourselves up in the opinion that Montana knows everything she needs to know, . . . close the door to everything that can come from outside," Knowles urged his colleagues. The convention granted Blackwell audience, not as a special petitioner on the floor, but in an evening appearance in the convention hall open to the public.³

Blackwell marshalled the common arguments for woman suffrage: to fulfill democratic principle, bring greater morality to government, and strengthen women's bid for economic equality. He tried to tempt the delegates, keenly conscious of community-building, with a vision of "100,000 of the most progressive and the most desirable immigrants that America can furnish" thronging within five years to a Montana

³Proceedings and Debates, 1889, pp. 78-80. For press reaction see especially the Great Falls Tribune, July 20, 1889, p. 2.

enlightened enough to offer equal suffrage. Blackwell acknowledged that women hesitated to vote, but social custom had taught that it was unwomanly to meddle in politics. He predicted that if Montana men accepted the idea, women would conscientiously share the civic responsibility. All humanity would benefit. Blackwell's major plea, however, was that the new constitution retain the suffrage rights women already had under territorial law and that it continue legislative discretion over suffrage. Constitutional restriction of woman suffrage in Montana would be a new obstruction to progressive public will. While constitutional amendment was possible in the abstract, political mobilization to arouse sufficient public support for the cause would be extremely difficult. To Blackwell the legislative avenue seemed to be a familiar, conservative, and responsive solution.⁴

The impact of Blackwell's speech is unclear. The ideas he expressed permeated many aspects of the suffrage debates that followed, but nobody cited him. And his major recommendation, for continuance of legislative discretion to expand the franchise, was rejected by the convention. The delegates decided that the confines of political power in the future state seemed safer under their paternalistic stamp.

The major battles over woman suffrage took place in late July. The convention first turned its attention to the Suffrage Article on

⁴Proceedings and Debates, 1889, pp. 81-88.

July 25. The Committee on Right of Suffrage, chaired by German-born Louis Rotwitt, had recommended severe limitations on political privileges of women, modelled verbatim after those set by the 1884 document. The committee proposed that the legislature might "pass laws allowing women the right to hold any school district office and vote at any school district election." That was all. It would omit any direct political privilege to women, subtract their territorial eligibility to the office of County Superintendent of Schools, eliminate women's tax ballot, and withdraw legislative discretion over expansion of suffrage.⁵

The convention rejected the stringent limits on women's political rights as proposed by the suffrage committee. It made local school ballot and office a mandatory provision and restored women's eligibility to the office of County Superintendent of Schools (since "the ladies" had shown that they were fully competent to take charge of that public service). Just before adjournment, the convention reinstated the equal tax ballot. Proposed by former governor B. Platt Carpenter, the measure passed without discussion, 34 to 26. However, proposals to make women eligible to vote for State Superintendent of Public Instruction and to hold that office were rejected by the convention, as was an effort by Timothy Collins to grant women the municipal ballot.⁶

⁵Ibid., p. 330. See pp. 330-408, 448-466, 855-857 for full suffrage debates.

⁶Ibid., pp. 404-408, 871, 915.

It was over the question of legislative power to enfranchise that the storm raged. Walter Bickford, a junior law partner of Judge Stephens (who proposed equal suffrage in the 1884 convention), offered a substitute to the section of the Suffrage Article which defined qualifications of electors. Bickford did not disturb constitutional provision of the ballot for males only. His key clause would empower the legislature "to confer upon women the rights and privileges of electors to vote in any or all elections."

Whether viewed as a natural right or one bestowed by the state, Bickford thought that the right of general suffrage belonged to women; they were as capable of a discriminating vote as were men. He argued for as conservative a position as possible, but he wanted Montana's legislature authorized to respond to the issue of equal suffrage when, in the march of progress, prevailing public sentiment should so warrant. He cited growing evidence that women did want the ballot and would use it well. Meeting the moral arguments, pro and con, Bickford declared that neither the fears of those who opposed woman suffrage nor the hopes of its supporters would be realized. Woman was not degraded at the polls; neither did she greatly purify the ballot nor dispose of all public problems. He urged the convention to do what was just, to be liberal enough to vote in the interest of progress and good government,

and by so doing "add one ornament . . . to the bright crown of the state of Montana."⁷

Bickford's basic premise was that the constitution should allow flexibility for response to social change. Therefore, his proposal won support from delegates who respected the procedural rights of public opinion and future citizens; position of the delegates on the substantive issue of general franchise for women was a secondary consideration in the debate.

Proponents of Bickford's clause for legislative power dominated the debates. Perry McAdow, miller and miner whose wife (Clara) ably managed their business, backed Bickford and women's rights. He thought that woman suffrage belonged in the constitution, but if that were impossible, he entreated his colleagues for sufficient liberality "not to close the doors and build up a wall against the rights of our women." John Rickards, a Butte Republican who would be elected governor in 1892, was convinced that if the constitution itself incorporated woman suffrage, there would be "ungallant men enough" to defeat it. Without arousing dispute, Rickards claimed that Montana's territorial legislatures had not abused their public trust. He was confident that the state legislature would be a safe repository for the power of enfranchisement. Walter Burleigh, a story-spinning lawyer from Miles City,

⁷Ibid., pp. 347-350.

pleaded that the convention not put the "seal and signet of death" on the suffrage issue through constitutional restriction, but to allow the intelligence of those who would come after them to mold a legislated solution in accordance with changing circumstances.⁸

Two of the convention's most prominent delegates, Hiram Knowles and Joseph K. Toole, paired off in final debate with very different concepts of the nature of women. Still these men agreed that woman suffrage should be a matter for legislative decision. Judge Knowles pointed out to the convention that the changing milieu had brought new opportunities and new roles for women. They were proving themselves in clerical, business, and professional pursuits in addition to their traditional dedication to education and religious institutions. While Knowles granted that many opponents of woman suffrage were "actuated by as knightly principles as ever actuated the knights of old," he argued that the protected, regal role into which they were trying to cast women was illusory for the large majority. Women were taking part in affairs of life, so why not in public affairs? They were educated, and this was significant in a world moving away from government by force to one guided by reason. Knowles held no great expectations that equal suffrage would bring about major reform. But women, like men, had property and personal rights that government was charged to protect.

⁸Ibid., pp. 364, 365, 452.

Then why shouldn't women be allowed to participate in government?

Knowles wanted the legislature (where a simple majority opinion could prevail) to be able to say when Montana was ready for woman suffrage.⁹

Joseph K. Toole, recent territorial delegate to Congress and future governor, thought it was not expedient to encumber the proposed constitution with "this much mooted question" of woman's ballot. Ratify the constitution, he recommended, then discuss the suffrage matter in the legislature as circumstances might demand. Toole did not favor equal suffrage at that time. Although the plausible arguments of the convention's suffragists had caused him to waiver, he was not yet persuaded. The Missouri native regarded the sexes in classic Victorian model with well-defined spheres: man the provider and protector who dealt with the perplexities of life; and woman the tender mother and minister of sublime virtues in whom man sought "reciprocity and repose." Toole was skeptical that greater political privilege would benefit women; and not all of them wanted to vote or to sit on juries. If men would fulfill their obligations, the onerous responsibility of government would not be thrust upon the softer sex. But should men fail, who would not permit woman to experiment with administration of government? Should popular opinion recommend universal

⁹Ibid., pp. 453-456.

suffrage, the legislature should not have its hands tied; it represented the people, whom Toole said he trusted.¹⁰

Few delegates took the floor to oppose the Bickford amendment openly. But Henry Whitehill, a Deer Lodge lawyer, was deeply disturbed over the social implications of a changed political status for women. He was unwilling to grant the premise that women had the same natural rights as men or that they were entitled to the same political privileges. Opponents to woman suffrage were not tyrants, Whitehill argued; rather they were "animated with quite as chivalric principles as any of the advocates." But a higher law was in operation. "Man is to the woman as the cord is to the bow," he declared, and woman suffrage would threaten that "divinely implanted" marital relationship.¹¹

The powerful Martin Maginnis, Montana's delegate to Congress from 1873 to 1885, was the major spokesman against Bickford's amendment. He firmly opposed constitutional experiment with broader political privileges for women, he did not want the question left to legislative judgment, and he voted against submitting the issue to the electorate in a separate proposition.

All objections to woman suffrage had been petty, Maginnis declared, for they missed the essential philosophy that the primary element behind all government was force. And force was the principle

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 456-458.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 365-366.

of majority rule. The majority enforces its views upon the minority because both have agreed not to fight on the field of battle, but to count at the ballot box. Maginnis argued that suffrage was not a natural right, but a political privilege bestowed by governments to maintain the state against all threats. Man's responsibility to preserve the state, even to the "last grand arbitrament of war," entitled him to suffrage. That was why men universally, even the poor and the black, had the franchise. But woman, due to natural limits, was precluded from a call to enforce decrees of government. The sexes had their proper and equally noble spheres--woman to perpetuate, educate, and regenerate humanity; man to "conquer the savage world." Maginnis said he did not want woman to be dependent upon man's will, and he respected her capacities. But in government, founded upon force, she was out of place. Furthermore, women did not want the ballot, and men had no right to insist that they take it. Then confessing to a faltering faith, Maginnis expressed fear that women, morally prone as they were, might be guided by the clergy in their political decisions. And of all classes of men, he rated priests and preachers as the least knowledgeable of the interests of mankind and the least adapted to legislate and govern.¹²

¹²Ibid., pp. 369-371, 856.

Maginnis was chivalrous in manner and democratic in phrase. But his colleagues understood that at the heart of his argument was a political determination to protect the status quo. In 1912, as the Democratic state convention thrashed out endorsement of submission of the equal suffrage amendment, Maginnis acknowledged that he had been judged responsible for defeat of the woman suffrage movement in 1889.¹³

William A. Clark, president of both the 1884 and 1889 constitutional conventions, summarized the practical alternatives in dealing with the suffrage issue. He conceded that maybe women did not want general suffrage--no one knew. Perhaps it was not expedient to incorporate a woman suffrage plank in the constitution; and it was "impracticable," in his opinion, to submit it to the voters in connection with the constitution because of evidence of popular disfavor in Montana--"and then we will have to face the impossibility of its ever being brought up again except by a constitutional amendment." Clark asked that the constitution leave the way open for women to express a desire for franchise. He saw no objection to legislative discretion in the matter.¹⁴

¹³Helena Independent, August 30, 1912, p. 2. Shortly after the close of the Constitutional Convention, Maginnis reassured Montana women of their attributes: "We are so proud of the beautiful ladies of our land, for when they smile it is a glimpse of Paradise and the white robed angels are forgotten in comparison." (Great Falls Tribune, September 25, 1889, p. 2.)

¹⁴Proceedings and Debates, 1889, p. 374.

On July 25 the Committee of the Whole rejected Bickford's proposal, 29 to 34. Proponents tried again during final consideration of the suffrage bill on July 30, but the convention again defeated Bickford's amendment, with a tie vote of 33 to 33 (and 2 paired). After Bickford's proposal failed, McAdow tried to salvage some advance for women by proposing limited legislative discretion to extend suffrage "without regard to sex, provided that women shall not be liable for military or jury duty, nor shall they be eligible for any office except that pertaining to schools." This compromise should have met the declared reservations of many of the delegates, but it was defeated by a vote of 31 to 38.¹⁵

James Callaway, Virginia City lawyer, had voted against the Bickford amendment even though he claimed to be "rather favorable to the proposition of woman suffrage." As was the case with a large majority of the delegates, Callaway's paramount consideration was Montana's admission to statehood. He strongly feared that any constitutional provision for equal suffrage, whether directly incorporated or left to legislative discretion, would endanger approval of the constitution by the electorate. To resolve the dilemma, Callaway sponsored Proposition 29 on July 31 (the day after Bickford's final defeat). Callaway wanted to submit the question of legislative power over woman suffrage to the electors as a separate proposition at the time

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 374, 459, 465-466.

they would vote on the constitution. If accepted by the voters, the article would become a part of the constitution. This course of action would solicit the sense of the people without risk to the basic document. Thirteen days later Callaway's proposition was pried out of the Committee on Suffrage "without recommendation." A move to table it was narrowly defeated. Because the convention was near termination, the delegates suspended rules (thereby requiring a two-thirds vote for passage) and immediately took the final vote. Callaway's measure lost in another tie vote, 34 to 34. Montana's electorate would not be tested on the issue of equal suffrage for another quarter of a century.¹⁶

Delegates had sharply divided into consistent voting blocs on the issues related to woman suffrage. On the major measures (Bickford's amendment, McAdow's compromise, Callaway's proposition, and the equal tax ballot) 32 delegates supported at least three, while 33 others opposed at least three. Within both blocs, only rarely did anyone cross over with a vote. Of the 33 in the "anti" blocs, only one voted for the Callaway proposition. This fact blew away their rhetorical smokescreen that the suffrage issue might endanger the constitution. Thus the delegates who opposed woman suffrage in principle also rigidly opposed constitutional provision for legislative reappraisal, as well

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 364, 452, 491, 856.

as public expression on the issue. They did not want woman suffrage by any procedure. Political partisanship was not a factor. Nor did nativity of the delegates seem to affect their position, except among the foreign born. (Nine of the eleven foreign-born men opposed woman suffrage.) However, regional division is clear. The eight eastern counties, mostly plains, supported woman suffrage approximately three to one, while the eight counties of the western mountain area (where population was more concentrated) opposed it in a ratio of about three to two.

Sentiment obviously was not ripe for equal suffrage as Montana prepared for statehood. Evidence of popular interest in woman suffrage in 1889 is meager. Two unimpressive petitions in support of equal suffrage reached the convention--one from Jefferson County signed by "several citizens" and the other, from Madison County, signed by "Edwin Cooley, and 30 others."¹⁷ Eva Warren Collier of Bedford, a tiny gold mining town, likely sparked these petitions. A petition form, with exactly the same wording as those later submitted to the convention, was included in a "Letter to the Editor" which Mrs. Collier sent to the Boulder Age (and presumably to other newspapers, since the Age was not sympathetic toward woman suffrage). She asked adults of both sexes to sign, "the men as voters, and the women as caring enough for the ballot

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 64, 74.

to ask for it."¹⁸ The WCTU made no public move on behalf of woman suffrage at this time, nor was there any remonstrance by anti-suffragists.

Since the public had not rallied to the idea of equal suffrage, delegates to the Constitutional Convention were reluctant to sponsor it as a constitutional item. Even Walter Bickford opposed the vote for women at that time, because "they do not avail themselves of the privilege." Only an amendment proposed by Timothy Collins, a Great Falls banker and woolgrower, directly tested the convention's position on constitutional provision for equal suffrage. His amendment to remove sexual restriction from suffrage qualifications was voted down without discussion, 25 to 43.¹⁹ The consensus of the delegates, as expressed in convention debates, was that the male electorate would not be receptive to woman suffrage, and there was doubt among those on both sides of the question that the majority of the women wanted the ballot then.

The framers of Montana's constitution constructed provisions on suffrage with care. They decided to secure, in fundamental law, the several political rights which women had exercised under territorial

¹⁸ Boulder Age, June 12, 1889, p. 3.

¹⁹ Proceedings and Debates, 1889, p. 359.

legislative enactments. This was a small gain in security for women's rights. But the convention's decision to shackle women's political rights to their 1889 socio-political view was a giant step backward. The delegates foreclosed any modification of suffrage rights, for men or women, except by the cumbersome process of constitutional amendment. Obtainment of equal suffrage by that process obviously would be laborious and greatly delayed. It would have to be achieved through persuasion of practical political powers and by the grace of those already enfranchised. Montana's crown lacked the adornment of progress in political rights for women.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN LIBBERS OF THE 1890'S

Suffragists and the WCTU, the Early Tie

Montana's first organized effort to gain the ballot for women came through the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In 1883 Frances Willard, national president of the WCTU, helped to organize a territorial chapter in Butte and local unions in Great Falls, Marysville, Helena, and Bozeman. Conceiving broad reform and feminist functions for the WCTU, she encouraged education of women, fuller development of their capacities, and their right to vote. Organizers of the Montana chapter unanimously endorsed the ballot for women, but within the context of casting on "all questions pertaining to the liquor traffic." The WCTU needed woman's ballot to obtain its moral legislation--"to protect Montana homes." Thus the Union rationalized a public sphere for women in respectable Victorian rhetoric, but it shied off from promotion of woman suffrage as a natural right.¹ The infant organization petitioned Montana's 1884 Constitutional Convention for a temperance provision, but it did not suggest woman suffrage. During the 1889 convention the WCTU kept silent, for the national mood had turned decisively against prohibition.

In 1892 the Prohibition party, supported by the WCTU, ran a nearly full slate of candidates in Montana. While most of its

¹Butte Miner, August 2, 1883; August 3, 1883.

candidates drew poorly (around 550 to 750 votes) its nominee for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mrs. Eva M. Hunter, attracted more than 4,000--even though women were not eligible to that office. Except for that election, the Prohibition party in Montana served primarily as an appendage to the national party, underwriting its platform, and naming Congressional candidates and presidential electors.² It no longer ran local candidates. The national Prohibition platform as early as 1869 (and except for 1896) called for universal suffrage, usually qualified by education and full citizenship. By 1888 its platform also struck at sex discrimination in employment by demanding equal wages for equal work.³ However, women's rights remained subordinate to other Prohibition proposals for legislated reforms. Not even the WCTU's publication in Montana, The Voice, gave much space to the suffrage stand of its political ally.

Nationally, the WCTU's own emphasis on woman suffrage declined after 1887, when Miss Willard began to devote much of her time to international organization of women's interests. The shift was reflected in Montana. Mary Long Alderson wrote in 1900 that many of Montana's

²Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 66-74, passim.

³Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage, pp. 81, 86; Boulder Age, June 6, 1888, p. 2.

members thought that the WCTU had moved too slowly on suffrage, and some had resigned in order to work more vigorously for woman's franchise. But then the suffrage clubs became discouraged and disbanded (except for the brief rally in 1902 and 1903), and the WCTU turned its attention to passage and enforcement of local option prohibition. In 1909 the 1,000 members of Montana's WCTU circulated petitions sent by NAWSA for a federal suffrage amendment. In the meanwhile, the WCTU offered its members experience in organization and in public expression, and for many years it supplied leaders to mushrooming women's organizations.⁴

Of the WCTU suffragists, Mary Long Alderson was the most remarkable and enduring. A native of Massachusetts, she was inspired by the "Bostonian" suffragists (including Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, and their daughter Alice Stone Blackwell). This influence was encouraged by her father, and later by her husband, Matthew Alderson (a farmer, mine operator, and editor). Mrs. Alderson always credited

⁴Mary Long Alderson, "Thirty-Four Years in the Montana Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1896-1930" (pamphlet, Montana State University archives, Bozeman), passim; Mary Long Alderson, "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women" (typescript, Montana State University archives, Bozeman), p. 8; Alderson, "Montana," HWS, p. 796; The Real Issue, February 1, 1909, p. 7; April 1, 1909, p. 5.

Several Montana women (including Mary Long Alderson, the Reverend Alice Barnes Hoag, Laura Howey, Delia Kellogg, Martha Rolfe Plassman, Anna Walker, and Mary Wylie) were early leaders in both the WCTU and the woman suffrage movement.

Montana's men with generosity and sincerity, even when she was baffled by their illiberal resistance to woman suffrage. Although she valued woman's ballot as a tool to achieve "reformatory and progressive measures," as a meliorative social force to complement men's qualities, she expected no panacea in woman suffrage. Mrs. Alderson worked persistently through the years to increase the ranks of the "white ribbon sisters" in Montana's WCTU and to prepare them for responsible citizenship. As legislative superintendent for the WCTU, she took an educational approach in persuading the public and legislators. During Montana's final suffrage campaign in 1914, Mary Long Alderson (as president) gave the WCTU suffragists plucky leadership that matched Jeannette Rankin's forcefulness.⁵

Ella Knowles, Populist

In her 1900 manuscript, Mary Long Alderson paid special tribute to several Montana women outside the WCTU who worked individually for women's rights: to Mrs. P. A. Dann of Great Falls (later Kalispell), a contemporary of Susan B. Anthony, for suffrage service and financial help; to Clara McAdow as the "most prominent among the earliest workers for suffrage;" and to Dr. Mary Moore Atwater of Marysville for her

⁵ Alderson, "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," and miscellaneous memorabilia in the archives of Montana State University, Bozeman; interview with Myrtle Alderson Griswold, daughter of Mary Long Alderson, April 30, 1973.

sustaining efforts. But Mrs. Alderson's highest commendation was bestowed on Ella Knowles, "by far the most prominent woman in the political history of the state," who "nobly battled for the enlargement of woman's legal rights."

Ella Knowles was born to an old-stock, rural gentry family in New Hampshire in the early 1860's, a precocious only child. When Ella was fourteen, her mother died. She enrolled at Bates College (Lewiston, Maine) in 1880, when coeducation was still a controversial issue there. Rising to the challenge in a mostly male school, she became the first female editor of the college magazine and the school's first female debater. After graduating with high honors, Miss Knowles studied law with a New Hampshire law firm. However, for reasons unclear, she headed West, teaching at an Iowa college and then in Salt Lake City before settling in Helena, Montana, in 1887. There she taught in public school and quickly advanced to principal. But law was her abiding ambition, so she associated with the Kinsley law office in Helena and resumed study of law. At that time Montana did not permit women to practice law. On behalf of Miss Knowles, Councilman Walter Bickford successfully sponsored a bill in the Territorial

Legislature of 1889 to admit women to the bar.⁶ In December of that year Ella Knowles became Montana's first woman lawyer. By April her privilege extended into federal courts.⁷

During the 1892 election campaign, Ella Knowles walked into the political limelight as the Populist (People's Party) candidate for state attorney general. The Helena Independent, annoyed that its rivals had recommended endorsement of Miss Knowles by the major parties, questioned her eligibility for the office. The paper planted doubt that Miss Knowles met the minimum age of 30 to serve that office. It quoted an "esteemed and venerable" journal of her native community which estimated her age at "about 20 years old." The Independent pointed out, too, the constitutional implication of Section 2 of the Suffrage Article: that only persons who were privileged with the general franchise could be eligible to state offices. The constitution plainly

⁶Miss Knowles was credited with drafting that bill. During final House debate, Representative J. D. Joslyn, of Deer Lodge County, proposed that "any lady desiring to practice law should be over 30 years of age, have decided convictions on the question of matrimony, and be firmly of the opinion that marriage is a failure." He was ruled out of order and evidently dropped his idea. (Butte Miner, February 9, 1889.) Some years later Miss Knowles reflected that the legislators had played a "fine joke" on her: by prearrangement nearly all had spoken against the bill then voted in favor of it. (Reprint from the San Francisco Examiner, in the Helena Independent, May 28, 1895, p. 5.) The Miner had given no clue of jest in its report about Joslyn.

