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No. 1881

QUEST FOR EQUALITY: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S
RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN TEXAS, 1890-1975

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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August, 1982

Gammage, Judie Walton, Quest for Equality: An Historical Overview of Women's Rights Activism in Texas, 1890-1975. Doctor of Philosophy (History), August, 1982, 221 pp., bibliography, 326 titles.

This dissertation begins with an examination of the activism of the 1890's, when the first concerted demands for change in the legal and social status of Texas women began, and ends with the 1970's, when an organized effort was made to undo the most recent advances. During these eighty-odd years, Texas women have won the vote, the right to serve on juries, and equal legal rights under the state constitution. General histories have usually ignored these and other women's issues until the current feminist movement, beginning in the 1960's, spotlighted that neglect. Unfortunately, "corrected" texts now frequently offer disjointed, even incoherent summaries, implying that every so often women and their demands pop up and then retire.

This study makes a different claim. In Texas, at least, the demand for change was ongoing, more evident at one time than another, but never entirely absent and certainly not a composite of sporadic events spawned by this or that national mood. Of course, the national movements were important, but success at the state level depended on the long and patient work of Texas women. Their demands for

the right to vote and for equal legal rights were reinforced by, but not simply an echo of, contemporary national movements. At this writing Texas women continue to work for equality, namely the freedom to pursue their own individuality, impeded by no barriers based on gender.

This study presents a chronological examination of women's rights activism. The first three chapters cover the origin, growth, and success of the Texas woman suffrage movement. Chapter Four examines the issues of interest to Texas women after the right to vote was achieved, including birth control, better working conditions, unionization, jury duty, and married women's property rights. The last chapters explore the origins, growth, and success of the movement to secure an Equal Legal Rights Amendment to the state constitution, and its immediate aftermath. Sources include manuscript collections, interviews, newspaper and magazine accounts, and government documents.

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PREFACE

This dissertation is an attempt to bring together the sundry bits and pieces of information about the promotion of women's rights in Texas over the last century, organize them into a coherent description of these activities, and fit them into the larger perspective of the national movement for women's rights. It begins with an examination of the activism of the 1890's, when the first concerted demands for a change in the legal and social status of Texas women began. It ends with the close of the Texas legislative session in 1975, a time which marked the emergence of a counter-movement seeking to undo the rights gained by women in the state during the previous ten years.

This dissertation is limited to presenting an historical overview of the various women's movements in Texas. It is not a sociological study of a social movement, an analysis of political participation or public policy, or a psychological study of the factors which caused Texas women to seek a change in their prescribed roles. Its purpose is to provide a framework in which other historians can place their own particular examination of an aspect of women's rights activism in Texas. It relies on the tools

and methodology of history--the treasure hunt for manuscript collections, the search through newspaper accounts and government documents, the contributions of other thesis and dissertation writers, personal interviews with participants and their families, as well as helpful details supplied by authors of secondary accounts--to provide the necessary reservoir of information from which history is written. Because women's history has been so long neglected as a major research topic, the location of primary source documents is challenging detective work, relying more on word-of-mouth and the helpful memory of archivists than on traditional catalogs of materials.

No such historical framework for the Texas women's movements has heretofore been constructed. Willie Bowles completed a thesis on the suffrage movement in 1939, and A. Elizabeth Taylor published an article on the same subject in 1951. Recent dissertations on married women's property rights in nineteenth-century Texas and on women activists in the Progressive Era in the state offer a much needed analysis for those periods, but are limited by the period covered to a narrow historical perspective of these topics. The current emphasis on women's history has produced a spate of books which offer useful biographical sketches of Texas women but make little analysis of these women's lives in terms of an overarching women's movement in the state. The same can be said of recent master's theses--they provide

necessary details about women's participation in various activities which broadened women's rights or reflected an enlightened attitude about women's roles in Texas, but they necessarily focus on so narrow a topic that little integration into a broader historical framework is provided.

Until recently, little had been published which provided an analysis over time of the women's rights activities on the national level. Most works concentrated on the early feminist movement of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially the suffrage movement. The current feminist movement, which did not become a national phenomenon until the late 1960's, became the focus of a new body of work which provided useful compendia of participants, events, and policy, but again offered little historical integration of the current movement with the earlier attempts to redefine the status of American women. Only in the last several years have a few books presented a synthesis of the various periods, and doubtless, more will come.