⁷Progressive Men of Montana (Chicago: A. W. Bowen and Co., 1901), pp. 472-473; Helena Independent, January 12, 1890, p. 5.

limited woman suffrage to district school elections. So how could Ella Knowles hold the high office to which she aspired?⁸

Answering rebukes for his ungallant attempt to force the lady to declare her age, the Independent's editor revealed that what gravelled him was the audacity of women in politics:

In these days when women are competing at every point with men, holding immense conventions to secure political privileges, campaigning all over the country, running for office, serving as school superintendents, and in many cases casting their ballots like men, no sensible woman cares a rap about concealing her age.⁹

Ella Knowles coyly assured the public that, if elected, she would meet the constitutional qualification on age.¹⁰

An anonymous lawyer, in the Helena Herald of August 4, presented a public brief defending the eligibility of female lawyers to the post of state attorney general. He cited statutes which admitted women to the bar and which defined masculine pronouns to be generic.¹¹ Ella

⁸ Helena Independent, July 29, 1892, p. 4.

⁹ Ibid., July 31, 1892, p. 4.

¹⁰ In the interview with the San Francisco Examiner, op. cit., Miss Knowles admitted that she was not yet 30 when nominated.

¹¹ That month District Judge William J. Pemberton, of Butte, also asserted broader legal rights for Montana women. Mrs. Thomas Leonard had charged a boy with larceny as bailee. His attorney asked Judge Pemberton to dismiss the case on the ground that the plaintiff, as a married woman, could neither own money independently nor be recognized by the court; her husband could have taken this legal action or they could have brought it jointly. Judge Pemberton recognized equal

Knowles would meet all special qualifications outlined in the constitution for the office of attorney general: 30 years minimum age, admission to practice in the state's supreme court, and current good standing. Her defender claimed that "many of the leading lawyers of Butte City, as well as Helena" concurred in this view. Incumbent Attorney General Henri J. Haskell, her Republican opponent, pledged to certify Miss Knowles should she win the election.¹²

The issue of Ella Knowles' eligibility remained a monkey on her back despite spirited statewide campaign involving national issues, notably free silver, which she preferred to discuss. In a Bozeman speech, near the end of the campaign, Miss Knowles presented the opinion of United States Attorney General Miller which stated that she could be inducted into office; she just needed the votes.¹³

Ella Knowles proved herself an eloquent protagonist in the 1892 campaign. To overcome the third-party handicap, Populists started their campaign early and vigorously. By mid-June, more than three months before the state conventions of the major parties, the Populists

dignity for women before the law. (Missoulian, August 18, 1892, p. 4.) This interpretation seemed to challenge Judge Blake's decision of 1889 that women were legal non-entities unless blessed by explicit statute.

¹²Thomas A. Clinch, Urban Populism and Free Silver In Montana: A Narrative of Ideology in Political Action (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1970), p. 59.

¹³Helena Independent, November 5, 1892, p. 8.

had selected their slate. In mid-August national leaders James Weaver and Mary Lease stumped Helena and Butte. By late August Ella Knowles and Will Kennedy, the Populist gubernatorial candidate, had kicked off an extensive campaign through central and eastern Montana. After mid-September they canvassed the western area.¹⁴ The Democrats trailed the Populist team with "truth squads," but Knowles and Kennedy retained credibility. Even newspapers of differing political colors acclaimed Miss Knowles' ability. She earned the accolade, "Portia of the People's Party."¹⁵

Custer and Dawson counties comprised approximately the eastern one-third of the state in 1892, and Chouteau County stretched broadly across north central Montana. Miss Knowles ran poorly in these rural counties, but she was relatively weakest in Fergus and Yellowstone counties. Her strength, like that of the People's Party, lay in the more urban west. Miss Knowles led her race in the mining counties of Deer Lodge, Jefferson, and Silver Bow. In the final tally for the attorney general post, Haskell was re-elected by a vote of 16,606,

¹⁴According to Mary Long Alderson (HWS, IV, p. 800), Miss Knowles addressed more than 80 audiences and "alone organized some fourteen counties." This claim may be exaggerated. Montana then had 16 counties. The Independent counted her speech in Bozeman, just three days prior to the election, as her 56th--still a commendable performance. (Helena Independent, November 2, 1892, p. 8.)

¹⁵Clinch, Urban Populism and Free Silver in Montana, pp. 59, 84.

while Edward Day (Democrat) ran second with 15,377 and Knowles came in last with 11,464. However, she garnered more votes than did anyone else under the Populist label--3,671 more than Kennedy and 4,438 more than the Congressional candidate, Caldwell Edwards.¹⁶ Ella Knowles' substantial lead over the rest of the ticket is evidence that Montana's male electorate seriously considered a woman for high office in 1892, a major election year.

Henri Haskell appointed Miss Knowles his assistant attorney general, a position she filled capably for four years. She distinguished herself professionally in litigation before the United States Department of Interior in Washington. Meanwhile (on May 23, 1895) Ella Knowles married Attorney General Haskell, a 52-year old widower. After public office the Haskells briefly tried a law partnership in Helena, but they separated their professional and marital relationship in 1897. Ella continued practice there until 1902, then in Butte until her death in January 1911. Henri returned to Glendive. In addition to her successful law practice, Ella Knowles Haskell owned and managed mining properties. In 1900 she was a delegate to the

¹⁶Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 66-74. Two contemporaneous sources declared that Ella Knowles came in a close second, leading her ticket by 5,000 (Alderson, HWS, IV, p. 800) and 7,000 (San Francisco Examiner, op. cit.) This paper accepts Waldron's figures, which are based on records in the office of Secretary of State.

International Mining Congress (in Milwaukee) and was elected to the executive committee.¹⁷

Ella Knowles Haskell continued to contribute energetically to expansion of women's legal and political roles in Montana. In 1896 she was delegate to county, state, and national Populist conventions. At the latter, in St. Louis, she was elected to a four-year office on the National Committee. Mrs. Haskell was again active in county and state conventions in 1900, promoting fusion as well as equal suffrage. She did secure Populist planks in Montana endorsing equal suffrage in 1896 and 1900, a period when she was among the strongest leaders of the Montana Woman Suffrage Association.¹⁸ Her diligence stemmed from wide involvement in affairs of business and government. She understood that women had practical need of greater equality, but most importantly to Ella Knowles Haskell, equality for women was simple justice. Her feminist attitude was typical of the well-educated and professional women who led the suffrage clubs in the late 1890's.

¹⁷Progressive Men of Montana, p. 473; San Francisco Examiner, op. cit.; Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, A History of Montana, II (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), p. 1186; city directories for Helena and Butte, passim.

¹⁸Progressive Men of Montana, p. 473; Daily Missoulian, January 28, 1911, pp. 1, 6.

Awakening Queens

The political turmoil during the early years of Montana's statehood and the Panic of 1893 overshadowed issues of women's rights. Equal suffrage, as a public issue, lay dormant until the 1895 legislative session.

The first state legislature was stymied by an unresolved election controversy, but the second session, which met in early 1891, got the business of statehood underway. In 1893, three Populists manipulated a balance of power in the legislature, while the Clark and Daly factions of the Democratic party fought over the United States Senate seat with shameless corruption--and then left it vacant. The legislature awarded units of Montana's system of higher education to jealous losers in the fight for the capital site, but otherwise it neglected much public business. The Missoulian pronounced "the Democracy" in Montana "dead and damned."¹⁹ And so it nearly was. The next election decimated Democratic ranks to give harmonious control of state government to the Republicans. In the wake of the record of irresponsible government, a current of reform ran strong in the 1895 assembly. It passed a corrupt practices act and a great volume of other moral and regulatory statutes. This was a favorable mood for reconsideration of woman suffrage.

¹⁹ Missoulian, March 1, 1893, p. 2; March 2, 1893, p. 1; March 3, 1893, p. 1.

But more than this reform setting brought forth the suffrage question. Women themselves had demonstrated political interest and acumen as the electorate in 1894 prepared to choose between Helena and Anaconda for permanent location of the state capital. William A. Clark (of Butte) favored Helena over Marcus Daly's Anaconda, so a political battle raged, heavily financed by the mining magnates.

Early in the fight a "scurrilous pamphlet" which burlesqued Helena society was published anonymously, perhaps by Daly's Anaconda Standard. Clark's Butte Miner protested that some remarks about Helena women were "in violation of every propriety, an invasion of sacred ground and a wanton disregard of the tender sentiments of the home."²⁰ Women who had favored Helena for the state capital now had a respectable, womanly reason to enter the political fray. The preamble of the Women's Helena For the Capital Club rationalized their mission: they organized not only to save their beloved state from falling into the hands of a foreign corporation, but also to refute "the slurs cast upon us and our innocent children."²¹ A delegation from Helena, in Missoula to assist their sympathetic sisters in organizing for political action, justified their new political role in traditional terms:

²⁰Butte Miner, September 25, 1894, p. 4.

²¹Helena Herald, October 6, 1894, p. 1.

We feel this is a struggle in which the women of the state have as much right to engage as the men; for on the result will depend very largely the future welfare and happiness of our homes and our children.²²

The Miner recognized no breach of customary spheres as women sallied into politics:

Where if not in the hearts of the gracious queens of our homes, are the impulses of all that is good and true and ennobling? May their advice be heeded, their counsel respected and their interests protected by the men who march to the polls²³

And the Helena Herald commended their performance:

From morning until night fair woman is pleading for a state's salvation with the irresistible eloquence of a lovely advocate for a just cause. . . . [T]he ladies are doing nobly with the masculine weapons of organization and active campaigning.²⁴

Complementing well-organized men's efforts, the women's capital campaign was energetic and efficient: door-to-door canvasses, a state-wide network for correspondence and distribution of promotional literature, speeches in major cities (William A. Clark arranged a Northern Pacific car for their travel), and appeals to isolated rural women and to the clergy to use their influence. Anaconda's unchivalrous swipe at the softer sex had backlashed, and the cause of feminine politics in Montana gained momentum.

²²Missoulian, October 23, 1894, p. 4.

²³Butte Miner, September 24, 1894, p. 4.

²⁴Helena Herald, October 23, 1894, p. 4.

Representative John Huseby, a Populist from Lewis and Clark County, was the champion of equal suffrage in the 1895 legislature. His bill (HB 46) proposed to amend the constitution "so as to extend the right of suffrage to women of the same age and qualifications of men." The House Committee on Privileges and Elections recommended that the bill pass if amended to prohibit "any female to hold the office of Judge of any Court, Sheriff, Constable or Peace Officers, or to serve as a juror, excepting in cases where the personal or property rights of either women or children are concerned." The House accepted these restrictions and passed Huseby's bill 42 to 12, a slight margin over the necessary two-thirds vote for a constitutional amendment.²⁵

Curt Senate action on the equal suffrage bill came as no surprise. There Populist T. W. Brosnan, of Cascade County, had presented three supporting petitions: the first bearing about 230 women's names, the second signed by 1,500 women, and the last submitted by the Great Falls American Federation of Labor.²⁶ Nonetheless, the Dillon Examiner drolly commented, "That body contains a number of

²⁵House Journal of the Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly, pp. 46, 194, 286; Helena Herald, February 16, 1895, p. 1; Mary Long Alderson file, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena.

²⁶Butte Miner, February 13, p. 3; February 24, p. 1; February 27, p. 1; Helena Independent, February 13, p. 5; February 24, p. 8; February 27, p. 5.

staid old benedicts and confirmed bachelors who are proof against all feminine allurements." The Missoulian looked to efficacy of prayer.²⁷ But the Miner thought it noted a "change coming over the august solons" and reported that several senators were asking the women dear to them for advice.²⁸ It praised the "lady lobbyists" who were doing "noble work in their own cause." But when the political chips were counted, most senators stuck by their male predilection. On February 26 the committee reported the bill without recommendation. On the following day, without any debate whatsoever, the Senate killed the woman suffrage bill by a non-roll call vote of 14 to 4.²⁹ The 1895 Senate took pride in rapid dispatch of business in brief sittings, so the superficial treatment of this bill was in character.³⁰

Although partisan alignment was not evident in the Senate, some was discernible in the House. The Huseby bill was supported by all 14

²⁷"Montana Comment," Butte Miner, February 22, 1894, p. 4.

²⁸Ibid., February 25, p. 1.

²⁹Senators who favored the bill were George Brown (R) of Beaverhead, T. W. Brosnan, C. H. Eggleston (D) of Deer Lodge, and Reno Swift (R) of Custer. Ramsdell and Hoffman were absent. (Helena Herald, February 27, 1895, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 28, 1895, p. 1.) David Folsom, president pro tem and a skilled parliamentarian who opposed the Huseby bill, chaired the Senate that day. (Senate Journal, p. 219.)

³⁰Butte Miner, February 19, 1895, p. 6; Helena Independent, February 27, 1895, p. 5.

Populists and by 27 Republicans, although all 12 negative votes were cast by Republicans (since Democrats were all but excluded from the House). Silver Bow County (usually Democratic) had an all Republican delegation which supported HB 46 by a 9 to 1 vote.³¹

Newspapers generally were ambiguous in their stand on woman suffrage. The Miner, after applauding the Ladies Capital Committee, was restrained until the demise of equal suffrage in the Senate; then it treated woman suffrage as an unworthy notion and praised Montana women for their deference to the integrity and chivalry of the "trouser-wearing and bewhiskered wielders of the ballot."³² The Missoulian was non-committal and did not rank woman suffrage among the important issues before the legislature. The Helena Independent published no editorial to promote the Huseby bill when it might have influenced legislative action, but it came out in bitter denunciation of the Senate later:

It was in vain that the chivalrous Brosnan rallied to its support three other champions as doughty as himself. In vain to pour petitions upon ears that did not wish to hear. . . . The stolid Metzel, of Madison, sat, as on the memorable 22nd, with unyielding visage. Unyielding with him was Folsom, of Meagher, determined to retrieve the reputation for courage so shrewdly endangered by his

³¹Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 82; Missoulian, February 20, 1895, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 28, 1895, p. 1.

³²Butte Miner, March 2, 1895, p. 4.

former undignified retreat before the bloodless charge of the crinoline brigade. With them and like unto them voted 13 other lords of creation, and tolled the knell of woman suffrage hopes. . . .³³

The Helena Herald and the Missoula Democrat also chastised the senators for their omnipotent pose in denying a popular vote on the question of equal franchise. The Independent rebuked Governor Rickards for failure to support the suffrage bill and criticized the women of Montana for lack of cohesion. The editor urged women to qualify for intelligent political participation and to gird themselves for "a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together."³⁴ Gird they did.

Girded Women

The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) quickly followed up the prospect in Montana. Idaho suffragists had asked Mrs. Emma Smith DeVoe, organizer for NAWSA, to help them prepare for their 1896 referendum, so Mrs. DeVoe changed her itinerary to include Montana. Beginning May 15, 1895, in Miles City, she helped to establish 14

³³ Helena Independent, March 1, 1895, p. 4. German-born Representative H. Knippenberg (R), Beaverhead, was of kindred soul. He had advised women to quit their lobbying, that the legislators were "lords in power . . . asking and extending favors to no one." (Helena Herald, February 16, 1895, p. 1.)

³⁴ Helena Independent, March 1, 1895, p. 4.

suffrage clubs across the state, most of them along the route of the Northern Pacific Railway.³⁵

In early September the Helena Equal suffrage Association, headed by Sarepta Sanders, hosted delegates from nearby clubs (Great Falls, Butte, Marysville, and Bozeman) to form the Montana Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA).³⁶ In addition to encouraging letters from President Susan B. Anthony and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, NAWSA sent Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, chairman of its new Organization Committee, to assist the fledgling state organization. Several prominent Montana men extended their support. Lieutenant Governor Alexander Botkin, the Reverend T. B. Moore, and Colonel Wilbur F. Sanders spoke at well-

³⁵ Chapters were located in Miles City, Billings, Red Lodge, Big Timber, Livingston, Bozeman, Helena, Marysville, Great Falls, Butte, Dillon, Virginia City, Anaconda, and Missoula. (Larson, "Battle for the Ballot," p. 30.) According to Larson, a short-lived suffrage club, in Helena in 1890, had preceded these.

³⁶ Helena had 17 delegates, Great Falls 5, Marysville and Bozeman each 4, and Butte 3. Officers elected were: president, Mrs. Harriet Sanders of Helena (Sarepta's sister-in-law and wife of the former U. S. Senator and Vigilante); vice president, Mrs. Martha Rolfe Plassman of Great Falls (daughter of Sidney Edgerton, first governor of Montana Territory); corresponding secretary, Mrs. Delia Kellogg of Helena; recording secretary, Mrs. Mary Long Alderson of Bozeman; treasurer, Dr. Mary Moore Atwater of Marysville; auditors, Mrs. Martha Dunkel (sometimes "Dunckel") of Butte and Mrs. Mary Curtis Knowles of Missoula (wife of Judge Hiram Knowles, no relation to Ella); and delegate-at-large, Mrs. Mary Wylie of Bozeman. (Montana Woman Suffrage Association First Convention 1895, in the Mary Long Alderson collection, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena; Helena Independent, September 4, 1895, p. 6; HWS, pp. 796, 796n.

attended open sessions; and Governor John Rickards, who was out-of-state, sent a complimentary letter.

The convention surveyed the history and methods of the national movement and marked the status of Montana women. The suffragists were confident that the "new woman" would vote--her cause was just. Their concern, however, was for broad women's rights. Dr. Mary Moore Atwater, physician to the mining community of Marysville, outlined her view of MWSA objectives: The women did not expect woman suffrage to revolutionize the world, rather they wanted to abolish sex prejudice in order to share opportunities and recognition. She commended Montana's property statutes for women, but she criticized unwritten laws: "As professional women we find many positions closed to us. Women of conceded ability are not regarded as eligible to paying positions in state or company institutions."³⁷ Ella Knowles Haskell, still assistant attorney general, reported on the legal status of Montana women.³⁸

The state suffrage organization was also referred to as the Montana Equal Suffrage Association (MESA), possibly because some suffragists, notably Mrs. DeVoe, preferred that concept. This paper reserves use of "MESA" for the final period of Montana's suffrage campaign.

³⁷Helena Independent, September 4, 1895, p. 6.

³⁸Despite Mrs. Haskell's central role in promotion of women's rights, she was not prominent in the initial phase of Montana's organization for equal suffrage due to her injury and wedding.

Dr. Mary Moore (Atwater) practiced in Salt Lake City, then in Bannock, Montana, until the gold rush ended there. She returned to Chicago for post-graduate work and then came back to Montana, as

Helena had been the hub of Montana's equal suffrage movement since the campaign to locate the capital. In June, 1896, a second suffrage club organized in that city, an evening chapter which afforded participation by business women. Mrs. DeVoe had approved, and according to club minutes, the two groups enjoyed a cooperative relationship. The Helena Business Women's Suffrage Club (HBWSA) probed involvement of local Negro women in the suffrage movement, studied civic processes and community problems, and was attentive to labor and silver questions. A number of this club's members served as state suffrage leaders, among them Dr. Maria Dean, Mrs. Thomas Walsh, Madame Roena Medini, and Mrs. Haskell.³⁹

Members of this new Helena club promoted equal suffrage at the state conventions of the Republican, Democratic, and Populist parties in the fall of 1896. The major parties refused. But as a delegate to the Populist convention, Mrs. Haskell secured a platform plank which demanded "the same political and economic rights for women as are enjoyed by men."⁴⁰ While adoption of this plank caused considerable

mining company doctor in the Marysville area. There she married A. B. Atwater. Dr. Atwater cared little about social status or money, but her interest in people and women's rights ran deep and warm. (Alderson, "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," pp. 12-13; interview with Mrs. Agnes Wiggernhorn, friend, January 23, 1974.)

³⁹Minute book of the Helena Business Women's Suffrage Club, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, passim.

⁴⁰Butte Miner, September 4, 1896, p. 1.

stir at the convention, it got little subsequent play outside suffrage circles. Populists were absorbed by the more pressing issues of bimetallism, labor, and direct legislation.

Immediately following the general election of 1896, the MWSA held its second annual convention, in Butte, primarily to plan for an equal suffrage drive in the coming legislature. Montana then had 19 dues-paying suffrage clubs with an aggregate membership of nearly 300. Mrs. DeVoe had again helped to organize local clubs during the preceding spring. Although Virginia City had dropped and several others were inactive, 11 new locales had clubs: Glendive, Forsythe, Castle, White Sulphur Springs, Townsend, Boulder, Basin, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg, Hamilton, and Victor. Lewis and Clark County suffrage clubs had associated in August, 1896, on the initiative of Dr. Mary Moore Atwater.⁴¹ Again, only nearby clubs participated in the convention--the Lewis and Clark County association, Helena (two clubs), Butte (two clubs), Marysville, Bozeman, and Livingston. No NAWSA figure attended. The convention noted that Montana trailed other western states; Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho had already extended full franchise to women.

⁴¹Helena Independent, November 20, 1896, p. 5; Mary Long Alderson, "Woman's Suffrage [sic] in Montana," September 1900 manuscript for HWS, IV, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena; Minute Book of the Helena Business Women's Suffrage Club, op. cit.

The problem was to pry the question out of the legislature and place it before Montana's electorate. Helena suffragists dominated the new roster of MWSA officers; they would bear the brunt of work during the 1897 legislative assembly.⁴²

A suffrage lobby, referred to as the "legislative committee," was established under the direction of Ella Knowles Haskell with representatives from nearly every county to bolster the major task force of 26 from Lewis and Clark County (Helena).⁴³ The Helena Independent described the lobbyists' plan of operation:

[T]he duty of the committee will be first to ascertain just where every member of the house and senate stands on the question and then to make a systematic attack upon the strongholds of those who have been so unwary as to betray the fact that they are opposed to it. Everything is to be done in the most systematic manner possible. Regular relays are to be told [sic] off for special duty of seeing certain refractory members. They are to be relieved at intervals, and new women with new faces and new arguments will occasionally drop in on the members to make life more pleasant for

⁴²New MWSA officers were: president, Mrs. Ella Knowles Haskell of Helena; vice president, Miss Sarepta Sanders of Helena; corresponding secretary, Rev. Florence Kollock Crooker of Helena; recording secretary, Mrs. Mary Long Alderson of Bozeman re-elected; treasurer, Dr. Mary Moore Atwater of Marysville re-elected; auditors, Mrs. Martha Dunkel of Butte re-elected and Mrs. Minnie Hickox of Livingston; and Mrs. M. S. Cummins delegate-at-large, Helena. Mrs. Wilbur Sanders was named honorary president after declining re-election. Dr. Atwater attended national convention in May 1897. (Helena Independent, November 20, 1896, p. 5; HWS, IV, p. 797.)

⁴³The Helena Independent (January 10, 1897, p. 8) reported that all counties were represented in the lobby, but only 18 or the 23 were listed with named suffragists. Missing were Carbon, Chouteau, Madison,

him [sic]. . . . The senate is yet an unknown quantity, but an especial effort is to be made to bring the senators around. . . . The women would not be satisfied entirely even if they had a large enough vote to carry the measure through. They want to make as good a showing as they possibly can.

The equal suffrage bill of 1897 (HB 37), sponsored by Democrat R. B. Hill of Missoula, retained the basic wording of the constitution. It proposed simply to delete "male" from voter qualifications and to insert "without regard to sex" relative to eligibility to hold office. This implied full political rights for women.⁴⁴

On January 18, the day before the House Committee on Privileges and Elections heard suffragists' testimony, petitions asking the lawmakers to refer the equal suffrage issue to the electorate "deluged" the lower chamber. Silver Bow, the most densely populated county, was notable for its dearth of signers--it yielded about 50 male petitioners. However, Custer had "several hundred" signers, Meagher 200, Cascade, 300, Missoula "six type written pages," and Lewis and Clark "several yards of names." Others came in later to total more than 2,500 signatures from many parts of the state.⁴⁵ Although the committee divided over the merits of woman suffrage, it unanimously recommended submission

Teton, and Valley counties. Possibly these sent lobbyists later, but only Carbon, among these, had a suffrage club.

⁴⁴Helena Independent, January 10, 1897, p. 8.

⁴⁵Helena Herald, January 18, 1897, p. 5; February 8, 1897, p. 5; Helena Independent, January 19, 1897, p. 5.

of the amendment. The bill was printed. In appreciation the women sent boxes of apples for all of the representatives, regardless of their vote on the bill.⁴⁶

The equal suffrage bill was placed on special order for consideration by the Committee of the Whole on February 9. Supporters overflowed the galleries and filled available space on the floor, many standing, "even to the speaker's desk." Representative Hill was the main speaker on behalf of his bill. Trying to downplay debate over the principle of woman suffrage, he pleaded primarily that the legislature allow a popular vote on the issue--that was the least women could ask and the least the legislators could grant. But he also underscored the principle of equal representation. He alleged that no good reason had ever been tendered for denying women the justice to participate in government. Woman had not been consulted in the decision that man should represent her. As the men who jealously guarded their own franchise realized, only the ballot offered security of rights. Why deny suffrage to those women who did want it?⁴⁷

⁴⁶Helena Independent, January 20, 1897, p. 6; January 23, 1897, p. 5. Helena Herald, January 22, 1897, p. 5. Boulder Age, February 3, 1897, p. 4. House Journal 1897, p. 102.

⁴⁷Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 1.

Hill then moved that Ella Knowles Haskell be permitted to speak. Such a privilege to a non-legislator was prohibited by House rules and was without known precedent anywhere. But because of national interest in the suffrage measure, the solons voted 44 to 17 to suspend the rules. In her short speech, Mrs. Haskell asked only that the 68 men there allow the 50,000 male voters an expression on woman suffrage. She promised unceasing petitions until that be done and noted that no remonstrance against the grant of the ballot had been presented by the women of Montana, as had some "lily-fingered, blue-blooded dames" in Massachusetts. Montana women deserved trust and fair treatment.⁴⁸

George L. Ramsey, Gallatin County Democrat, was the major spokesman against the Hill bill. He never touched on the question of democratic submission to the voters, the point of the suffrage measure. Instead he expounded for nearly an hour and a half on the ideological errors of woman suffrage. He contended that woman was queen and absolute ruler in her God-designated sphere, but she had no place in politics. The Bible decreed that man should rule, and historic females who had usurped man's sphere (such as Cleopatra, Bloody Mary, and

⁴⁸ Butte Miner, February 10, 1897, p. 2. Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 6. The Boston Committee of Remonstrants had organized in the early 1880's and worked against suffragists not only in Massachusetts, but also in several other states during the rest of that decade. Beginning in 1890 these "antis" published The Remonstrance. (Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 295-296.)

Joan of Arc) provided disastrous proof of its consequences. Seeing a radical threat in woman suffrage, Ramsey warned, "Give the woman the ballot and you will absolutely change the political lines in this state." Since women were more susceptible to emotional persuasion than men, the church would become a political caucus with the clergy in control. Then citing an alleged school election irregularity in Butte, Ramsey denied that women would purify politics. Mary Lease, who was traveling around the country with a man (General Weaver) not her husband, was a striking example of what woman might come to in politics. And Ramsey implied that the Montana suffragists themselves were unbecoming models of womanhood--a female lobbyist was a most pitiful and revolting sight. He revered woman for her purity and hoped that she might never grow less divine.

Representative Dennis Shovlin also cast aspersions on the sort of woman who wanted suffrage. He suggested that many suffragists were alienated from normal womanly fulfillment of home and husband. He charged that the strong-willed leaders were ambitious for "fat political offices."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Butte Miner, February 10, 1897, p. 2; Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 6; Helena Herald, February 9, 1897, p. 8; February 10, 1897, p. 5.

Opponents to the Hill bill belittled the petitions, too, although Montana women had successfully experimented with petitions before--to raise the age of consent for girls and to secure local-option liquor control. The House granted Miss Sarepta Sanders special floor privilege as they had to Mrs. Haskell. After chiding the legislators for poor grammar Miss Sanders entreatingly asked what course other than petition was open to women to register their interest, and she protested that legislators should scoff at the right of petition.⁵⁰

Because HB 37 was engrossed upon receipt, rather than awaiting normal sequence among other bills, its return to the House on the day following debate was a surprise. Extremely few women were present, but a call of the house rallied all representatives for the final vote on this major business. Hill himself moved to cut off further debate. The vote tallied 41 to 27, 5 short of the two-thirds majority required for an amendment proposal.⁵¹

The woman suffrage campaign of 1897 unquestionably was well organized and energetically executed. Helena women spearheaded the

⁵⁰Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 6.

⁵¹Butte Miner, February 11, 1897, p. 3; Helena Independent, February 11, 1897, p. 5; Helena Herald, February 11, p. 5.

drive, but advocates from all areas of the sprawling frontier state participated at a time when communication and travel were still difficult. It was a commendable achievement for an abstract cause. However, there are indications that the petitions and the lobbying changed few legislators' votes.

The suffragists' lobby perhaps antagonized some of the non-converts. The Helena Herald complained that House rules barred lobbyists from the floor during sessions, "yet hardly a day . . . has passed that there has not been half a dozen of the recognized female leaders of this measure seated inside or near the different members whose assistance they have secured. . . ." ⁵² While the Billings Times felt that a popular vote on woman suffrage was only fair, it gave restrained support: "We don't admire some of these women who have made themselves notorious in politics. We detest them as much as we do an effeminate man." ⁵³ Clearly the woman in politics was not popularly accepted in Montana.

Too, the women evidently acted in poor grace during Ramsey's speech and handicapped their cause. When he argued that woman suffrage was un-Christian, a point that many proponents had assumed was a dead issue, the women "could not refrain from a burst of derisive laughter."

⁵²Helena Herald, February 8, 1897, p. 5.

⁵³Reprint in the Helena Independent, February 2, 1897, p. 4.

An embellished account in the Independent also reported that the women responded to the Butte election anecdote with "peals of silvery laughter." Such behavior could hardly persuade Victorian males.⁵⁴

The suffragists probably never had enough legislative support in the 1897 session, not even in the House. Straw votes had indicated that the equal suffrage bill lacked two to six votes. At the time of the committee report, the Herald reported that "not a few" were skeptical that HB 37 could pass the House; and if it did, "swift and sure death" awaited it in the Senate. A poll of the resolute Senate on February 9 showed that only 10 of the 21 senators favored the equal suffrage amendment.⁵⁵ Ramsey likely spoke for many colleagues when he declared, "[I] believe it is not our duty to submit to the people a proposition that we know has no merit in it. It is too important a question to be so lightly treated."⁵⁶ The Herald rejoiced that "another of the popocratic measures" had failed.⁵⁷

This vote of no-confidence in public judgment was paralleled by earlier House rejection of a bill which provided for initiative and

⁵⁴ Helena Herald, February 10, 1897, p. 5; Butte Miner, February 10, 1897, p. 2; Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Helena Herald, February 10, 1897, p. 7; January 22, 1897, p. 5; Helena Independent, February 10, 1897, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Helena Independent; February 11, 1897, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Helena Herald, February 11, 1897, p. 5.

referendum, also a constitutional change which (like equal suffrage) would expand popular participation in the political process. As with the equal suffrage proposal, Ramsey was the major opponent of this prime issue, and it too missed the two-thirds vote, also 41 to 27. Ramsey labelled the direct legislation bill "dangerous and pernicious," a Populist measure that no true Democrat could support. Sponsor M. J. Elliott pleaded against partisan expediency--only submit it to the people. This Ramsey was unwilling to do: "The conservatism of the state is beyond criticism, but in moments of excitement and prejudice, measures of great hazard might be passed."⁵⁸

Consistent partisan line-up of House votes on the 1897 reform bills for direct legislation and equal suffrage is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. House Votes on Related Reform Bills, 1897*

| Bill | Democrats | | Populists | | Republicans | |
|----------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-------------|----|
| | Aye | No | Aye | No | Aye | No |
| Init. and Ref. | 21 | 21 | 19 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Equal Suffrage | 22 | 20 | 18 | 1 | 3 | 4 |

*Source: Helena Independent, January 29, 1897, p. 1; Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 82.

⁵⁸Helena Independent, January 27, 1897, p. 5.

Five Democrats from Lewis and Clark County voted for the suffrage bill but not for direct legislation. This suggests that the Helena suffragists may have been effective in selecting or influencing their representatives. A Teton County Populist was the lone deviant from his party's record. Speaker of the House, W. J. Kennedy, of Ravalli County, nominally a Republican, voted with the reform bloc.⁵⁹

The solid core of support for woman suffrage in both the 1895 and the 1897 legislative assemblies had been the Populists, who came predominantly from urban-labor centers. In 1895 Silver Bow Republicans (an anomaly for Butte) had also strongly shared up the cause. Thus since the Constitutional Convention of 1889, support for equal suffrage had increased significantly among representatives of the more densely populated mountain region. Still a sufficient minority in the legislature could keep the suffrage amendment from a popular referendum; and it held back the amendment for direct legislation as well. Conservative regulars of both major parties whiffed political danger to themselves in the energy of the challengers. When their minority could bottle up further threats to their political control, as embodied in these proposed amendments, why submit to risk of popular expression on the issues? Why stand on democratic philosophy?

⁵⁹ Helena Independent, January 27, 1897; January 28, 1897, p. 5; January 29, 1897, p. 1; February 11, 1897, p. 5. Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 82.

Enduring Suffragists

Montana suffragists had no thought of folding their tents. In November 1897, the MWSA met in Helena for its third annual convention. No national suffrage leader was present. Denying that they were disheartened, the women noted that their state organization was only two years old, and the strong vote given the equal suffrage bill was evidence of male support for their cause. Montana had 35 local suffrage clubs, 16 more than a year earlier, with 300-400 active members. The women pledged to apply their "sterling qualities of endurance" by continuing to petition (but earlier) and by protesting publicly and privately against the unfair system of government. To secure direct representation and full citizenship, they would organize more clubs and boost membership; they would educate the public in terms of citizenship and good government for contemporary Montana; they would raise funds to work in party conventions, primaries and general elections.⁶⁰ With such ambitious groundwork, prospects appeared strong for favorable action when the legislature would next convene, in January 1899.

Past-president Mrs. Harriet Sanders, who was ill, prepared a paper for the convention in which she recommended an alternative route

⁶⁰ Helena Independent, November 8, 1897, p. 5; November 9, 1897, p. 7; November 10, 1897, p. 5.

to equal franchise. She urged suffragists to press first for woman's ballot by statute. That would require only a simple majority in the legislature--compared with a two-thirds vote there plus submission to the electorate for an amendment. Then women could help to elect a legislature sympathetic to submission of a constitutional amendment (and thus remove continuance of equal franchise from legislative caprice). She acknowledged that prevalent opinion judged such a statute would be invalid; but nowhere did the constitution forbid it. Section 30, Article 3, provided that "the enumeration in this constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or impair or disparage others retained by the people." Mrs. Sanders felt that the constitutional guarantee of certain suffrage rights to Montana women did not preclude enlargement of such rights by legislative action. She urged suffragists to work for both the law and the amendment.⁶¹ Evidently her idea was not pursued.

Normally a Democrat, Robert Burns Smith was elected governor of Montana in 1896 as a Populist heading a fusion ticket.⁶² But in his recommendations to the 1897 legislature, the governor had neglected to mention the woman suffrage plank which Ella Knowles Haskell had

⁶¹Ibid., November 11, 1897, p. 6.

⁶²Clinch, Urban Populism, pp. 113-114, 141, passim. Smith left the Democratic party in 1894, when he was Populist candidate for Congress. He returned to the Democratic fold in 1898.

nailed into the Populist platform. Called before the MWSA convention, Governor Smith explained that he had not given equal suffrage the critical study that its importance demanded. As a "born and bred" Southerner, he had seen the consequences of extension of the franchise to a race unprepared for such privileges and responsibilities. He feared that women were not ready. It was a patent fact, he asserted, that few women cared about political questions or had thought about woman suffrage. He would hesitate to experiment under these circumstances. The governor pointed out, however, that his opposition to equal suffrage was passive, and he encouraged continued suffrage work as means to a proper solution.⁶³

The WCTU branch of the Montana suffrage movement could not have been pleased with Dr. W. G. Eggleston, editor of the Helena Independent, when he cautioned the convention against seeking the ballot in order to vote the saloon out of politics. "The saloon has as much right in politics as a railroad company or as a bank that first buys a United States senator and then robs its depositors." The need as Eggleston saw it, was rather to vote politics into the homes. With a gospel of morality and civics taught in the homes, there need be no worry about corrupt politics and vices. The principles of religion

⁶³Helena Independent, November 10, 1897, p. 5.

were the principles of politics. This was a field of challenge to women. But he also favored woman suffrage because it was just.⁶⁴

The Reverend Carleton F. Brown, of Helena's First Unitarian Church, spoke candidly to the MWSA convention of institutional restraints to feminine equality. He too saw alliance of religion and politics, but as an oppressive bloc rather than the progressive catharsis that Eggleston wanted. Just as royalty and priestcraft had always joined to oppose democracy, so the politician and pulpit had allied to resist extension of democracy through woman suffrage. The politician, he contended, feared loss of power in change. He proposed that if anti-suffragists really doubted the political fitness of many women, they could impose educational restrictions which would weed out the unworthy, male and female alike. "But this is precisely what they do not dare to do lest such restrictions should put an end to the political power of their own party machinery," Reverend Brown told the suffragists. And the spirit of religion promoted conservatism; its recitation of "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end" was a cry against innovation.

The "woman question" extended beyond the ballot, Brown declared. It concerned woman's right to be first an equal human being, a concept that religion had hampered. This principle of individuality underlaid

⁶⁴Ibid., November 10, 1897, p. 7.

discussion of the expediency of woman suffrage. Wider dimensions were bringing new dignity to womanhood, and he predicted that "old time" chivalry would not suffice:

Women will sometime come to resent with all the spirit of their nature the patronage and sentimental protection which is offered them by many of the stronger sex. They will see that it is a false chivalry, which implies the condescension of superiors to inferiors. Women will cast aside angrily compliment and flattery and ask for simple equality. The soul of womanhood will dare to think, speak and act independently.

By their common birthright, what uplifted or degraded one sex mutually affected the other. "The distinctions created by society and maintained by statute are fictitious and are bound to pass away," Reverend Brown concluded, and with them would pass the "woman question."⁶⁵ This was heady feminism for a state whose conservatism was "beyond criticism."

The convention formed an "Equal Suffrage Party" modelled after political parties in structure. But its members would not seek office nor interfere with established parties or tickets aside from legislative candidates. Their aim was to elect sympathetic men--at least men who would allow electors to decide the suffrage issue. The platform, adopted without dissent, read:

⁶⁵Ibid., November 11, 1897, pp. 5-6.

Whereas, the equal suffragists of Montana believe that taxation without representation is unjust and that women of education, judgment and discretion are entitled to the same privileges of citizenship as men; and that their natural and inherited rights demand their recognition, therefore, be it resolved, that we believe in extending the elective franchise to all citizens irrespective of sex.

To direct the Equal Suffrage Party, the convention named an incomplete (but large) state central committee representing 15 counties and chose Ella Knowles Haskell committee chairman.⁶⁶

Helena women had dominated the MWSA action of the past year, but the 1897 convention elected new officers from a broader geographic distribution. Still all officers were from western Montana, and President Roena Medini (a musician) lived in Helena. Within the past year, Mdme. Medini moved from the state, and Dr. Mary Moore Atwater filled the presidency until October 1899. With activities channelled through its Equal Suffrage Party, the MWSA did not meet in 1898.⁶⁷

Women in the Montana suffrage movement during the 1890's were generally among the better educated and propertied. Some were featured in society columns of local newspapers. Despite their status and ability, they had failed to win the cooperation of conservative politi-

⁶⁶Ibid., November 11, 1897, p. 5.

⁶⁷The following were elected to MWSA offices in 1897: president, Madame F. Roena Medini (or Medini-Casedy) of Helena; vice president, Mrs. Nanita Bagley Sherlock of Boulder; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Richard T. Gaines of Missoula; recording secretary, Mrs. Martha Dunkel of Butte; treasurer, Dr. Mary Moore Atwater of Marysville re-elected; and auditor, Mrs. Datha Dolan of Helena. (Ibid., November 12, 1897, p. 5.)

cians to achieve full citizenship. While the platform of the Equal Suffrage Party could be interpreted as a plea for equal political privileges based on democratic principles and natural rights, the suffragists had subtly called attention to their special attributes of "education, judgment and discretion" as a basis for enfranchisement. Their tone should have conveyed the thought to non-converts that Montana suffragists, too, had a stake in a stable social order.

Responding to the suffragists' modulated bid, the next legislature (in 1899) considered an amendment for a woman's ballot restricted to substantial property holders. HB 50 was introduced by John R. Toole, a Daly Democrat. This bill provided for general suffrage to "all women more than 21 years old who pay taxes on property to the amount of \$100 and have not been convicted of a felony." The bill said nothing about eligibility to hold office. The House Committee on Privileges and Elections heard testimony from a number of prominent suffragists (including Ella Knowles Haskell, Mrs. Thomas Walsh, Dr. Maria Dean, and Colonel C. B. Nolan) coordinated by Dr. Mary Moore Atwater, acting MWSA president. Although a majority of the committee remained personally opposed to the proposal, Toole persuaded them to report his bill without recommendation.⁶⁸ On the House floor an attempt to delete

⁶⁸Ibid., January 24, 1899, p. 5; January 26, 1899, p. 8; February 14, 1899, p. 5; Great Falls Tribune, January 26, 1899, p. 1.

the property qualification, and thus convert the bill to an equal suffrage measure, was quickly defeated 25 to 26. Without further debate the bill was decisively defeated, 10 to 49, with a number of the proponents of equal suffrage rejecting the Toole compromise. The Independent reported the mood of the House toward the suffrage bill:

The bill never had many friends, for woman suffragists generally condemned it themselves as it imposed conditions upon women electors that were not required of men. Nevertheless, it had been expected that it would at least cause a spirited debate. . . . Even the man who fathered it was not present to say a word in its behalf and its enemies did not condescend to waste their time in arguing against it.⁶⁹

What had gone wrong with the suffragists' many-faceted plans of 1897? Why did they fail to get a sympathetic legislature? During the 1898 election campaign, the state suffrage association sent a letter to every legislative candidate inquiring as to his attitude toward submission of an equal suffrage amendment.⁷⁰ Presumably, the suffragists applied this information. Ella Knowles Haskell, meanwhile, engaged in the complex partisan politics of the election campaign. Free silver was a foremost issue, but partisan alignments were complicated by the legislature's upcoming task to elect a United States senator. Mrs. Haskell had urged Populists to fuse and then stumped

⁶⁹Ibid., February 14, 1899, p. 5.

⁷⁰Daily Missoulian, October 28, 1898, p. 4.

for free silver and equal suffrage. Democrats William A. Clark and Joseph K. Toole stoutly resisted fusion, but the Daly faction yielded. Then, usurping several Populist platform planks, the Democrats swept to victory--including 57 of the 70 House seats and 17 of the 22 Senate seats. The party was in full command without commitment to woman suffrage.⁷¹

The state was financially distressed. The 1899 legislature also was wracked by a vicious fight to name a United States senator, ending with the infamous election of William A. Clark, despite his faction's minority, on the 18th ballot. The corrupted and exhausted legislators were disinterested in reforms. Also, new rules gave tight control over legislation to a powerful few. The two chambers had agreed to appoint a joint steering committee, ostensibly to expedite action after the 40th day. This powerful committee could select and direct bills, even substitute its own measures. Principal reform bills

⁷¹Alderson manuscript for HWS, IV; Clinch, Urban Populism, pp. 156-159; Great Falls Tribune, February 14, 1899, p. 2. See also Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 87-88. Toole remarked, "The name fusion is much like the abused mule: it has neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity to recommend it." (Clinch, Urban Populism, p. 156.)

were disposed of after the 40th day. Direct legislation, pet bill of labor and Populists, went down as ignobly as woman suffrage.⁷²

The Montana suffrage movement, as indicated by minutes of the Helena Business Women's Suffrage Club, had its internal problems as well. Rapport with NAWSA appears to have slipped. The Helena club decided in January 1897 to close out its pledge to national (leaving a balance of \$13.50, with about 50 paid members) then use all future funds in Montana. Out of touch with Montana developments, NAWSA's Carrie Chapman Catt had suggested that Montana set up state headquarters. The Helena suffragists were miffed--since the state had already so organized; so the club explored affiliation with the "National Confederation of Clubs." At this time, too, Dr. Maria Dean, the local club's president from its start until she moved up to state presidency in October 1899, recommended that the suffragists "work among our own people upon fundamental lines." This probably meant cutting programs on esoteric public topics in favor of stricter civic preparedness and promotion of equal suffrage.

⁷²See especially Great Falls Tribune, January 27, 1899, p. 1; January 29, 1899, p. 1; January 30, 1899, p. 8. Also Ibid., February 5, 1899, p. 2; February 21, 1899.

With the U. S. Senate about to reject Clark for his corrupt path to Washington, Clark resigned. Lieutenant Governor Spriggs quickly reappointed him to the vacancy, a maneuver angrily rescinded by Governor Smith. For the second time Montana forfeited a seat in the U. S. Senate.

Apathy among Montana's women, real or assumed, remained a major obstacle. The Reverend Carleton Brown (whose wife was an active suffragist) predicted that 100 years hence women's apathy toward their own progress would be judged "most unaccountable."⁷³ Mary Long Alderson admitted the question of women's solidarity:

The men of Montana are, as a whole, notably chivalrous and liberal minded. Why they have withheld the ballot from women can hardly be explained. It may be that they are not convinced that the majority of women wish it or need it.⁷⁴

Governor Robert Smith, at the MWSA convention in 1897, sincerely expressed this view. The Great Falls Tribune, smugly recalling that "Mrs. Ella's frantic appeals to the men of Cascade County" during the election campaign were ineffective, admonished the suffrage advocates to direct their efforts toward women themselves:

Whenever there is any general desire manifested by the women of the state to possess the right of suffrage they are certain to get it. . . . No amount of tirade against their tyranny and general cussedness of voters who wear pants and deny to women equal political privileges will win for women suffragists their coveted political privileges. . . .⁷⁵

This familiar charge could survive as long as the position of women remained unquantified. Those who resorted to this line of argument ignored the fact that neither the Montana voters who wore pants

⁷³ Helena Independent, November 11, 1897, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Alderson, HWS, IV (1900).

⁷⁵ Great Falls Tribune, February 14, 1899, p. 2.

nor the disenfranchised who wore skirts had been allowed to pass on the question of expanded woman suffrage, equal or unequal.⁷⁶ The critical minority in the legislature, by withholding the referendum, maintained the status quo with self-assurance. One representative who dismissed the petitions from his constituents rationalized to the press that if the suffrage amendment were submitted to the electorate, "women would be around at the polls and everywhere asking the men to vote for their measure, and . . . men would do so even if they didn't want to." The Independent chided the self-appointed "deliverer" by pointing out that this intimidation of male voters was to be achieved by women who he claimed did not want the ballot.⁷⁷

⁷⁶The Independent (November 26, 1896, p. 4) had urged the legislature to submit a woman suffrage amendment to both men and women.

⁷⁷Helena Independent, February 3, 1897, p. 4.

CHAPTER IV

THE TARNISHED VISION

Turn-of-the-Century Doldrums

The ardor of Montana suffragists cooled after their dismal failure with the 1899 legislature. The MWSA convention in Helena in mid-October 1899 was a dispirited affair presided over by Dr. Mary Moore Atwater. NAWSA's Carrie Chapman Catt (still chairman of the Organization Committee) and Miss Mary Garrett Hay (field secretary and finance expert), who were on an extensive Western tour for the national organization, tried to spark enthusiasm at the convention. But they were not tuned in to particulars of Montana's problems and past efforts.

Miss Hay blamed the recent national doldrums of the suffrage movement largely on senatorial elections which, as in Montana, overshadowed all else. She acknowledged that local clubs and women "had been before the legislature," but Miss Hay twice asserted before the convention that Montana had not yet seen a campaign for equal suffrage. When she asked for contributions, strictly for work in the state, "the audience responded with more or less alacrity to the invitation, but there were few gold pieces in the hats." Principal business of the convention was how to keep the state organization alive. New state officers, headed by Dr. Maria Dean of Helena, comprised a committee for legislative action and to see that "the campaign of education would not be permitted to flag." They planned to establish county leagues, which a strong central association would coordinate. Stimulus ran

from the top down; NAWSA prodded the state suffrage leaders, who in turn would try to keep the grass roots from dying.¹

Helena suffragists, mainstay of the Montana movement, reorganized in November following the state convention. Their two clubs merged as the Helena Equal Suffrage Club. Mrs. Thomas Walsh declined the presidency, advising election of new faces. For the most part this was done, although Dr. Atwater, Dr. Dean, Ella Knowles Haskell, and Mrs. Walsh continued prominently in activities. The reorganized club limited its calendar to seven monthly meetings. Attendance was good, and programs

¹Ibid., October 17, 1899, p. 5; October 18, 1899, p. 8; Great Falls Tribune, October 18, 1899, p. 1.

Elected to state offices were: president, Dr. Maria Dean of Helena; vice president, Mrs. Nanita Bagley Sherlock of Boulder re-elected; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Anna Walker of Great Falls; recording secretary, Mrs. Harry Moore of Helena; treasurer, Dr. Mary Moore Atwater of Helena; auditors, Mrs. P. A. Dann of Great Falls and Miss Sarepta Sanders of Butte. (Helena Independent, October 18, 1899, p. 8.)

Maria Dean (ma-rye'a) graduated from the University of Wisconsin and continued study of medicine in Boston and in Germany before coming to Helena in 1885. She immediately established a thriving practice, specializing in care of women and children. Soon she was appointed physician for a smelting company, also. Eventually her interests included tuberculosis, child welfare, mental health, and criminology. She established the YWCA in Helena. As a young woman she was an excellent horsewoman, a crack rifle shot, and enjoyed small game hunting. Dr. Dean invested well in Helena real estate. She was one of the few suffragists to bridge the generations of the movement in Montana. Dr. Dean retired in Wisconsin and died there in 1919. (Helena Independent, January 12, 1890, p. 5; clipping in the Woman Suffrage file, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena; interview with Miss Frieda Fligelman and Mrs. Lucille Dyas Topping, friends, April 17, 1973, in Helena.)

concerned "practical work useful to the community" (especially consideration of a municipal water plant), civic instruction for members, and promotion of equal rights for women "in all things." The suffragists shared a permanent clubroom with other women's clubs, where they left issues of the national suffrage magazine, Woman's Journal. Meetings lapsed from the close of this club year until "Mrs. Catt's meeting" in May 1902.²

In 1900 the Helena Equal Suffrage Club was the only local club active in Montana, although action committees were set up elsewhere. State President Maria Dean helped to arrange monthly meetings around the state to inform the public as to suffrage needs and purposes. That fall Drs. Maria Dean and Mary Moore Atwater promoted the suffrage plank at Democratic and Republican conventions. While these major parties rejected it, Ella Knowles Haskell again succeeded with Populists. Their platform, harmoniously adopted by delegates attending from all but three counties, called for submission of the question of "equal citizenship" to the electorate.³

But partisan attention to the suffrage question was muted by concern over growing corporate influence in the state. Fusion of anti-

²Minutes of the Helena Equal Suffrage Club (Montana Historical Society Library, Helena), passim.

³Alderson, "Woman Suffrage [sic] in Montana," HWS, IV; Great Falls Tribune, September 20, 1900, p. 1.

Amalgamated (Standard Oil) forces--Populists, Democrats, and the new Laborites--dominated the party conventions in 1900. Former Governor Joseph K. Toole, who was not a delegate, like William A. Clark acceded to the principle both had resolutely opposed before. "[L]et us with one accord unite against this common enemy," Toole urged the Clark-controlled Democrats, "and not let party name divide us until this second crusade for liberty be attained." Tripartite fusion was stymied when Labor insisted upon Populist Thomas Hogan for governor on the joint slate. The remaining fusionists "prevailed upon" Joseph K. Toole to head their ticket, and they won handily in November elections.⁴

The Populists' suffrage plank was sacrificed in fusion, but it was no sell-out by Ella Knowles Haskell. Two years earlier she had worked for fusion to secure political strength for several major Populist planks, most importantly bimetallism. Again in 1900, although Populists could draw upon their Bryan national ticket, not all of their third-party principles could be attained, whether in fusion or independence. Splintered parties would forfeit the election to the "copper and kerosene" trust, a concern which to Populists had superseded the free silver issue. Mrs. Haskell's impassioned plea for compromise from

⁴Clinch, Urban Populism, pp. 160-166; Great Falls Tribune, September 16, 1900, p. 1; September 22, 1900, pp. 1, 10; Helena Independent, September 22, 1900, p. 1.

reformists (for fusion) "turned the tide" for Toole's nomination. Mrs. Haskell surely took note, also, that the Republican gubernatorial candidate was David Folsom, the Meagher County woolgrower who had influenced defeat of the suffrage bill in the 1895 Senate. Suffragists had no better practical alternative than fusion in 1900. Toole had consistently defended popular judgment, therefore, he could be relied on to support a referendum on suffrage. And submission was all the suffragists had asked. Possibly Ella Knowles Haskell picked up a chip from Toole to cash in behalf of equal suffrage in 1903. Governor Toole's endorsement of the suffrage amendment in 1903 was the only gubernatorial support expressed for it prior to 1913.

Suffragists maintained publicity for their cause by half-hearted presentation of another bill in the 1901 legislature. Representative S. R. Jensen, Cascade County Populist, introduced a full suffrage bill for women (HB 61) on January 30. The Committee on Privileges and Elections reported it without recommendation, and the House ordered it printed. On February 15, the session's 40th day, legislation passed to control by the steering committee. No more was heard of HB 61. Evidently the suffragists themselves saw no reason to resurrect the bill. Miss Adelaide Staves, a law student and assistant to Ella Knowles Haskell, had charge of the equal suffrage measure, "but owing to the turmoil on the floor . . . throughout the whole

winter, the women concluded to wait," according to the Butte Miner. "So the bill went to rest among the pigeonholes. . . ." ⁵

Affairs outside Montana in 1901 did not seem auspicious for suffragists either. Oregon, for the fourth time, turned down the franchise for women in a referendum. And in Kansas, Carrie Nation was rampaging against saloons. This violence gave cause for public reservation in regard to woman suffrage because of its close tie with the WCTU.

Help Wanted in the Stables

In 1902 and 1903 the impetus for woman suffrage in Montana again came from NAWSA, this time designed particularly to appeal to labor unions and to women's clubs. In May 1902, NAWSA sent a hard-working team to Montana--Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, new president (successor to the aged Miss Anthony); Miss Gail Laughlin, young New York lawyer (with the United States Industrial Commission) and organizer for NAWSA; and Miss Laura Gregg, an organizational "nuts-and-bolts" specialist on NAWSA's Executive Committee. Meeting in Helena with state suffrage officers, they initiated another statewide campaign. Mrs. Catt remained

⁵House Journal of the Seventh Session of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana, pp. 86-87, 130, 145; Great Falls Tribune, January 31, 1901, p. 5 (text of HB 61); February 23, 1901, p. 2; Butte Miner, December 21, 1902, p. 7 (brief history on woman suffrage in Montana); Adelaide Staves Reeder papers (Montana Historical Society Library, Helena).

in Helena for two weeks to help re-organize a suffrage club and to stir suffrage interest within all leading women's clubs there. Then, after a public address, she joined Gail Laughlin in Butte. Meanwhile Miss Laughlin had worked Butte labor unions, 10,000 strong, and had won their strong endorsement for equal suffrage. The two women addressed various organizations, then climaxed their drive with an open meeting. Men were in the majority, Ella Knowles Haskell presided, and prominent suffragists and socialites shared the stage. Miss Laughlin spoke on the ballot as means to social melioration, a power women must possess to be effective, and she appealed to women to assist their less favored sisters (working women) in obtaining rights they needed.⁶

Mrs. Catt's "logical and eloquent discourse" ranged over a multitude of points tied to her central theme: there was immediate social need for women in politics, that grant of the ballot should not await a miracle of purification of democratic institutions under male direction. She declared that the alleged failure of woman suffrage came from partisan males frustrated by the independence of women voters. Mrs. Catt played to the nativism of this audience. (In 1903, 36 per cent of Silver Bow's population was foreign born.) Referring to the constant influx of "foreign ignorance, pauperism and criminality," she

⁶Butte Miner, May 20, 1903, p. 7. Also see Ibid., May 25, 1903, p. 19.

pointed out that an enormous percentage of these immigrants were males with the potential to far out-weigh women's ballot power. Extension of suffrage to women would not double the undesirable vote; rather, she implied, it would safeguard the superior citizenship of American men.⁷

Although Mrs. Catt returned home to New York in late May, Gail Laughlin and Laura Gregg remained in Montana to mobilize for the coming election and legislative assembly. Miss Laughlin toured the state, mostly by stagecoach, organizing clubs in more than 30 communities and committees elsewhere. Her report included mention of cordiality and success in Fergus County and in "every town" across northern Montana. All labor unions endorsed equal suffrage, and the state labor convention, with only one dissenting vote, sanctioned a popular referendum on the issue.⁸

Thus encouraged, MWSA officers called a mass convention September 17 and 18 in Butte, where a dynamic suffrage club had organized in June. Railroads and hotels granted special rates to participants expected from all counties.

⁷Ibid., May 20, 1903, p. 7.

⁸Topping, "Montana," HWS, VI, p. 360; Butte Miner, August 10, 1902, p. 7. Bridget McMahon was the only woman delegate to the state labor convention. This suggests that working women did not have an effective forum for their particular problems in the Montana labor organization at that time. (Butte Miner, August 29, 1902, p. 9.)

With the 1902 convention MWSA shifted its rationale for woman suffrage. Arguments for equal justice based on natural rights were bypassed, and political equality based on property rights got scant mention. Instead the suffragists emphasized that women had accrued new interests, new needs, and new obligations. The home and public affairs had become inseparable spheres. Woman's ballot was needed to preserve American values and to improve social conditions. Several speakers, men and women, developed these themes in sessions open to the public. F. Augustus Heinze, embattled against the Amalgamated Copper Company, had been on the program, but he failed to attend due to "pressure of business." (Party conventions were concurrently in contest.) However, he sent a "liberal contribution to assist the state organization in its press work."⁹

NAWSA's Gail Laughlin was the principal speaker. She stressed that the business of politics concerned the most vital and common needs of the home and family. Woman, therefore, had a duty to participate responsibly in her enlarged sphere of community and world; politics was no longer a question of privilege. Politics would not unsex her, Miss Laughlin assured. Man's delight in woman was not in increased ratio to ignorance. Woman would remain womanly to contribute views complementary to man's, thus their combined efforts would advance society.

⁹Butte Miner, September 19, 1902, p. 10; Heinze also supported direct legislation (Clinch, Urban Populism, p. 167).

Two women signalled the coming progressive attitude that social problems should be attacked at their source. Mrs. Emma Reed Corbin, of Missoula, pointed out that in the past women's work had been largely palliative, but now their effort would be directed more to prevention of wrong social conditions. Mrs. Margaret Cunningham, socially prominent in Butte, spoke of juvenile courts as a specific need for environmental reform where women had special interest. She blamed the foreign-born for bringing "effete conditions of the old world." for growing disparity of classes and spread of an undesirable element. Right in Butte, a city with the highest per capita wealth in the world, a large number of youth were being schooled in idleness and vice. She urged judicious public expenditures to avert such exposure and to make useful citizens of these children.¹⁰

In pre-convention politicking (in the office of Ella Knowles Haskell) and in executive session the hard matters of organization, leadership, and finance were thrashed out. Most important was election of the Committee on Organization of Legislative Work. Ella Knowles Haskell was picked as its chairman, and several men served.¹¹ The con-

¹⁰Butte Miner, September 18, 1902, pp. 10, 16.

¹¹Named to the Committee on Organization of Legislative Work besides Ella Knowles Haskell were Mary O'Neill, Peter Breen, and J. S. Shropshire (all of Butte), Adelaide Staves Reeder of Helena, Edward Waters of Anaconda, and Gail Laughlin. Many suffragists, especially members of the Butte and Helena clubs, helped this committee. (Ibid., September 18, 1902, p. 16; September 19, 1902, p. 10.)

vention decided to set up state headquarters in Butte, rather than Helena, for several reasons. Women's clubs, considered a fertile ground for suffrage work, abounded in Butte at that time. Sarepta Sanders and Ella Knowles Haskell, experienced hands in suffrage work, had moved there from Helena. Also Butte was the center of unionism, and labor was a focal point of NAWSA's hope in this campaign. The convention appointed Mary O'Neill (of Butte) state press superintendent and asked NAWSA to extend Gail Laughlin's services for the concluding phase of the suffrage campaign before the legislators. The convention resolved to appoint a committee to work for adoption of an equal suffrage plank in the state conventions of the Democratic, Republican, and Labor parties. The Populists and Socialists were not on the list, since the Populists had "never failed" to adopt such a plank and the Socialists had already included it. The major parties again declined.

The suffragists' confidence in Populist support relied primarily on Ella Knowles Haskell's tenacity and standing in her party. The People's Party had waned a great deal by 1902 except in the Butte area,

New MWSA officers were: president, Mrs. Clara Tower of Butte; vice president, Dr. Maria Dean of Helena; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Charles (Bessie Hughes) Smith of Butte; recording secretary, Mrs. Nanita Bagley Sherlock of Boulder (wife of the state senator); treasurer, Mrs. Thomas J. Walsh of Helena; auditors, Mrs. Ella Carter of Livingston and Mrs. Edward Waters of Anaconda; national executive committee, Mrs. Emelyn [sic] Bowman of Sheridan.

where it still carried political weight as a faction to fusion. In the Populist's Silver Bow County convention Mrs. Haskell won a hard battle for the suffrage plank. Then as the only woman delegate to the party's state convention and a prominent member of its Platform and Resolutions Committee, she vociferously defended woman suffrage with support from Peter Breen. Mrs. Haskell pointed out that every labor union in Butte had endorsed submission of an equal suffrage amendment, even the Bartenders Union. Unintimidated by her opponents aspersions to women in public life, Ella Knowles Haskell responded that she would advocate equal suffrage if she were the only woman in Montana to do so-- because she believed it to be right. Although the convention retained the suffrage plank by a large majority, it was among the numerous concessions made when the Populists fused with the Labor Party and Anti-Trust Democrats.¹²

Governor Toole, in his message to the assembling 1903 legislature, recommended numerous political reforms: direct election of United States senators, initiative and referendum, direct primary nominations, and election of judges apart from the general election. And with this state message, Toole became the first Montana governor

¹²Ibid., August 21, 1902, p. 10; September 23, 1902, p. 8; September 25, 1902, p. 7; October 4, 1902, p. 10. Thomas Hinds, a determined anti-suffragist, was a power on the autonomous "Committee of Five" which represented the Populists in bargaining for fusion.

officially to advocate woman suffrage. He argued the principle of submission (as he had at the constitutional convention in 1889), that "the rights of the people are safe with the people;" that a request "frightened with such duties and responsibilities" as equal suffrage and promoted by so many should be answered by the people. Then, in effusive oratory, he defended the merits of woman suffrage:

A new force is demanded in this State to clean out the Augean Stables whose poisonous effluvia ladens the political atmosphere and corrupts the public morals. Unaided and alone we cannot cope with the situation with the hope of complete success in any reasonable time. It requires more than the strength of Hercules or the Omniscience of Jove.

. . . [W]hat can be more desirable than the active cooperation of the maidens and matrons, the future mothers in this State, in preserving and guiding the next generation, not only in religious but also in civil and political prudence? Let it be for them not only "to outwatch the stars" for the purity of the ballot and consequent safety of the State, but by their personal participation in every contest, to make righteous every result.

When this co-operation shall have been authorized and clothed with organic life, it will out-weigh the armies and navies of the world and accomplish more for Liberty and Equality, Justice and Fraternity than all the great battles which have ever been fought from Marathon to Maila.¹³

The popular vision of an enlightened, progressive society in Montana had been badly tarnished by corruptive power politics. Formerly reticent to permit women in affairs of state, Toole now saw woman's help as a public necessity. To justify this thrust of women into

¹³"Governor's Message," Great Falls Tribune, January 7, 1903, p. 8. Although Toole served as governor until April 1908, he did not repeat his endorsement of woman suffrage.

politics, Toole and other proponents of a public sphere for women were forced to compromise the Victorian model. The morally superior being, whose alleged special qualities were nourished by her home environment, was being called to vulgar environs.

In accepting this rationale for the ballot, suffragists had to downplay the natural rights argument of human equality which had been an important part of their ideology. Mary O'Neill, new press agent for Montana suffragists, carried the theme to extreme feminine chauvanism with a remark in her column: "Now, it is woman, only woman . . . who can rescue poor, indiscreet and misguided man and lift him to the height above the seething, rotten conditions into which he has got himself."¹⁴

Montana editors had been shaping public opinion in the debate over woman's rightful responsibility in the changing economic and political milieu. The editorials were highly colored by corporate politics since corporate interests were rapidly acquiring control of the press. The Helena Record, an organ for Amalgamated interests, suggested that women keep out of the public scene:

It might be a good plan for these women who are so busy saving the country and helping the Almighty with free advice to turn their attention to their homes and see if they can't find room for improvement there.¹⁵

¹⁴ Great Falls Tribune, October 26, 1902, p. 5.

¹⁵ Quoted in the Helena Independent, February 6, 1901, p. 4.

The Independent did not like "the plan" suggested by the Record. Moral law ought to bind outside the home. "These women" were trying to bring up useful citizens, trying to make the world better.

[O]bserving women have noticed what an unholy botch the men have made. . . . Women might do a little better; they could not do worse. . . . "[T]hese women" see laws violated with impunity from punishment. . . . They see one-sided laws purchased. . . . They see needed legislation for the protection of the people killed by lobbyists. . . .

No man can have a greater stake in the country, in its progress on right lines, than the mother and wife. "Make the world better," said Lucy Stone. . . . That is what they will do when the bumptious clods of conceit, bigotry, narrow-mindedness and don't care a damn are elbowed out of the way long enough for the men who think and have respect for women to given woman [t]he right to take part in government.¹⁶

Shortly after Toole's gubernatorial address the Libby News, another "Standard Oil" paper, argued that the elective franchise should be restricted, not extended. There was neither good reason nor broad support for woman suffrage:

[T]he better class of women, especially the "home" women, do not want it. As a general rule it is only favored by a lot of gad-about, women who neglect their home duties to run around peddling neighborhood gossip and who generally take a large interest in other people's affairs.¹⁷

W. G. Eggleston had become editor of a new progressive semi-weekly, The Press. It was dedicated to opposing corporate control of

¹⁶ Helena Independent, February 6, 1901, p. 4.

¹⁷ Quoted in The Press, February 7, 1903, p. 12.

Montana government, and it carried no advertising. Eggleston responded to the Libby News by charging former United States Senator Thomas Carter, now employed by Standard Oil interests, with "anonymous journalism" to influence legislative denial of amendments for woman suffrage and for direct legislation. Eggleston declared that Carter's objection to equal suffrage had the same foundation as his objection to direct legislation, direct primaries, a railroad commission, and an honest judiciary. As agent and lobbyist for corporations, Carter's business was to keep power out of the hands of the people. Eggleston continued to lash out: It was not the common people who destroyed free government, but the unscrupulous who clothed "robbery with respectability, bribery with pretense, and corruption with patriotism." The demand for woman suffrage, he argued, was based on desire to uplift humanity. Eggleston had directly tied the issue of woman suffrage into the package of progressive thought.¹⁸

Fusion-Laborites held 17 of the 72 House seats in the 1903 legislature. Suffragists capitalized on this strength by pressing another shift in rationale for woman's franchise: that working women needed more clout to deal with their employment problems. Without the ballot

¹⁸The Press, February 7, 1903, p. 12. John S. M. Neill was proprietor of the Helena Independent in 1901 and of The Press during its two-year lifespan (September 1902 to October 1904).

women could not get adequate consideration from employers or the attention of politicians for legislative remedy.¹⁹

Equal suffrage amendment bills were introduced both in the House (HB 8 by Republican Aaron Connor, of Ravalli County) and in the Senate (SB 1 by Democrat Henry Sherlock, of Jefferson County). The Senate acted early and perfunctorily. Then on January 14, after brief floor debate, the senators voted 12 to 12 for indefinite postponement of SB 1, and Lieutenant Governor Frank Higgins broke the tie, killing the bill. Senator W. F. Meyer, a member of the Judiciary Committee (which had reported the bill), pleaded that because of considerable public concern with the suffrage issue, the bill should be printed for full Senate deliberation. Committee chairman Fletcher Maddox, Great Falls attorney, objected on grounds that the entire committee had considered the bill twice and "no overwhelming clamor for submission" of the question had been evident. His assertion stretched the record. The Senate rejected the Maddox report and returned the bill to committee; proponents would be heard.²⁰

Mary O'Neill and Gail Laughlin had been "working like beavers" among the averse senators, but the swift committee report on the bill

¹⁹"Legislative Gossip," Helena Independent, January 10, 1903, p. 8.

²⁰Butte Miner, January 15, 1903, p. 1; Helena Independent, January 15, 1903, p. 8; January 16, 1903, p. 8.

caught the suffragists, as well as Sherlock, by surprise. They protested that they had not been notified of committee hearings; besides, they claimed, the committee had assured them a favorable report.²¹

Suffragists quickly mobilized. Petitioning (which had begun in September) had continued into January, particularly by women's clubs. These petitions were called in, and MWSA's President Tower rushed home from the East.²²

On January 28 the Judiciary Committee held its hearing in the Senate chamber. Galleries were packed. In unprecedented deference, the committee gave their seats on the Senate floor to the suffragists who were to testify, while they sat on the platform. Mrs. Adelaide Staves Reeder spoke on the increasing numbers of women taxpayers and wage earners and their genuine stake in full citizenship. Mrs. Thomas Walsh admitted that maybe it was true that the mass of women opposed equal suffrage, but such resistance was common to all great reforms. Mr. M. P. Haggerty thought that denial of rights to women constituted "intellectual prostitution." Also testifying during the orderly 1 1/2-hour hearing were Dr. Maria Dean, Mrs. R. B. Matheson, Mr. S. C. Herron,

²¹Butte Miner, January 14, 1903, p. 1; January 15, 1903, p. 1; Helena Independent, January 15, 1903, p. 8; January 16, 1903, p. 8.

²²Minutes of the Helena Equal Suffrage Club, September 13, 1902 (text of the petition), Montana Historical Society Library; Butte Miner, January 15, 1903, p. 7; January 18, 1903, p. 11; Helena Independent, January 21, 1903, p. 4.

and Miss Gail Laughlin. No opponents showed. MWSA President Clara Tower presented petitions which had more than 2,000 signators. The committee immediately retired in executive session and decided unanimously to order the bill printed. On the following day advocates of equal suffrage presented similar testimony to the House Judiciary Committee in open session of the chamber.²³

The Senate again debated SB 1 on February 5. Although the bill was read in entirety, Senator Meyer was unhappy with his colleagues' unreasoned treatment. "Nothing gives resistance to this measure," he charged, "but that spirit of conservatism which prompts us not to adopt new measures." Nonetheless, he met the worn, "untenable" arguments, assuring opponents that suffrage would not wipe out woman's admirable characteristics. "Men [sic] will always remain the strong, steady oak, and woman the clinging vine. . . . It is [her] good in politics that we want." Senator Maddox, a rigid "anti," admitted that the subject of equal suffrage "could not be laughed out of court." His principal objection to the bill, he now declared, was the form of the ballot. In his opinion submission of any amendment was tantamount to passage, simply because voters perfunctorily marked their ballots. He would favor submission if means could be devised to obtain a full

²³Butte Miner, January 29, 1903, pp. 1, 8, 10; January 30, 1903, pp. 1, 10; Helena Independent, January 29, 1903, p. 5; January 30, 1903, p. 5.

and fair expression of the people. The Senate killed the bill by a larger margin this second time--16 to 10.²⁴

Mildly hopeful, suffragists took the cue from Maddox to amend the House bill so that the electorate would have a separate ballot for the suffrage question. Without further debate the House approved their revised version 40 to 24, but this was slightly short of the required two-thirds. On reconsideration two Lewis and Clark representatives switched to the opposition for a final tally of 38 to 27. Defeat in the House nullified need for further Senate attention to the suffrage amendment.²⁵

Montana suffragists in 1903 pressed their bills beyond reasonable hope for passage so they would have a voting record for use in the next election. However, the vote didn't necessarily indicate individual commitment of the legislators because some of them played to publicity on the issue. There was no discernible alignment of the major parties on the equal suffrage bill. But representatives of minor parties, all from Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties, gave almost unanimous support. Of the 11 Labor members, 5 Fusion-Democrats, and lone Anti-Trust

²⁴Butte Miner, February 6, 1903, pp. 1,8; February 7, 1903, p. 9; Helena Independent, February 6, p. 5.

²⁵Helena Independent, February 7, 1903, p. 8; February 11, 1903, p. 8; Butte Miner, February 7, 1903, p. 9

Democrat, only one bolted to oppose woman suffrage (2 were absent). Other urban centers and the rural areas show a mixed record on the issue.²⁶

In 1899 NAWSA's Mary Garrett Hay had belittled previous suffrage campaigns in Montana, conducted without national help. But in 1903 the outside "experts" from NAWSA had no more to show. They obtained complete endorsement by labor's officialdom. However, the mere 2,000 equal suffrage petitioners indicates that union rank-and-file had not concurred, maybe in reaction to suffragists' anti-foreign expressions. And NAWSA failed to get a lasting commitment from clubwomen. Many of the socialites recruited for this suffrage campaign quickly returned to their more mundane interests.

The Independent judged that woman suffrage in Montana would be postponed for years, for where was proof of practical benefit?

The truth is that the people of this state are conservative and do not as a rule believe in trying experiments. . . . As a matter of sentiment and theory the women to-day are able to make out a pretty good case, but political matters

²⁶ Helena Independent, February 6, 1903, p. 4; February 5, 1903, p. 5; February 11, 1903, p. 8; Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 103, 104. In the Senate 6 Democrats and 4 Republicans supported the suffrage bill, while 8 of each party opposed it. Supporting in the House were 22 Republicans, 13 Labor and Fusion-Democrats, and 3 Democrats; opposing were 22 Republicans, 1 Fusion-Democrat, and 3 Democrats. William Lindsay, Republican state chairman (who had voted for woman suffrage twice), warned that the time was not opportune for submission. Sponsor Connor, floor leader, was a rising Republican star. (Helena Independent, January 31, 1903, p. 4; February 3, 1903, p. 4.)

go further than the sentimental side of things and demand practical results.²⁷

"Practical" matters indeed demanded political attention in the 1903 legislature, even though no senatorial seat was in contest. At the vortex of excitement were the alleged frauds by Heinze forces in the Silver Bow election, the impeachment and acquittal without trial of Judge Harney, the change of venue bill, and the power politics of Carter, Clark, and Heinze. Even reform questions on gambling, a fellow servant bill, and proposal for a railroad commission involved more "practical" facets than the enfranchisement of women. Without the force of ballot, women's appeal for rights remained subordinate to interests of established political power.

In 1905 the House again considered a woman suffrage bill, HB 77 sponsored by William W. Berry, of Lewis and Clark County. Neither opponents nor advocates seemed keenly interested in the bill. After hearing testimony from several suffragists (Mrs. J. M. Lewis, Mrs. Walter Matheson, and Miss Mary O'Neill), the Committee on Judiciary returned a majority report in favor of the bill. The chamber adopted it without debate. Promoters of the initiative and referendum bill, wanting to assure one of the three places on the ballot for their issue, had discouraged action on any other proposal for a constitutional

²⁷Helena Independent, February 6, 1903, p. 4.

amendment until their own passed. Labor was emphatic on this point of priority.²⁸ The suffrage amendment, however, did not appear to have a chance to carry, so it was permitted to advance to final consideration on February 14. Galleries were crowded.

Sponsor Berry avoided discussion of the merits of woman suffrage. But citing 6,000 petitioners as evidence of the people's interest, he pleaded for submission. Berry and J. M. Kennedy, of Silver Bow County, stressed that the suffrage measure complemented the principle of direct legislation to which all parties were pledged. The opposition again questioned women's desire for the ballot and asserted that it was the legislator's duty, as demonstrated by the two-thirds requirement, to carefully consider the merit of proposed amendments. The House facetiously passed, and then withdrew, an amendment to the suffrage bill to restrict the ballot to men and women with at least two children. Advocates rebuked their colleagues for lack of earnestness and common courtesy.²⁹ Limited debate, horseplay, and a poem took up only 45

²⁸ House Journal, January 25, 1905, p. 70 (resolution from the State Federation of Labor). No more than three amendments could be submitted at a given election.

²⁹ Helena Independent, February 16, 1905, p. 5; Butte Miner, February 15, 1905, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, February 15, 1905, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, February 15, 1905, p. 1. Only the latter reported petitions; possibly Berry was referring to a cumulative total from previous campaigns.

The 1905 legislature submitted an amendment for direct legislation to the electorate. It carried in November 1906 by a huge majority, 36,374 to 6,616. (Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 119.)

minutes before the House decisively killed the bill, 33 for and 37 opposed. As a public issue woman suffrage would be dormant for the next six years, until its revival in the 1911 legislative assembly.³⁰

During debate, only Democrats spoke for the bill and only Republicans against it. The vote, however, was not so partisan. Supporting woman suffrage were 14 Republicans, 14 Democrats, and 5 Laborites; opposing were 22 Republicans, 11 Democrats, 2 Fusion, and 2 Laborites. A breakdown of counties by size of population as indicated by number of representatives, is more revealing. (See Table 2.) Silver Bow and Lewis and Clark counties, the two most populous, favored woman suffrage nearly 3 to 1. The next three most populous counties (Deer Lodge, Cascade, and Missoula) divided about evenly. The next group, with three representatives each, voted 2 to 1 against woman suffrage; and this same ratio held for the 21 least populated of the 26 counties. Within county groupings, party affiliation seemed to bear

³⁰House Journal, January 25, 1905, pp. 54, 94, 205; Butte Miner, January 28, 1905, p. 1; January 31, 1904, p. 9; Daily Missoulian, January 31, 1905, p. 1; Helena Independent, January 30, 1905, p. 5.

Mary Long Alderson (in "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," p. 16) stated that suffragists "went before the legislature" in 1907 without success; and Larson (in "Battle for the Ballot," p. 34) reported a brief flurry of interest during that session. The legislative journals have no reference to any suffrage bill in the 1907 or 1909 sessions. Mrs. Alderson's account was written years after the events. Larson offered no source.

Table 2. Vote on the Woman Suffrage Bill, 1905*

| No. of Rep. | | Vote | | |
|----------------|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | For | Against | |
| 12 | Silver Bow (Butte) | 9 | 3 | |
| 7 | Lewis and Clark (Helena) | 5 | 2 | |
| | | <u>14</u> | <u>5</u> | |
| 6 | Deer Lodge (Anaconda) | 3 | 3 | |
| 5 | Cascade (Great Falls) | 2 | 3 | |
| 4 | Missoula (Missoula) | 2 | 2 | |
| | | <u>7</u> | <u>8</u> | |
| 3 ea. | Flathead, Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison (4) | 4 | 8 | |
| 2 ea. | Beaverhead, Broadwater, Chouteau, Custer, Fergus, Granite, Meagher, Park, Ravalli (9) | 5 | 12 | (1 absent) |
| 1 ea. | Carbon, Dawson, Powell, Rosebud, Sweet Grass, Teton, Valley, Yellowstone (8) | 3 | 4 | (1 absent) |
| | | <u>12</u> | <u>24</u> | |

*Source: Ellis L. Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864: An Atlas of Elections (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958), p. 110; Montana, House Journal of the Ninth Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1905, p. 205.

little on the position of the representatives.³¹ Thus the strength of support for woman suffrage in 1905 seems directly related to urban development. Minor parties were not a factor.

Incubation for Reform

Although the woman suffrage movement seemed dead in Montana between 1905 and 1911, complex socio-economic changes occurred during this period to set the stage for a popular surge for political reforms, including equal suffrage in 1914. The reform mood had momentum by 1910, peaked in 1912, but carried over to 1916. It was part of a nationwide progressive wave to bring greater control of government to the people in order to preserve traditional social values.

Montana reformers worried most about intrusion of corporate power into public affairs. As the twentieth century began, the "kerosene and copper" trust acquired control over the press of the state. In October 1903 the Amalgamated Copper Company (ACC, or "the Company") paralyzed the Montana economy in a shutdown to force a special session of the legislature. As a result of the "Fair Trial" law then enacted, ACC soon absorbed F. Augustus Heinze and its major

³¹Based on roll call on HB 77 (Montana, House Journal of the Ninth Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1905, p. 205) and Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 110.

competitors. The War of the Copper Kings was over. The Company had demonstrated economic and political domination of the state. It did not relax its power position during the following years. In 1909 the legislature legalized corporate mergers in Montana, giving out-of-state monopolies even greater powers. Just before the 1911 legislature convened, Judge E. K. Cheadle warned that special interests in Montana were far stronger than state government, an "absurd and dangerous" condition.³² The "effluvia" of which Toole spoke in 1903 still ladened Montana's political atmosphere.

As nationally, the prospect for purifying government in Montana was keyed to fuller popular control of the machinery of politics. Structural reforms such as primary election, initiative and referendum, and direct election of United States senators appeared to reformers as promising devices to shift the locus of political power. These changes would increase the potential of citizens already enfranchised. But equal suffrage would extend the popular base to an entire new class. Women's application to help clean the "stables" had become more admissible.

Political dissidents had characteristically advocated equal suffrage in anticipation of women's support for other reforms.

³²Montana Lookout, January 23, 1909, p. 4; Western News, September 6, 1910, p. 1; Fergus County Democrat, quoted in Montana Lookout, December 31, 1910, p. 2.

Socialists, successors to the People's party in Montana, included equal franchise in a large package of reforms by which they meant to break the alleged control of the privileged class over laws and the ballot. The Socialists reform proposals were more tempered than their radical rhetoric, and Montanans seem to have taken the Socialist program, not as a radical whim, but as a constructive means to a more responsive government. Socialists rivalled Progressives in voting strength in 1912, then took a lead over them in 1914.

Progressives, too, saw advantage in sharing the ballot with women, not only to broaden the base for reforms, but also to hold old American values against the unsettling impact of urbanization and industrialization. Only after a sweep of progressive initiatives in 1912 did political leaders accord woman suffrage earnest attention. Politicians got the message that the electorate was discontent with corruption and privilege in affairs of government; the people could and would change the system. Thus, the revival of the woman suffrage issue in Montana was a part and product of the progressive movement.

Homesteading on a large scale, a phenomenon concurrent with progressivism in Montana, changed the character of the state's populace to one more receptive to woman suffrage. In 1905 Montana still had a vast domain of unappropriated public lands. The wanted settlers were slow in coming--fewer than 3,500 homestead entries yearly through 1907. Most of the early homesteaders in Montana had qualified under

the 1862 Homestead Act, which limited stakes to 160 acres. That size was not sufficient in semi-arid, non-irrigable sections. Montana agricultural experts thought 20-30 million acres of this semi-arid land could be dry-farmed. Railroads and commercial interests took up dryland promotion and reaped a quick bonanza in real estate. Many large ranches were broken up for private sales, and Indian lands were opened to settlement. In February 1909, after years of sharp controversy over public land policy, Congress passed the Mondell Homestead Act, doubling the allowable dryland acreage. Congress further encouraged homesteaders by liberalizing residency requirements in 1912. For eight years, beginning in 1910, homesteaders thronged into Montana. (See Table 3.) Irrigation made other agricultural development attractive. Thus the rural population, particularly in the dry eastern counties, increased more rapidly than other segments. (See Table 4.) By 1909 the value of Montana's agricultural product had surpassed the value of its mineral production.³³

³³Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), passim (see especially pp. 329-356, 373-382, 439-448); Ralph H. Farmer, "Analytical Survey and Study of Agricultural Conditions and the Mortgage Loan Experience of the Federal Land Bank of Spokane in the State of Montana, 1917-1927" (unpublished typescript, University of Idaho, Moscow, n.d.), pp. 2-9; K. Ross Toole, Twentieth-Century Montana: A State of Extremes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), Chs. 2 and 3.

Because county boundaries changed extensively, comparison of local growth 1910-1920 is difficult. However, the eastern and northern areas doubled or tripled their population during this period. Although

Table 3. Homestead Entries in Montana, 1905-1919*

| Year | Number | : | Year | Number |
|------|--------|---|------|--------|
| 1905 | 2,386 | | 1913 | 17,844 |
| 1906 | 3,398 | | 1914 | 20,662 |
| 1907 | 3,347 | | 1915 | 16,146 |
| 1908 | 5,328 | | 1916 | 14,486 |
| 1909 | 7,484 | | 1917 | 15,197 |
| 1910 | 21,982 | | 1918 | 9,429 |
| 1911 | 15,399 | | 1919 | 5,462 |
| 1912 | 12,597 | | | |

*Source: Ralph H. Farmer, "Analytical Survey and Study of the Agricultural Conditions and the Mortgage Loan Experience of the Federal Land Bank of Spokane in the State of Montana, 1917-1927" (unpublished typescript, University of Idaho, Moscow, n. d.), p. 6.

Table 4. Development of Montana Population, 1900-1920*

| | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total Population | 243,000 | 376,000 | 549,000 |
| Eastern Section | 93,000 | 177,000 | 314,000 |
| Rural Population | 159,000 | 243,000 | 377,000 |
| Eastern Section | 72,000 | 132,000 | 241,000 |
| Number of Farms | 13,000 | 26,000 | 58,000 |
| Eastern Section | 7,000 | 18,000 | 46,000 |

*Source: Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 441.

The homesteaders came with families to build homes and permanent communities. These women were not a fragile, protected sex; rather they proved their capacities beside their menfolk. Their ballot would strengthen agricultural interests (many shared with progressives) in governmental issues. Why would rural men deny their women a part in public decisions?

In November 1910 the doldrums of the national suffrage movement ended as Washington voters adopted woman suffrage by a wide margin (52,299 to 29,676). It was the first state to approve since 1896, when women in Utah and Idaho won the ballot.³⁴ Opposition to equal suffrage in Montana apparently had mellowed, too. The Great Falls Tribune, still hesitant to take a stand for woman's vote, indicated in December 1910 that sentiment was maturing in support of equal franchise. The editor pointed out that higher education for women stimulated their civic interest and serious wish to participate in public decisions. In a

a major portion of settlement was complete by 1914 (when the electorate passed on woman suffrage), peak settlement in the "Triangle," north of Great Falls, came in 1917 and 1918. (Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 129, 131, 174, 177; Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925, p. 442.)

³⁴Washington in 1910 took a lead on the national Progressive movement by electing a highly progressive legislature (but within traditional parties). The coincidence of adoption of the suffrage amendment and the reforms enacted that year support the theory that woman suffrage was a common element of progressive ideology. (William T. Kerr, Jr., "The Progressives of Washington, 1910-1912," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, January 1964, pp. 16-27.)

subsequent column the editor remarked that, as more states granted women the ballot, experience demonstrated that many of the old arguments against woman suffrage were without merit.³⁵ Montana thought had changed a great deal since 1905.

³⁵Great Falls Tribune, quoted in Montana Lookout, December 10, 1910, p. 6; February 11, 1911, p. 6.

CHAPTER V

SISTERS IN YELLOW AND WHITE

Both the WCTU and the Montana Equal Suffrage organization figured largely in the final phase of the state's woman suffrage campaign.

Jeannette Rankin earned the generous credit traditionally awarded her for dedication and remarkable leadership. Mary Long Alderson's less dramatic but more sustained leadership for the cause of woman suffrage is not so well remembered. And untold numbers of Montana women volunteered time and talents to the cause in 1914.

Born in 1880, the oldest of six children, Jeannette Rankin grew up in the Bitterroot Valley (Ravalli County) and graduated from the University of Montana in 1902. After trying several vocations, she attended the School for Philanthropy in New York City 1908-1909, then experimented briefly with civic projects in Missoula before moving on to social welfare work with a Spokane children's home. In 1910 Miss Rankin enrolled at the University of Washington, Seattle, to prepare for a legislative career in order to combat social problems. The Washington suffrage campaign was already well advanced under Mrs. DeVoe's able leadership. Miss Rankin joined the university equal suffrage club and plunged into statewide campaign activities.¹

¹For biographies of Miss Rankin, see Board, "The Lady from Montana;" Harris, "Jeannette Rankin." Also see Schaffer, "The Montana Woman Suffrage Campaign," pp. 9-15.

In December 1910, after success in Washington, Miss Rankin came home to Missoula. She brought campaign techniques garnered particularly from her Washington apprenticeship: keep suffrage a single issue, don't rouse the opposition, persuade with "facts" (especially in print), maintain an affirmative position, and contact every voter personally.² Jeannette Rankin was young (30), unencumbered by family responsibilities, and unworried about personal finances. Citizen action in government, peace, and social justice were her great concerns. She saw suffrage as a responsibility, not a privilege. An intellectual, Miss Rankin nonetheless could empathize with the less fortunate. Social ills could be remedied by better laws, but without woman suffrage, she insisted, women and children were inadequately represented in legislative halls. Many of Jeannette Rankin's ideas and methods were eclectic, but she rallied new spirit at an opportune time.

An equal suffrage amendment was again proposed in the Montana legislative assembly which convened in early January 1911, just after Jeannette Rankin's return to the state. Dr. D. J. Donohue, representative from Dawson County, had been persuaded to introduce the bill, perhaps by the WCTU of Glendive. Rumors circulated that Donohue did

²Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," p. 44.

not personally subscribe to the franchise for women; but whatever the case, he conscientiously performed his duties as sponsor.³

The suffrage bill (HB 147) was a "red-hot poker" which most legislators did not want to handle. Speaker W. W. McDowell assigned it to the Committee on Development and Publicity, chaired by D. L. O'Hern. Not wanting to bear responsibility for disposition of the issue, the committee reported HB 147 without recommendation except that it be printed and placed on general orders. This adopted, the controversial decision passed to the House floor.⁴

The Donohue bill was on special order for the afternoon of February 1. The representatives invited senators and suffragists, and in chivalrous gesture to their visitors they decorated the House chamber with flowers. Although the Senate declined as a body, most of its Democrats and several Republicans attended the hearing. Floor privilege was accorded to Senators Thomas Stout, Fred Whiteside, and W. G. George for brief comments. The House also extended floor privilege to any

³"Legislative Gossip," Helena Independent (Semi-Weekly), February 3, 1911, p. 3; Alderson "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," p. 16. Mrs. Grace Gilmore and Mrs. Wallace Perham, both of Glendive, were prominent leaders of the WCTU and ardent suffragists.

⁴"Legislative Gossip," Helena Independent (Semi-Weekly), January 24, 1911, p. 3; House Journal, 1911, p. 209.

suffragists who wanted to testify, but Jeannette Rankin spoke for all.⁵ "Old workers" in the Montana suffrage movement, including Mary Long Alderson, Dr. Maria Dean, and Dr. Mary Moore Atwater (Ella Knowles Haskell had died a few days earlier) were honored on the speakers platform. Colonel C. B. Nolan introduced Miss Rankin. In the 20-minute speech (which her brother Wellington had helped to prepare), Miss Rankin drew on facts of woman suffrage experience elsewhere. Then she asked for earnest consideration of the bill for submission of the equal suffrage question to the voters. Representative Joseph Binnard, a leading opponent of woman suffrage, gave Miss Rankin a bouquet of violets.

In the debate that followed, Colonel Nolan, William Berry, and Nelson Story, Jr., spoke for the Donohue bill. Burton K. Wheeler, a freshman legislator from Butte, obstructed with repeated amendments intended to be facetious, such as a proposal that women qualify for the ballot as mother of at least six children. Wheeler obstreperously appealed rulings by the chair that he was out of order. While E. J. McNally had earned special enmity of the suffragists earlier, the most effective opponents during this debate were E. F. O'Flynn and Joseph Binnard. All outspoken opponents that day were Butte Democrats.

⁵The honor of floor privilege to suffragists was not new. In 1897 the House had allowed Ella Knowles Haskell and Sarepta Sanders to speak. In 1903 many suffragists gave testimony in both chambers of the legislature.

Donohue insisted on roll call. After a call of the house, the bill cleared the Committee of the Whole with the surprising strength of 38 to 32.⁶

On final reading of HB 147 two days later, there was no debate, only brief expressions in response to roll call. O'Hern pointed out that the American Federation of Labor and its Montana affiliate, as well as the Helena Trades and Labor Assembly, had endorsed the bill. Wheeler capitulated, maintaining that he was "unalterably opposed to the enfranchisement of woman," but he felt it right that the electorate should pass on the question. Despite persistent call of the house, 10 representatives (including Nolan) could not be rallied for the final count. At the last moment Donohue switched his vote in order to move for reconsideration, and the bill won the insufficient majority of 33 to 30.⁷ Several days later by a tie vote the House refused to reconsider the bill. But Donohue had done everything possible for his bill.

As in 1905 there was no significant difference in partisan position on the woman suffrage bill: 17 Democrats and 16 Republicans voted for the measure, 19 Democrats and 11 Republicans opposed it, and 5 from each party were absent. A study of counties by size of popula-

⁶Helena Independent, February 2, 1911, pp. 1, 5; Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," pp. 49-52; Alderson, "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," pp. 16-17. Mrs. Alderson considered Miss Rankin an outsider: "Miss Rankin had entered the suffrage work, as representing the National, and we old workers . . . all supported her and sat on the speakers platform."

⁷Helena Independent, February 4, 1911, p. 2.

tion, however, shows not only a division of view related to population density, but also a radical change in voting pattern from that of 1905. This time woman suffrage was turned down by the more populous areas and heartily supported by the sparsely settled counties. Those with only one representative each (two more counties were in the category in 1911 than in 1905) voted 7 to 1 in support--and the one negative was Donohue's switch for parliamentary purpose. Counties with two representatives voted 10 to 6 in favor. Thus, the 19 least populated of the 28 counties officially registered 17 to 7, actually 18 to 6, for submission of the amendment. No other counties showed decided support. Silver Bow County voted 2 to 1 against HB 147, and Cascade County cast the heaviest proportion, 4 to 1, against it.⁸ (See Table 5.)

Heartened by majority support in the 1911 House of Representatives, Montana suffragists prepared for a major offensive to pry an equal suffrage amendment out of the next legislature. This meant a thorough campaign to elect legislators favorable to the cause. But suffrage organizations in Montana had atrophied after 1903. Dr. Mary Moore Atwater and Dr. Maria Dean kept a working committee alive in the Marysville-Helena area. Probably a club persisted in Missoula. In the

⁸Based on roll call on HB 147, Montana, House Journal of the Twelfth Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1911, p. 366; Helena Independent, February 4, 1911, p. 2; and Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 132.

Table 5. Vote on the Woman Suffrage Bill, 1911*

| No. of Rep. | | Vote | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------|----------|------------|
| | | For | Against | |
| 12 | Silver Bow (Butte) | 3 | 6 | (3 absent) |
| 7 | Lewis and Clark (Helena) | <u>3</u> | <u>2</u> | (2 absent) |
| | | 6 | 8 | |
| 6 | Deer Lodge (Anaconda) | 2 | 3 | (1 absent) |
| 5 | Cascade (Great Falls) | 1 | 4 | |
| 4 | Missoula (Missoula) | <u>2</u> | <u>2</u> | |
| | | 5 | 9 | |
| 3 ea. | Flathead, Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison (4) | 5 | 6 | (1 absent) |
| 2 ea. | Beaverhead, Broadwater, Chouteau, Custer, Fergus, Granite, Meagher, Park, Ravalli (9) | 10 | 6 | (1 absent) |
| 1 ea. | Carbon, Dawson, Lincoln, Powell, Rosebud, Sanders, Sweet Grass, Teton, Valley, Yellowstone (10) | <u>8^a</u> | <u>0</u> | (2 absent) |
| | | 23 | 12 | |

^aDonohue's vote is tabulated here as in support of HB 147.

*Source: Ellis L. Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864: An Atlas of Elections (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958), p. 132; Montana, House Journal of the Twelfth Session of the Legislative Assembly, 1911, p. 366.

absence of a state organization, Jeannette Rankin urged the rejuvenated Missoula Political Equality Club to take the lead in directing state work. Helena suffragists also quickly mobilized on the initiative of Dr. Maria Dean and Dr. Ewing-Murray. Both clubs felt that most opposition stemmed from ignorance, that only a small minority of legislators understood the pros and cons of the suffrage question. Therefore, they recognized education as their great task.⁹

Montana suffragists accomplished little during the next year and a half. In the meantime, socialite Harriet Laidlaw, chairman of the Manhattan borough of the Woman Suffrage Party, hired Jeannette Rankin to assist her for six months in New York City on the recommendation of a NAWSA colleague of Miss Rankin in the Washington campaign. Miss Rankin continued suffrage work under NAWSA sponsorship including the successful California campaign during the fall of 1911, then back in New York state and in Ohio. Miss Rankin returned to Montana in the summer of

⁹Daily Missoulian, February 16, 1911, p. 10; Montana Lookout, February 25, 1911, p. 7; March 4, 1911, pp. 8-9; Alderson, "A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," p. 13.

Topping, "Montana," HWS, VI, p. 361, states that prior to 1911 "some of the political equality clubs lived on, the strongest one in Missoula" and mentions W. G. McCormick and Rankin as leaders. However, they were elected in mid-February 1911 (after which Miss Rankin was out-of-state a great deal). Biographers Board and Larson credit Miss Rankin with organizing the club in Missoula, but Harris and Schaffer more modestly say that she immediately joined her home club and gave it new life. News stories on club activities in early 1911 suggested the latter.

Sources vary as to the growth of suffrage clubs. Suffrage Daily News (November 2, 1914) mentioned clubs only in Missoula, Helena, and Kalispell by August 1912.

1912, frustrated by recent failures and exhausted. But she did not rest long.¹⁰

The Democratic state convention met in Great Falls in late August, and the Republicans met there a week later. Jeannette Rankin and a small committee contacted every delegate to both conventions to try to secure suffrage planks in the platforms. The Democratic convention was the critical testing ground. There the recommendation of the Committee on Resolutions favoring a plank for submission of an equal suffrage amendment to the voters precipitated a lengthy debate. Joseph Smith (Beaverhead) led the minority challenge and Judge J. M. Evans (Missoula) defended the majority report. Democrats retained the suffrage plank by a small plurality. In a year of high Progressive "insurgency," Republicans could do no less. As they had done before, the minor parties also endorsed submission of the suffrage question.¹¹

¹⁰Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," passim; Board, "The Lady From Montana," pp. 22-24. Larson in "Battle for the Ballot" (p. 34) leaves quite a different impression of development of Montana organizations and of Jeannette Rankin's activities during 1911 and 1912. However, his dates are unclear and his paragraphs are not documented.

¹¹Helena Independent, August 30, 1912, pp. 1-2; September 6, 1912, pp. 1-2. Scrapbooks of Montana political conventions and elections, IX, Historical Society Library, Helena. Many clippings are not identified or dated.

The Butte Miner tabulated Democratic votes on their suffrage plank. Delegates of the northeast, extreme northwest, and central portion of Montana, plus Ravalli County voted very heavily in favor of the plank. The southeast, southwest, and older urban centers, plus Toole and Yellowstone counties, firmly turned it down. Even the delegates from Missoula County, home of Evans and Rankin, rejected equal suffrage at this convention.

Following the party conventions, suffragists pressed legislative candidates for individual pledges of support. In Butte, women vigorously campaigned against "anti" James McNally. (He won his re-bid for a House seat, but expediently voted for the 1913 suffrage bill.) After the election, suffragists wrote letters to Sam Stewart, governor-elect, and to W. W. McDowell, lieutenant governor-elect, asking that they direct fulfillment of their party's suffrage pledge. Holdover Senator Tom Stout, progressive Democrat from Fergus County, agreed to sponsor an equal suffrage bill in the coming legislature.

Democrats won every state and national office in the Montana election of 1912, and they controlled both legislative chambers. The electorate had demonstrated depth of reform mood by passing all four initiatives (the first ever on a Montana ballot): for direct primary elections, popular referendum for election of United States senators, presidential preference primary, and a corrupt practices act. All carried by more than 70 per cent. Thus, voters could be expected to hold the Democrats accountable for their progressive platform. Governor Stewart in his message recommended that the legislature enact the various reforms pledged in the party platform, including the amendment to strike "male" from voter qualifications. Unlike Toole in 1902, Stewart offered no oratory on the subject of equal suffrage.¹²

¹²Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 136-147; "Governor's Message," Helena Independent, January 7, 1913, pp. 1, 3.

Suffragists were not confident. The conservative wing of both major parties was strongly represented in the legislature. The limit of three constitutional amendments per election might deny the equal suffrage question a place on the 1914 ballot. And liquor interests were prepared to fight legislation unfavorable to them. Two liquor lobbyists muscled in on tables assigned to reporters in the House, insisting on the privilege because they would publish a monthly circular in Butte (for the liquor league's Montana Protective Association). Understandably, saloonmen contended that woman suffrage would mean agitation for local option, so their axe was ready for the suffrage bill.¹³

As legislators assembled at the capital in early January 1913, suffragists from all sections of the state also convened there to establish a permanent state structure, to plan their lobbying, and to organize for a continuing campaign. This new Montana Equal Suffrage Association (MESA) operated freely without constitution or by-laws, and, at least until the Central Committee's second meeting (in late June 1913), it did not affiliate with NAWSA. Miss Rankin continued as

¹³"Legislative Gossip," Helena Independent, January 7, 1913, p. 3; Montana Progressive, January 16, 1913, p. 4. Possibly House rules barred lobbyists from the floor at that time.

chairman and Miss Ida Auerbach became press chairman.¹⁴ Miss Rankin urged her colleagues not to form a suffrage party, since all of Montana's political parties were pledged to support submission of an equal suffrage amendment. In a body, the organized suffragists called on the governor and the legislative chambers, then applauded the governor's endorsement from the galleries. Politicians could not ignore the activity of the determined women.¹⁵

¹⁴ Other officers were: assistant chairman, Mrs. Grace Gilmore (Glendive, also in WCTU), and Mrs. Helen Fitzgerald Sanders (Butte, daughter-in-law of Wilbur Sanders); secretary, Mrs. Eleanor Sample Coit (Big Timber); treasurer, Mrs. Wilbur Smith (Helena); finance chairman, Mrs. Wallace Perham (Glendive, also in WCTU); and literature chairman, Mrs. Harry Poindexter (Dillon). At the next meeting, called by Mrs. Coit in June 1913, Mrs. John Willis (Glasgow) was added as recording secretary; Miss Mary Cantwell (Hunters' Hot Springs) became literature chairman. Mary O'Neill also was named press chairman by June 1914. (Beginning October 1, 1913, a professional journalist had already replaced Miss Auerbach--maybe Miss O'Neill, maybe Miss Mildred Sherrill of Butte.) Also by June 1914 Mrs. Edith Clinch (Butte, also in WCTU) was treasurer; Miss Eloise Knowles (Missoula) was literature chairman; Dr. Maria Dean (Helena) and Mrs. L. O. Edmunds (Absarokee) were finance chairmen. (Helena Independent, January 7, 1913, p. 5; Montana Progressive, June 26, 1913, p. 2; October 8, 1913, p. 2; "Weekly Bulletin," June 12, 1914, cited by Larson, "Battle for the Ballot," p. 36.

Several accounts explain that the 1913-1914 MESA avoided a constitution because of dissension over an earlier one. This study was unable to verify the incident. Another plausible explanation is suggested by Miss Rankin's pragmatism and preference for flexibility; she was not interested in mundane procedures of history.

Mrs. Coit initiated inquiry about national affiliation in an exchange of letters with Mary Ware Dennett in May and June 1913. (Woman Suffrage file, Historical Society Library, Helena.)

¹⁵ Helena Independent, January 4, 1913, p. 8; January 7, 1913, p. 5; January 8, 1913, p. 2.

Stout's equal suffrage bill (SB 1) came up early in the session and sailed through. There was no debate in the Senate and very little in the House, where Joseph Pope (of the Anti-Saloon League) was ready with his own suffrage bill. Both houses passed SB 1 nearly unanimously: 26 to 2 in the Senate and 74 to 2 in the House. Only Republicans cast opposing votes. Party discipline kept the Democratic record unstained. With their heavy majority Democrats were pressed to honor their campaign pledge. Several who opposed woman suffrage grumbled through their duty to cast a supporting vote. The governor signed SB 1 on January 25, 1913.¹⁶

Although the work of the Helena Equality League and Miss Rankin had borne fruit in the legislature, the happy suffragists knew that much work lay ahead. The amendment would be submitted to the electorate on a separate ballot in an off-year election. Opposition was sure to mount to vie for the vote of Montana's males.¹⁷ And because NAWSA appointed Jeannette Rankin national Field Secretary, she could not give Montana her prime attention for a while.

¹⁶Montana, Senate Journal, Thirteenth Session, 1913, pp. 109-110; passim; Montana, House Journal, Thirteenth Session, 1913, p. 169; Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 142.

¹⁷Helena Independent, January 24, 1913, p. 8; Montana Progressive (Helena), January 30, 1913, pp. 1, 7.

Butte and Silver Bow County suffragists promptly sparked enthusiasm with a rally. Sarepta Sanders spoke, urging that women "spend less time on bridge and reading the Ladies Home Journal and give more thought to human welfare." She stressed that voting was a serious responsibility. Woman's vote would not bring about the millennium, but it would be used to "hasten the coming of a more just state."¹⁸ Great Falls suffragists organized on March 20. Miss Frieda Fligelman, principal speaker, denied narrow feminist aims and cast the suffrage movement in a broad humanitarian mold. Women asked for the franchise as citizens, she stressed. The ballot was not their final goal; rather it was a means to a more decent social existence.¹⁹

New York banker James Laidlaw, national president of the Men's League for Woman Suffrage, lent his assistance to form a Montana chapter in July 1913. It was the first affiliate in the West. The organization gave tacit endorsement to the principle of equal suffrage from publicly-respected men. Probably it did little actual work. Wellington D. Rankin, Jeannette's lawyer brother of Helena, was president of the Montana League.²⁰

¹⁸ Montana Progressive, February 7, 1913, p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., March 27, 1913, p. 7.

²⁰ Other officers, all "vice presidents" except for A. B. Castell, secretary, were: Pearl I. Hindley (Boulder), W. J. McCormick (Missoula), James O'Connor (Livingston), John L. Slattery (Glasgow), Sam W. Teagarden (Forest Grove), and H. D. Weenink (Dillon). (Montana Progressive, July 31, 1913, p. 2.)

From February 1913 possibly until January 1914, Miss Rankin devoted most of her time to national suffrage work. She assisted campaigns in North Dakota, Michigan, and Florida. She participated in demonstrations by suffragists in Washington, D. C. which were led by the militant Alice Paul: the parade on the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration which nearly turned into a riot; and the July 31 pilgrimage bearing petitions to Congress. And she lobbied on Capitol Hill. However, Miss Rankin did find time to attend meetings of the Montana suffragists' state central committee in late June (in Livingston) and in late September (in Butte).²¹

The Montana suffrage campaign moved into its final stage early in 1914. MESA opened headquarters in Butte on February 1, an event announced by a letter from Jeannette Rankin to every voter. And that month Mr. and Mrs. James Laidlaw of New York, on Miss Rankin's invitation, called briefly in several Montana cities convenient to their private rail car--Billings, Helena, Butte, and Missoula. For five days the Laidlaws and Miss Rankin spoke at meetings and attended special social events. Their whirlwind campaign helped to lend prestige to the

²¹Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," pp. 70-77; Suffrage Daily News, November 2, 1914. Perhaps Mrs. James Sanders of Butte and Mrs. Harvey Coit of Big Timber carried the burden of the MESA leadership in this period.

suffrage cause and to fill its coffers.²² "Guests" they were, but also outsiders, the first of several professional suffragists to work in Montana's final campaign.

The MESA suffragists criss-crossed the state in 1914. Miss Rankin herself logged 9,000 miles. They staged some suffrage events of their own, but ubiquitously appeared at other gatherings: at conventions of women's organizations and of the state press, at agricultural fairs, and at holiday celebrations. They planted clagues to "inspire" politicians to speak for suffrage. The MESA suffragists supplemented their personal appearance campaign with extensive printed materials, feature stories in newspapers, and special editions of many publications. Their "Weekly Bulletin," submitted to editors throughout the state, aimed especially at rural people.

Outside speakers, mostly from the East and widely known among suffragists, assisted in all but four Montana counties. The most publicized were "General" Rosalie Jones and "Colonel" Ida Craft, Miss Margaret Hinchey (a laundry worker), and Kathryn Blake (a school principal dedicated also to peace).²³ These NAWSA workers were not

²²Montana Progressive, February 12, 1914, pp. 1, 2; Clippings in the Woman Suffrage collection, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena.

²³Montana Progressive, July 28, 1914, p. 3; Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," pp. 86-88.

well-received. A story relates that in Miles City during the Fourth of July parade, cowpunchers vented their antagonism toward "General" Jones by roping her as she marched.²⁴

Montana's budget was not strained by this external aid, since most of the outside speakers volunteered their services and even paid part or all of their travel expenses. Montana suffragists were grateful for direct financial aid, also. NAWSA and suffrage organizations of other states covered about half of the \$9,000 spent on the Montana campaign. Rosalie Jones donated \$1,000 which she had raised during the 1913 pilgrimage from New York to Washington, D. C. And the Laidlaws added \$600 to National's help to replenish MESA funds lost when a Butte bank failed in September 1914.²⁵

The work of the Montana Equal Suffrage Association was supplemented in 1913 and 1914 by a separate suffrage campaign conducted by the WCTU. The MESA and the WCTU became irreconcilable over strategy in dealing with the tie between prohibition and the ballot for women. However, the two organizations agreed on major concepts: that woman had special attributes, and that society needed woman's vote. Both groups viewed enfranchisement of women not as an ultimate goal, but as

²⁴Interview with Mrs. Agnes Wiggenhorn.

²⁵Montana Progressive, May 22, 1913, p. 3; Topping, "Montana," HWS, VI, p. 365; Schaffers, "The Montana Woman Suffrage Campaign," pp. 13-14.

tool to be used for social betterment. Both saw the vote as a serious responsibility for which women needed broad civic preparation.

Both Montana suffrage groups in this final period turned to a modified Victorian concept of woman which was consonant with popular thought. Woman was morally and intellectually different from man. Her needs and views were related to home and family, an orientation which nourished a superior moral being. Rarely did either suffrage group mention that women should have full political rights for reason of equal justice. Feminist theories of individual rights had been largely swept under the rug. Women were needed in public affairs precisely because of their inherent, unique qualities.

Both the MESA and the WCTU saw extension of the franchise to women as a means to obtain legislation which they regarded as necessary to safeguard traditional social ideals. To the MESA this meant progressive measures for greater protection of the interests of women and children, health and safety regulation, and political reforms to curb the selfish and corrupt elements of power. To the WCTU it also meant statutory control over personal morality. The WCTU intended to apply women's power to secure restrictive laws to achieve civic righteousness. to "bring a moral, uplifting element into the electorate."²⁶

²⁶Woman's Voice, December 1914, p. 7.

Foremost the WCTU wanted state prohibition of liquor traffic. But it also had petitioned and lobbied for local option laws, a higher age of consent for girls, and juvenile laws; it wanted statutes against gambling, pornography, and use of tobacco. This, to the WCTU, did not mean infringement of legitimate liberty:

Liberty does not mean the inalienable right to do anything that is destructive to society as a whole. Society has a similar right to protection that the individual is entitled to. Under the theory of organic and social evolution, progress has only been made by suppressing destructive agencies. On this theory the temperance question was founded.²⁷

WCTU women did not expect miracles. "Moral laws do not legislate people into moral life," Mrs. Alderson commented, "but they give every one a better chance to become moral." They saw their work as a constructive, progressive social force:

Tradition is a good footstool. We must stand on the shoulders of the Past in order to get a wide view of the Present. We must break the shackles that hamper our development. . . . [Tradition] tries to relieve distress and remedy an error here and an ill there. Progress which makes for efficiency concerns itself with causes. It changes those conditions . . . does the vital constructive things. Tradition tries to reform. . . . Tradition keeps the social evil and the saloon.²⁸

WCTU growth in Montana had been continuous (in contrast to the decline of suffrage clubs after 1903). From 14 local unions with 330

²⁷ Reprint from the Butte Tribune-Review in the Montana Lookout, December 17, 1910, p. 1.

²⁸ Woman's Voice, October 1914, pp. 16-17, 30; December 1914, p. 7.

members in 1896, it increased to 45 unions with 1,102 enrolled in 1910 and to 50 chapters with 1,212 members in 1912. The goal of 2,000 members in 1914, at the height of the suffrage campaign, failed. However, that year chapters in Billings, Laurel, Park City, Columbus, White Sulphur Springs, Winston, and Forest Union (Forest Grove?) doubled their memberships, while Sidney and Lewistown each added more than 50 to their rolls. Of these centers, only two had more than 2,500 population in 1910; none of the older urban centers were among the rapid gainers.²⁹

At its state convention in October 1913, the WCTU decided that their campaign for the equal suffrage amendment should take precedence over all other Union activities in the coming year. To coordinate the WCTU effort, the women resumed publication of their own journal with issue of the Woman's Voice in December 1913.³⁰ Mary Long Alderson--as state president, superintendent of the suffrage department, managing editor, and major contributor to the Voice--was WCTU's key figure. She was the spur, conscience, and voice of the sisterhood. Although politely

²⁹ Alderson, "Thirty-Four Years in the Montana Women's Christian Temperance Union," pp. 4-7; Woman's Voice, October 1914, p. 9; November 1914, p. 6; Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, p. 129.

³⁰ The Montana WCTU had previously published the W.C.T.U. Voice for five years, beginning in 1903. During 1914 the WCTU circulated 1,000 to 1,500 copies of Woman's Voice, except for May. In May 2,500 copies of a special suffrage edition were printed, and copies were given to editors and volunteers.

expressing cooperation with other suffragists, Mrs. Alderson insisted upon independent strategy. The WCTU would "carry out its own suffrage campaign, cooperating with any suffrage organization where practicable."³¹ Mrs. Alderson kept both the Anti-Saloon League, led by Joseph Pope, and the MESA at a cool distance. In both cases the reason was partly due to personal differences but more to conflicting notions regarding the conduct of the campaign. The Anti-Saloon League was politically oriented and professional directed, and it lacked esprit de corps such as marked the WCTU's sisterhood.

The major disagreement between the WCTU and the MESA arose from the MESA's efforts to dissociate from the prohibition issue. Suffragists and prohibitionists across the country were convinced that aroused liquor men could tap extensive financial and political resources. In Montana the liquor lobby evidently had already emptied its cash drawer to resist various legislative proposals which threatened its welfare.³² Would the liquor fraternity outside the state have sufficient interest in the fate of woman suffrage here to help its remote brethren? Should Montana suffragists try to steal past the liquor interests or face them directly? Mary Long Alderson reasoned that the liquor people knew full well why the WCTU and the Anti-Saloon League wanted the ballot for women;

³¹ Woman's Voice, June 1914, p. 9.

³² Board, "The Lady From Montana," p. 45; Woman's Voice, May 1914, p. 11.

nobody would be fooled. She felt that the "undercover" approach had defeated woman suffrage in other contests. "Temperance and suffrage are twin sisters," she declared. "Everything that tends to advance temperance tends to bring strength to the woman suffrage movement."³³ Therefore, the WCTU would not sidestep confrontation with liquor men.

But Jeannette Rankin's training taught her to keep the suffrage issue simple, a rule she violated only to speak for peace. Identification of equal suffrage with other creeds or causes could only distract support. Furthermore, the line between "drys" and "wets" in regard to support of woman suffrage was not distinct; and Jeannette Rankin meant to get every possible vote.³⁴

The Markeson incident in January 1914 brought these differences in campaign strategy to an early head. Miss Clara Markeson of Ohio, organizer for the National Anti-Suffrage Association, came to Butte for a clandestine visit with the publisher of the National Forum, publication of the liquor trade. Presumably Miss Markeson wanted the Forum to discontinue open belligerence toward woman suffrage because it was helping the suffragists, and let her "Antis" carry the public fight. The news leak left an appearance of collusion that benefited the suffragists. The Forum admitted the incident, and although it protested

³³Woman's Voice, July 1914.

³⁴Montana Progressive, July 28, 1914, p. 3.

gumshoe methods, it did tone down its attack on woman suffrage.³⁵

Liquor interest became so discreet that Mary Long Alderson reported in May 1914 that, with the Montana liquor convention's proclamation of neutrality on the suffrage issue, there was "no organized opposition to woman's being given the ballot in our state." Still, as if to alert readers of the Voice not to believe that liquor opposition had faded away, that same issue reproduced the text of a letter (dated February 19, 1914) from the "Bureau of Protection" in Butte to the "Farmers' Club." The circular letter, in part, warned its members that woman suffrage meant the end of saloons in Montana and admonished, "It is your duty to use every endeavor to prevent the adoption of the suffrage amendment."³⁶ The extent of liquor opposition in Montana may never be known. The liquor men did not leave many records.

³⁵ Board, "The Lady from Montana," p. 46; Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," p. 79; Larson, "Battle for the Ballot," pp. 37-38. Board says that Mrs. Arthur Dodge, national president of the Anti-Suffragists, accompanied Miss Markeson to Butte.

³⁶ Woman's Voice, May 1914, p. 7. The "Farmers' Club" in Montana might have been patterned after the "National Farmers Union." Both seem to have been fronts for non-agricultural interests. Both opposed various public issues, including woman suffrage. The National Farmers Union was funded by railroads, a banker-rancher, and the Texas Businessmen's Association (a motley of big corporations, including brewers). It supplied quantities of free boilerplate to editors. (Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 300-301.)

As a result of the Markeson folly, which tied "Antis" with liquor interests, Jeannette Rankin's suffragists became confident of the "dry" vote. They could afford to dissociate their campaign from temperance suffragists and invite support of the "wets." At one point the MESA leaders sweepingly declared that they were not interested in social reforms.³⁷ Mary Long Alderson responded by underscoring that the WCTU had to go-it alone. She tried to bind the sisters in loyalty. In the February Voice she wrote:

As we are "driving our own team," we urge all our members to be loyal to their own and contribute all they give to suffrage work through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. . . . Other organizations are necessary for other women, but not for our own. . . .

Mrs. Alderson repeated her plea in the June Voice:

For thirty years our organization has been educating our members as to the need and use of the ballot. Our own outlines . . . for the study and discussion of all points relative to the woman's vote, are as complete and comprehensive as can be. We need no separate society to prepare ourselves for the ballot. We can best work along our own conservative lines and co-operate with other suffrage organizations when wise and practicable.

But some of WCTU's capable women continued to work in both suffrage organizations, as they had in the past. They were proud of their white ribbons symbolizing temperance and their yellow ribbons for suffrage. In 1914 the MESA was better-organized than the WCTU,

³⁷Helena Independent, February 26, 1914.

much better-financed, and its leadership generated broad enthusiasm. Cooperation seemed practical, so some women were torn between the suffrage factions. Mrs. Maggie Smith Hathaway was one of these.

Maggie Smith Hathaway, a former teacher and a dedicated member of the WCTU, wanted to campaign only for the suffrage amendment in 1914, but Mrs. Alderson held a tight rein and insisted that Mrs. Hathaway also campaign for prohibition. MESA suffragists did not receive her warmly either. Mrs. Hathaway recalled:

I then turned to the state suffrage organization. But the president and other women were afraid of my white ribbon, so I was told. Later, I was told the leader [Jeannette Rankin] was afraid of my speaking ability and also aspired to political office. . . . [M]y spirit of independence and persistence asserted itself. I decided to go on making votes even if I did have to pay my own bills, do my own advertising and bill-posting. I went from town to town, speaking in every county of the state, . . . to crowds and groups wherever I found them.

A glimmer of cooperation occurred near the close of the campaign when, according to Mrs. Hathaway, she responded to an invitation from suffrage headquarters to participate in a four-day program at a tri-county fair in eastern Montana. And although Mrs. Hathaway was critical of militant suffragettes, she did appear with "General" Rosalie Jones in Great Falls at the mayor's request. Mrs. Hathaway covered more than 5,000 miles in her independent statewide tour, which began in June. (Mrs. Alderson travelled over 4,500 miles for the 1914 campaign.) It was deeply satisfying that her home county of Ravalli voted 70 per

cent in favor of equal suffrage, the highest in Montana. Ravalli also elected Mrs. Hathaway to the House of Representatives in 1916, where she served three consecutive terms.³⁸

Feelings between the WCTU and MESA women frayed further over arrangements for the suffrage parade at the State Fair in September. Although the WCTU was not much given to drama, this demonstration would be a momentous climax to long work. It formally accepted the invitation that Miss Rankin herself had extended to the WCTU to march under its own banners. But somebody in the MESA lost courage; the WCTU was asked not to appear as a body. Mrs. Alderson commented:

It is laughable to have the suffragists so considerate of the views of the liquor men that they fear to antagonize them by allowing a temperance banner in their parade. But such is their policy. So the oldest suffrage organization in the state [the WCTU] . . . which is proud of its white ribbons, was not represented in the parade, though many individual members marched in with the county organizations. But the quiet work counts more than the "Hurrah."

Even after this rebuff, Mrs. Alderson advised all suffragists to keep closed ranks and not to publicize any division. Long afterward, however,

³⁸ Harold Tascher, Maggie and Montana (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), p. 63, passim. Friction with Jeannette Rankin showed again in 1916. When Miss Rankin ran for Congress, as a Republican, she phoned Mrs. Hathaway to ask for help in the campaign. The answer was No, and Mrs. Hathaway decided "in a flash" to file for state representative on the Democratic ticket. (Ibid., pp. 68-69.) Mrs. Hathaway was a childless widow, so, like Miss Rankin, she had no family responsibilities to bar her pursuit of a political career.

she bluntly remarked about the rift between the MESA and the WCTU:
 "Its leader [Jeannette Rankin] told me not to dare to bring prohibition into the campaign. I was not taking orders. And we had two campaigns in the state with pleasant relations, of course, between the uncompromising leaders."³⁹

What Mary Long Alderson meant by her recommendation that the WCTU work along its own "conservative lines" is conjectural. Maybe she meant that the WCTU's twin goals of woman suffrage and prohibition would work together to conserve an ideal society, therefore the campaign against liquor could not abate. Maybe she simply meant to object to the Rankin-NAWSA style of public approach. Mrs. Alderson liked the "backdoor" campaign by which each member shared the goal of talking with all voters--neighbors, friends, laborers, and business people--to solicit their views and support for equal suffrage. They would try to convince the "many home-loving women" that a woman's ballot would mean greater protection of home and family.⁴⁰ The WCTU was forthright, low-keyed, and plebeian.

³⁹ Woman's Voice, October 1914, pp. 4, 9, 10; Alderson, "Thirty-Four Years in the Montana Women's Christian Temperance Union," p. 11.

⁴⁰ Woman's Voice, March 1914, p. 7.

The WCTU's common touch and long social view showed also in their plans to persuade the foreign-born that equal suffrage was in their interest. The foreign element comprised 20-25 per cent of Montana's population in 1914, and the WCTU recognized that these people would remain a significant factor in Montana's society. The WCTU would instruct the immigrants, men and women, about laws that governed them and intelligent use of the ballot. Such civic responsibility could not be left by default to the saloonkeepers. The women's plans proved greater than their performance. Little was done outside Butte. But there the WCTU distributed a considerable volume of foreign-language literature--in German, Russian, Italian, Finnish, Swedish, and Danish.⁴¹

The Montana WCTU's concern was to Americanize the newcomer, to make him a more desirable member of society. This contrasted with the nativist attitude of Jeannette Rankin and of NAWSA in this period. Their strategy proposed to drown out effective participation by minority elements in the political process by a flood of traditional American votes from women.

Nativism had been a part of the thinking of some of the early suffragists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. But under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw,

⁴¹Ibid., December 1913, p. 11; October 1914, p. 25.

NAWSA increasingly appealed to ethnic prejudice as an argument in support of enfranchisement of women. The feeling was vented against the foreign-born in the North and against the Negroes in the South.

The "new immigration" from southern and eastern Europe, with its strange tongues and non-Protestant faiths, was in itself unsettling to older Americans with Anglo-Saxon roots. Furthermore, these recent immigrants tended to remain in urban enclaves where machine politicians ministered to their peculiar needs in turn for their vote. Old-stock Americans were fearful and frustrated by the political corruption and by the growing economic and cultural disparity. Suffragists tended to lump immigrants, political machines, and vices together and blamed them for repeated defeats of state referenda on woman suffrage. They were indignant that the moral and capable American woman should be denied the ballot by these marginally qualified male voters. A parallel suspicion and antagonism had grown in the South in regard to the enfranchised black male. Woman suffrage, therefore, was offered as a means to sustain white Anglo-Saxon supremacy in American society, North and South. This meant compromise of egalitarian concepts of democracy and individual rights. Some suffragists, such as Jane Addams, were troubled by the contradiction in democratic principle that extension

of the franchise to one class should be overtly sought in order to counterbalance the political capacity of other classes of citizens.⁴²

Nativism never became a dominant theme in the Montana suffrage campaign. However, in Butte in 1902, NAWSA's President Catt promoted woman suffrage as a device to safeguard the supremacy of native-born males. And her successor, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, after the State Fair suffrage parade (1914), told her large Helena audience that women should have privileges equal to those of immigrants. In 1913 Miss Rankin suggested to Southern senators, worried about the effect of universal suffrage on their political and social system, that they might invoke the "grandfather clause" to nullify the unwanted vote of Negro women. Montana suffrage literature listed among many reasons why women should have the ballot: "Because it would increase the proportion of native-born voters." Jeannette Rankin, years later, commented that attention to immigrants had been the weakest aspect of the Montana suffrage campaign, but she thought it very fortunate that the state had "so few foreigners."⁴³ Could she have been unaware in 1914 that nearly one-fourth of Montana's people were foreign-born?

⁴² See Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, Ch. 6 and Ch. 7.

⁴³ Helena Independent, September 26, 1914, cited by Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," p. 90; Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," pp. 73, 76; Suffrage Daily News, November 2, 1914; Schaffer, "The Montana Woman Suffrage Campaign," p. 14.

Very belatedly, in June 1914, the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs endorsed woman suffrage. This network of women's organizations represented a large number of middle class and leisure class women. Therefore, the Federation's support of woman suffrage, even though late and passive, was an important indicator of the position of the conservative "home women."

Women's clubs had proliferated in Montana after 1900, and through them women cautiously widened action in public affairs. Butte, for example, had a vigorous Woman's Club by 1902 with 200 members interested in civic projects and in such development of woman that did not seem to violate her traditional sphere:

The activities of professional life as compared with the home have long ago been measured and woman has chosen the fireside instead of the forum. The planes of politics and the delights of mental activity contrast so much in favor of the intellectual domain that woman has lent her delicate fancy to the enriching of literature and held aloof from the hard and ceaseless strife where her peculiar capabilities would handicap her in the race for preferment.⁴⁴

These women pictured themselves as avant-garde, brave spirits of the progressive movement. "Subject to limitations of their sex," Butte

⁴⁴ Butte Miner, October 2, 1902, p. 10. The club reported that, although the recent anti-expectoration law was not well enforced, the practice on streets had decreased. The club took credit, too, for waste boxes on Main Street.

women could explore intellectual variations in art, music, literature, domestic science, or current events. Numerous other women's clubs offered similar, often more specialized, activities.⁴⁵ The suffrage campaign of 1902-1903 touched some of these clubwomen, but immediately after legislative defeat of the equal suffrage bill, the clubs returned to non-political topics.

In April 1904, in response to a call from the Butte Woman's Club, delegates from 25 clubs met in Butte to organize the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs. Their purpose was "literary progress" and "betterment of humankind." At the next state convention, in Deer Lodge in June 1905, reports included such topics as libraries, marital laws, juvenile courts, child labor, and public playgrounds. At least the assembled leaders had left the fireside for the forum. In 1908 Mrs. Thomas Walsh, as president, streamlined the Federation's structure and turned activity from "papers" to special work. At the 1909 convention Mrs. Walsh led a faction of the clubwomen who were critical of legislative neglect of the state's tuberculosis problem.⁴⁶ The Walsh group urged the Montana

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mrs. E. W. Fiske reported that in 1909 tuberculosis caused 8.5 per cent of Montana deaths, and 90 per cent of the victims had lived in the state more than five years. The prevalence of respiratory illness among miners forced this as a public issue. Several women's clubs had worked for more sanitary work conditions and for a sanitarium before the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs granted general support. (Montana Lookout, June 25, 1910, pp. 3, 11.)

Federation of Women's Clubs to adopt an anti-tuberculosis campaign aimed to arouse public awareness. This debate carried over to the 1910 convention as a principal consideration. Although some viewed civic improvements as a more suitable and less controversial field, a resolution to assist the Montana Anti-Tuberculosis League did carry. And the 1911 legislature did approve a sanitarium, although reformers considered it minimal.⁴⁷

Despite the Federation's baptism into controversial public affairs with the anti-tuberculosis campaign, it continued to withhold endorsement of woman suffrage. In June 1913, on the heels of the annual convention of the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs in Livingston, the Montana Equal Suffrage Central Committee (headed by Jeannette Rankin) also met there. Presumably the strategy was to encourage and to coordinate plans with those Federation leaders who did support woman suffrage in order to swing endorsement by that conservative organization. It worked. Mrs. Tyler Thompson of Missoula, an ardent suffragist, was president of the Federation in 1914, when, in convention in Lewistown, those "splendid women . . . not only took decided stand in favor of Woman's Suffrage, but unanimously passed a resolution against

⁴⁷Montana Lookout, July 25, 1908, p. 12; October 31, 1908; January 16, 1909, p. 2; May 8, 1909, p. 5; June 26, 1909; June 25, 1910, pp. 3, 11.

the liquor traffic."⁴⁸ Mary Long Alderson, still president of the WCTU and deep in suffrage work, had attended. And again the suffragists' central committee tagged its conference immediately after the annual meeting of the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs. Miss Rankin and Miss Belle Fligelman delivered open-air speeches and directed much discussion among the clubwomen, thereby re-enforcing suffrage sentiment among the leaders of women's clubs.⁴⁹

Evidently Montana's women generally accepted Jeannette Rankin's rationalization that nativism and elitism were compatible with progressive ideals of justice, fulfillment, and uplift. By instinct women strive to preserve and advance mankind, Miss Rankin declared, and suffrage would release them for responsible social action. Those with greater cultural or educational advantage bore greater social obligation.

⁴⁸Woman's Voice, October 1914, p. 15; Montana Progressive, June 11, 1914, p. 3. Larson, "Battle of the Ballot," p. 36, stated that the Montana Federation of Women's Clubs never endorsed woman suffrage, although many members worked for it.

The National Federation of Women's Clubs had endorsed woman suffrage, also. It sent a delegation of 500, representing one million women, to petition President Wilson for equal rights. (Montana Progressive, July 9, 1914, p. 3.)

⁴⁹Woman's Voice, July 1914, p. 4; Montana Progressive, June 11, 1914, p. 3; June 18, 1914, p. 3.

Miss Belle Fligelman, in Lewistown to cover the meetings as a reporter for the Helena Independent, first met Jeannette Rankin on that occasion. Miss Fligelman served as "publicity man" and assistant campaign manager for Miss Rankin when she ran for Congress in 1916, then as her secretary in Washington. (Interview with Belle Fligelman

All of society would benefit from their larger sphere of contribution.⁵⁰ It was a patronizing attitude, but it meshed with the popular mood for moral reconstruction of society.

Anti-suffragists did not believe that such benefits would accrue to women or to society from equal franchise. Besides drawing on the common arsenal of Victorian arguments concerning the proper station of women, the Antis challenged the premise that universal suffrage would bring a more perfect democratic process. They felt that women's representation in affairs of government was more complete and unbiased with male suffrage than it would be if the women's minority views should prevail. These women were content that their menfolk tended their interests at the ballot box.

Because the Antis considered political controversy as unwomanly, they were slow to organize for an opposition campaign. Resistance to the suffrage amendment in Montana was weak and sporadic until September 1914, when some Butte women met in alarm. The momentum of the suffrage campaign had forced the Antis to act. They noted that the state had been "overrun all summer with imported suffragists" who claimed to represent the wishes of Montana women. But few Montana

Winestine, May 1, 1973; letter from Mrs. Winestine to Dr. and Mrs. Merrill Burlingame, April 27, 1964, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman.)

⁵⁰Montana Progressive, June 4, 1914 and Helena Independent, September 20, 1914, cited by Harris, "Jeannette Rankin," p. 83.

women wanted the ballot, the Antis insisted. "Why should Montana, where the laws for protection of women and children are excellent, take the burden of woman suffrage on her shoulders in order to make it easier for the eastern feminists to obtain the ballot?" Unwilling to be pawns, these women felt "obliged to get into the campaign in earnest" in order to protect their right "to be just women as the good Lord intended."⁵¹ The Montana Antis weren't necessarily "plain home women," as they portrayed themselves. Mary Long Alderson paid them high respect: "These 'antis' include some of the finest and most honored women in Montana, who have been and are today prominent in working for the best interests of the community."⁵²

But only in Butte (in late summer) did Antis organize--as the Montana Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. At the State Fair the Antis' booth featured Alaskan curios and tracts discrediting Colorado's 15-year experience with woman suffrage.⁵³ Their stance was defensive.

⁵¹ Butte Miner, September 18, 1914.

⁵² Woman's Voice, August 1914, p. 4. Mrs. Alderson complimented some anti-suffragists again for their constructive response in public affairs after Montana women got the ballot. ("A Half Century of Progress for Montana Women," p. 18.)

⁵³ Butte Miner, September 23, 1914; clippings in the Woman Suffrage file, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena; Topping, "Montana," HWS, VI, p. 366.

Although the National Anti-Suffrage Association sent Miss Minnie Bronson, its executive secretary, and Mrs. J. D. Oliphant, activities of the Antis in Montana were very limited.

Meanwhile, endorsement of the equal suffrage amendment by all political parties, campaigning in the state by NAWSA president Shaw, and the climactic parade at the State Fair (in Helena on September 25) fueled the momentum and confidence of the suffragists. The History of Woman Suffrage recorded:

The most picturesque and educative feature of the whole campaign and the greatest awakener was the enormous suffrage parade. . . . Thousands of men and women from all parts of the State marched, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw was at the head, and next, carrying banners, came Dr. Dean, the past president, and Miss Rankin, the present State chairman. A huge American flag was carried by women representing States having full suffrage, a yellow one for the States now having campaign; a large gray banner for the partial suffrage States and a black banner for the non-suffrage States. Each county and city in the State had its banner. The Men's League marched and there were as many men as women in the parade.⁵⁴

Biographer Harris reported also that the procession was a mile long and included 20 automobiles, two bands, floats, horseback riders, and 600 women in white and yellow suffrage costumes. Dr. Shaw and Judge E. K. Cheadle spoke to a large audience in the city auditorium after the parade. This event forcefully demonstrated the breadth of support for equal suffrage and women's sincerity in asking for the ballot.

⁵⁴Topping, "Montana," HWS, S. VI, p. 366.

Montana suffragists were well aware that, despite precautions on the part of suffragists, corrupt election maneuvers by the opposition had nearly wiped out the California Victory and allegedly had stolen Michigan's approval from them. Poll watchers were on the job throughout Montana on election day (November 3, 1914). State law required that election officials seal one copy of the election report with the ballots until official canvass, but in Anaconda officials locked away all copies. They had no immediate report available. Without the Anaconda tally, election returns for Montana became a cliff-hanger. Suffragists feared that after vote counts elsewhere were known, the Anaconda vote would be manipulated sufficiently to defeat the suffrage amendment. Jeannette Rankin telegraphed NAWSA headquarters in New York about the threat, and the news went out to the Associated Press. MESA got local legal counsel. Mrs. Edith Clinch, with a team of helpers, took up guard in Anaconda, and Dr. Mary Atwater and assistants watched the canvass in Boulder (Jefferson County). The suffragists' victory was narrow (52.3%)--41,302 to 37,558.⁵⁵ Nevada also passed a suffrage referendum that day, bringing the number of equal suffrage states to 11. All were in the West except Kansas.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Board, "The Lady From Montana," pp. 56-60

⁵⁶ Wyoming had equal suffrage continuously from 1869 and was admitted to statehood with the privilege in 1890. Other states through 1914 gained equal suffrage by the amendment process. They were Colorado 1893, Idaho 1896, Utah 1896, Washington 1910, California 1911, Arizona

Suffragists never felt confident of a fair count. However, it was an off-year election, and the slate was very short. Also, the woman suffrage amendment was submitted on a separate ballot. Where there was considerable deviation between the percentage of votes cast on the suffrage issue as compared to those cast for the Congressional race, it can be explained (except for Wibaux County). For example, Silver Bow County cast nearly 2,200 (19%) more votes for the Congressional race than on the suffrage issue. But Butte's mayor, Lewis Duncan, was a Socialist candidate for Congress. Furthermore, Butte was the stronghold of liquor interests, many of the foreign-born resided there, and a labor crisis (which brought martial law to Butte from September 1 through election day) had handicapped campaigning for suffrage. But Wibaux County is a puzzler. That tiny grassland county reported just over 500 ballots for Congress (heavily Republican) but nearly 800 on woman suffrage. Wibaux most soundly defeated woman suffrage, with only 35 per cent support.⁵⁷

1912, Kansas 1912, Oregon 1912, Montana 1914, and Nevada 1914. The Territory of Alaska legislated equal suffrage in 1913 as its first statute. Also, in 1913 Illinois legislated presidential suffrage for women. (NAWSA, Victory: How the Women Won It, pp. 161-162.)

⁵⁷Derived from Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 152-154.

Regional patterns offer the clearest basis for understanding Montana's suffrage vote. The Northwest region--mountainous, with lumber, mixed agriculture, and some mining--gave solid support to the amendment. Eight of the nine counties with strongest support were in this area, giving 63 per cent of their 14,330 aggregate vote in favor of equal suffrage. The other area of major support followed the Yellowstone Valley east of the mountains, except for a weak area around Glendive. This region was mostly grassland and agriculture (some irrigated), but also mining around Red Lodge (Carbon County). Railroads and homesteading had encouraged a recent spurt in population. Omitting the Glendive link (Dawson and Wibaux counties), this region gave 57 per cent of its 11,180 aggregate vote for the suffrage amendment.

Firmly turning thumbs down on equal suffrage was the block of older communities running from the southwest mountain area to the Missouri Valley as far as Fort Benton. This area had a mixed economic base--ranches in the southwest, mixed agriculture, the heart of Montana's mining, the state capital, and the Great Falls community with industry and wheatlands opening to homesteaders. Montana's major urban centers were located in this negative block, except for Missoula, home of the state university, and Billings, a newcomer.⁵⁸

(See Table 6.)

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

Table 6. Per Cent of County Votes in Support of Woman Suffrage (1914), Prohibition (1916), and Minor Parties (1914).*

| County | Suffrage | | Prohibition | Minor Parties (Congressional Vote) | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------|------|
| | Pct. | Number | | Total | Prog. | Soc. |
| Ravalli | 70 | 1,389 . . . | 71 . . . | 39 | 23 | 16 |
| Sanders | 66 | 799 . . . | 62 . . . | 20 | 9 | 11 |
| Missoula | 64 | 2,481 . . . | 60 . . . | 34 | 10 | 24 |
| Stillwater | 62 | 659 . . . | 65 . . . | 20 | 16 | 4 |
| Flathead | 61 | 1,830 . . . | 64 . . . | 44 | 30 | 13 |
| Lincoln | 61 | 609 . . . | 64 . . . | 35 | 8 | 27 |
| Mineral | 60 | 393 . . . | 52 . . . | 36 | 7 | 29 |
| Toole | 60 | 538 . . . | 68 . . . | 10 | 2 | 9 |
| Teton | 58 | 1,005 . . . | 69 . . . | 15 | 5 | 10 |
| Custer | 58 | 1,053 . . . | 58 . . . | 26 | 16 | 10 |
| Big Horn | 57 | 291 . . . | 56 . . . | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Richland | 57 | 928 . . . | 63 . . . | 29 | 21 | 8 |
| Yellowstone | 57 | 1,712 . . . | 62 . . . | 20 | 14 | 6 |
| Rosebud | 56 | 654 . . . | 64 . . . | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Carbon | 56 | 1,099 . . . | 63 . . . | 18 | 2 | 16 |
| Park | 53 | 1,162 . . . | 55 . . . | 18 | 8 | 10 |
| Meagher | 53 | 732 . . . | 63 . . . | 9 | 3 | 6 |
| Fergus | 53 | 1,890 . . . | 65 . . . | 19 | 9 | 10 |
| Valley | 52 | 950 . . . | 69 . . . | 21 | 9 | 12 |
| Broadwater | 51 | 483 . . . | 62 . . . | 9 | 3 | 16 |
| Musselshell | 51 | 864 . . . | 61 . . . | 15 | 2 | 13 |
| Hill | 51 | 1,018 . . . | 62 . . . | 20 | 5 | 15 |
| Silver Bow | 50 | 4,471 . . . | 42 . . . | 35 | 3 | 32 |
| Chouteau | 50 | 908 . . . | 65 . . . | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Madison | 49 | 746 . . . | 57 . . . | 11 | 3 | 8 |
| Jefferson | 48 | 468 . . . | 57 . . . | 26 | 13 | 13 |
| Dawson | 48 | 1,003 . . . | 64 . . . | 11 | 4 | 7 |
| Sheridan | 48 | 1,420 . . . | 66 . . . | 29 | 15 | 15 |
| Cascade | 48 | 1,943 . . . | 53 . . . | 11 | 2 | 10 |

(table continued)

Table 6--Continued

| County | Suffrage | | Prohibi- tion | Minor Parties (Congressional Vote) | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|------|
| | Pct. | Number | | Total | Prog. | Soc. |
| Gallatin | 47 | 1,325 . . . | 64 . . . | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| Granite | 47 | 417 . . . | 58 . . . | 24 | 10 | 14 |
| Lewis & Clark | 47 | 1,718 . . . | 49 . . . | 15 | 9 | 7 |
| Fallon | 47 | 915 . . . | 58 . . . | 14 | 7 | 7 |
| Powell | 45 | 609 . . . | 57 . . . | 17 | 4 | 13 |
| Beaverhead | 43 | 605 . . . | 55 . . . | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Sweet Grass | 42 | 323 . . . | 64 . . . | 22 | 18 | 4 |
| Deer Lodge | 41 | 1,098 . . . | 48 . . . | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Blaine | 40 | 511 . . . | 68 . . . | 29 | 21 | 8 |
| Wibaux | 35 | 283 . . . | 56 . . . | 10 | 2 | 8 |
| Montana | 52 | 41,302 . . . | 58 . . . | 22 | 8 | 14 |

*Source: Derived from Ellis L. Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864: An Atlas of Elections (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958), pp. 149, 153, 166.

Progressivism and prohibition often seemed to share a common path with woman suffrage. How closely were these socio-political issues correlated? Agitation for women's franchise in Montana had waxed and waned with the Populist party in the 1890's and later grew with the progressive surge. The Socialist and Progressive parties for years had claimed special concern for economic and political equality for women. In Montana, Progressive strength at the polls peaked in 1912, but Socialists still ran well in 1914 (with 14% of the Congressional vote). A county-by-county look at election returns that year reveals some tendencies but no stable correlation between support for the minor parties and the suffrage amendment. Five of the seven strongest counties for equal suffrage also were the strongest for minor parties. Silver Bow was the only county outside this group to give more than 30 per cent of its vote to minor parties. On the other hand (besides Silver Bow County), Sheridan, Jefferson, and Blaine voted over 25 per cent for minors yet defeated woman suffrage.⁵⁹ (See Table 6.)

The case of prohibition and equal suffrage is similar. Seven of the nine top supporters of woman suffrage voted over 60 per cent for prohibition. Only 6 of the 17 counties that defeated the suffrage amendment gave that much favor to prohibition. The prohibition movement might have been a factor in the suffrage vote in the Yellowstone Valley, where the WCTU had many active chapters.⁶⁰ (See Table 6.)

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 149, 153.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 153, 166.

No single factor, or set of factors, seems to explain adequately why the counties voted as they did on equal suffrage. Montana was a sparsely populated, pluralistic, frontier society. Thus local conditions and personalities could easily skew the sentiment of communities in regard to enfranchisement of their women.

To keep up the momentum of the purpose behind woman suffrage, Jeannette Rankin issued a general call to Montana women to join suffragists in Helena on January 21 and 22 (1915) to organize for intelligent use of the ballot. Miss Rankin realized that this was a critical formative period in citizenship for Montana women.⁶¹ She was aware, too, that Montana would be watched by those still struggling over equal suffrage elsewhere.

Many of the suffrage work-horses, as well as male political leaders, addressed the convention, including Governor Sam V. Stewart, Wellington D. Rankin, Dr. Maria Dean, Nanita Bagley Sherlock, Mary O'Neill, Mary Stewart, and Belle Fligelman. Several speakers recommended that the women remain independent from present parties, and several discouraged them from forming a woman's party. The con-

⁶¹Lewis and Clark County hit an early snag. Many women, when registering to vote, protested having to reveal their age. The county attorney smoothed the process by ruling that a declaration of "over 21" would suffice. (Helena Independent, January 24, 1915; p. 5.)

vention took all of this advice. The women organized the Montana Good Government Association, forerunner of the League of Women Voters in Montana, to encourage women's informed participation in government on a non-partisan basis. The convention postponed election of officers until a June meeting in Missoula. Meanwhile, the association operated under a state central committee and continued a statewide structure as used by the suffragists. A large committee was named to recommend legislation dealing with many particular interests of women and children. Prophetically, the women adjourned to attend a House committee hearing on prohibition.⁶² (A prohibition amendment was approved by 58 per cent of the electorate in the next election.)

In 1916, the first election in which women were eligible to public office, Jeannette Rankin was elected to Congress, the first woman to sit in a national parliamentary body. Emma A. Ingalls, of Flathead County, and Maggie Smith Hathaway won seats in the Montana House of Representatives, while May Trumper became the state's first woman to serve as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.⁶³ But it would be nearly two decades until women would be allowed to serve on juries in Montana.

⁶²Helena Independent, January 20, 1915, p. 8; January 22, 1915, p. 2; January 23, 1915, p. 8; Montana Progressive, January 14, 1915, p. 2.

⁶³Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864, pp. 160, 164, passim.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Montana during its territorial period had leaned toward liberality of franchise. It dearly wanted settlers. Drawing from mixed cultural backgrounds, the pioneer community tolerated a range of social values. And under the paternal wing of Congress, Montana could afford political experiment. Male voters did not have to be United States citizens; they only needed to declare their intent to qualify--and 30 per cent of the population was foreign-born. Voters did not have to be literate in English or in any other language. In the 1880's Montana's territorial legislature granted women partial suffrage, although it was not based on human equality. Women were allowed tax suffrage, based in sacrosanct rights of property, and they got political rights in local school affairs, a rational extension of woman's domestic sphere.

An enduring plan for statehood called for firmer controls. The prominent and the powerful wanted to ensure a social environment and political framework compatible with their ideals. Therefore, the constitution was long and rigid. The state's Founding Fathers carefully defined the power structure and restricted access to it. Women's political privileges, as exercised under territorial law, survived in constitutional guarantees. But any modification of the right of franchise would have to be achieved through the cumbersome process of constitutional amendment.

Time clearly was not ripe for equal suffrage in 1889. Almost no popular expression on woman suffrage reached the constitutional convention. The WCTU, the only organization in Montana that had suggested woman suffrage, submitted no suffrage proposal. Even the prominent suffragist, Henry Blackwell, asked only that Montana's state constitution continue legislative discretion over franchise. Without debate the delegates snuffed out the only motion for equal suffrage. The convention's real considerations were (1) How much partial suffrage for women should be written into the constitution? (municipal suffrage? full suffrage but no military or jury duty? full right of ballot but limited eligibility to hold offices?); and (2) Should the legislature be invested with continued power over suffrage? (in the basic text of the constitution? by electorate approval of a separate proposition?). The convention denied all of these attempts to enlarge popular government.

The convention's limitation of suffrage derived from the delegates' concepts of the source of political rights and the status of woman. Was force (symbolized in the ballot) the basis of government and, therefore, political rights a male prerogative? Or should reason and morality justify the right of ballot in the civilized world? Could woman, credited with greater purity, contribute more to social melioration with increased political rights than by moral suasion of her menfolk? Should she--did she want to--risk her femininity and

familial harmony for vulgar politics? The convention's answers were clear: politics was a masculine arena, and woman, with her special attributes, could not belong there.

The Victorian mystique in Montana began to fade in the 1890's. Pioneer women never had fit the fragile image, and now Montana women were capably entering professions, business, and politics. Ella Knowles (Haskell) respectably ran for high office in 1892, and prominent women campaigned for Helena for state capital in 1894. The WCTU was introducing "home women" to club work, developing leadership and community awareness among them. An increasing number of women wanted fuller human dignity and equal opportunity. They were confident that they could handle non-domestic responsibilities, and their activities demonstrated a practical need for more than suasion in public decisions. These women were not questioning the propriety of the ballot. Equal suffrage meant equal justice. It was right.

There were campaigns for a woman suffrage amendment in every legislative session (convening biennially) from 1895 through 1913, except for 1907 and 1909, before the legislators would permit the Montana electorate to pass on the issue. Three of these drives (in 1896-1897, 1902-1903, and 1912-1913) were highly organized statewide and energetically carried out. Political reception of the suffrage amendment rose and fell with the strength of third-party challengers to established political power--the Populists in the 1890's, Laborites

early in the century, then Socialists and Progressives. Although Governor Joseph K. Toole asked in 1903 for submission of the suffrage question and poetically defended the merits of woman's franchise, both Democrats and Republicans remained evasive toward the issue until 1912. Then under welling pressure of reform, both capitulated and endorsed submission of the amendment to the electorate. In 1914 they also supported the principle of equal suffrage.

The state's first woman suffrage bill came in the afterglow of women's political performance in the capital campaign. The 1895 House of Representatives, with solid support from its Populist phalanx, gave the bill more than the two-thirds majority required for an amendment, but the Senate abruptly killed it. Suffragists then organized, worked the political parties, petitioned, and lobbied exhaustively in the 1897 legislature. Although Populists were more numerous than before and nearly unanimously supported equal suffrage, conservative opposition stiffened and the measure failed the two-thirds vote even in the House. Undaunted the suffragists prepared for another major campaign that never came off. Their cause was lost in the furor of senatorial politics, and Populist support dissipated in fusion. Suffrage leaders diluted their aims by proposing full suffrage limited to well-propertied women. The compromise was unattractive to many suffragists, and the legislators in 1899 decisively rejected it. Montana's suffrage movement then lapsed into the general doldrums which from 1896 to 1910 distressed the movement nationally.

Only in 1902-1903 did suffragists try another ambitious campaign in Montana prior to the progressive tide. Promotion came primarily from NAWSA with hope that by involving labor unions and women's clubs their cause would gain substantial breadth and vigor. Clubwomen discussed their "enlarged sphere" and petitioned for the ballot, but their interest in the suffrage venture imposed by NAWSA was shallow. Governor Toole gave women and the equal suffrage bill his blessing, and labor leaders heartily endorsed submission of the amendment. But the suffrage bill could not muster even a simple majority in the Senate and again missed a two-thirds vote in the House. The outside suffrage experts had proved no match for Montana's conservative bloc.

Demand for progressive reforms built up in Montana, as it did nationally, early in the twentieth century. Reformers reacted in particular to the growing dominance of the "copper and kerosene" trust over the state's economy and government, but they were also uneasy about the breakdown of social cohesion. Progressives and suffragists, men and women alike, shared fundamental social values and goals. They wanted the ballot for women in order to gain firmer control of democratic machinery to conserve the social ideals of the middle class, "old stock" Americans. The coincidence of extensive homesteading in Montana, beginning in 1910, and the corresponding advance of agricultural interests re-enforced the call for progressive reforms.

In 1912 Montana's first initiative measures (four election reforms) qualified for the ballot, and all passed by over 70 per cent. Democrats, with a vigorous progressive platform, swept the election. In this reform mood, woman suffrage fared well. Both legislative chambers passed the bill for submission almost unanimously. While Mary Long Alderson led the WCTU in a separate campaign to win popular approval for the suffrage amendment, Jeannette Rankin gave inspired leadership to other suffragists to ride the crest of reform to victory for woman suffrage on November 3, 1914. Nevada passed a suffrage referendum that same day; eleven states and the Territory of Alaska then had equal suffrage.

By 1914 suffragists in Montana, as nationally, had adapted the Victorian premises of sexual inequality and "proper spheres" to the progressive setting. It was to protect home and family that woman was called to the voting booth. It was as man's complement, specifically because of her sex-related differences, that woman could help to secure the good society. Thus the suffragists compromised the large question of natural rights and equal justice for women in order to win popular support for women's franchise. The "woman question" greatly troubles America and Montana yet in the 1970's.

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Mrs. Lucille Dyas Topping, Helena, Montana, April 17, 1973.

Mrs. Agnes Wiggenhorn, Bozeman, Montana, January 21 and 23, 1974.

Mrs. Belle Fligelman Winestine, Helena, Montana, May 1, 1973.

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