General histories, whether on the national or state level, generally ignored women's issues. When the current feminist movement protested this omission, historians hastily offered a corrective and included a few pages about Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's activities, the later suffrage movement, and the recent women's liberation movement. Such brief mention tended to imply

that every so often women popped up, demanded a few changes in their status, then retired to the periphery of history.

This dissertation makes a different claim. At least in Texas, one group of women or another was agitating for a redefinition of woman's role or a change in her legal status throughout the period examined. The demand for change was an ongoing one, although the number of women making the demand varied across time. Sometimes the activities were a dominant part of Texas culture; at other times they receded into the background. They were not sporadic events spawned by a national mood for reform. In most cases, however, they depended for success on a concomitant social climate which encouraged change, such as the Progressive period or the recent "equality era" of the 1960's and 1970's. At root, the basic issue was equality for women. And what equality meant to the women described in this work was the freedom to pursue their own individuality, impeded by no barriers based on gender.

Although this dissertation ends with the rise of an anti-feminist movement in Texas and the nation, this counter-movement perhaps marks only a lull in the move toward equality for women, as the other counter-movements have been. Recent history is always hard to interpret, for it is the future, as well as the past, which gives it the proper perspective.

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CHAPTER I

A SHAKY BEGINNING

The first stirrings of an organized movement to secure equality for women in Texas occurred during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Although this initial effort lasted only a few years, it delineated the major problems, trends, and themes which recurred in each successive endeavor to secure equal rights for women in the state. In the 1890's and subsequently, the initial demands by movement leaders for broad changes in the treatment of and attitudes toward women gradually gave way to campaigns more narrowly focused on securing only a few demands at a time. Then and later, ideological arguments for equality gave way to expedient ones as movement leaders realized the need to appeal to or counteract whatever biases their would-be supporters had. Thus, each equality campaign transformed movement leaders from politically naive idealists into politically astute, cynical, well-organized realists. By no means, however, does this transformation imply that the leaders themselves believed their expedient arguments or relinquished their own belief in an ideology of equality.

Not only did this early women's rights movement foreshadow the recurring strategies of its supporters, it also embodied the recurring arguments of its opponents as well. Two themes occupied center stage in the objections to women's rights in the 1890's--women's "natural" subordinate state, which required male "protection," and the disintegration of the patriarchal family should this "natural" order be disturbed. Additionally, during the first women's rights movement in Texas, the twin specters of racism and nativism often obscured the basic issue.

Prior to the 1890's, only a few isolated attempts were made in Texas to give women broader legal and political rights, particularly the right to vote. At the constitutional conventions of 1868 and 1875, resolutions calling for woman suffrage were handily defeated. The state's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) endorsed suffrage in 1887, but that was just one of many goals occupying their attention. In 1893, however, Texas women began to establish societies devoted solely to securing rights for women. Such organizations sprang up throughout the South at this time as part of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association's plan to organize women in every state to campaign for the vote. The South was fifty years behind the rest of the country in offering support for women's rights, largely because of its concentration on recovering from the effects of the Civil War and its

antipathy toward a movement which had its roots in the abolitionist crusade.¹

The national organization had already been through several transformations. Beginning with the women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, the movement campaigned for reforms in marriage and divorce laws, called for an end to the suffocating corset and cumbersome clothing of the Victorian woman, advocated social and legal freedom for unmarried women, and attacked patriarchal religion as an important source of women's subordinate status. During the Civil War they put aside their own goals, formed the Woman's Loyal League, and worked for the emancipation of the slave. When the war ended, they expected equality to be extended to all citizens. Instead, the federal Constitution was amended to the exclusion of women's suffrage, and the principle of sex discrimination was introduced into the document for the first time. Angered by this action, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony broke away from the Equal Rights Association, which had all but abandoned its efforts to gain woman's suffrage in order to get the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments ratified. They formed the National Woman Suffrage Association, embraced radical reforms aimed at changing the status of women, and pushed for a federal suffrage amendment. The conservative feminists, led by Lucy Stone of Boston, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association,

working within the traditional framework of home and church to try to win the vote for women, state by state. For twenty years these two groups were at loggerheads with each other, and neither gained much ground in securing votes for women.²

By 1890 leaders of both groups realized that a unified suffrage association was needed, that shock tactics or legal arguments were not enough, and that the long, hard task of building suffrage support in every state was required. That same year they formed the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), led by Stanton and Anthony. A key part of their organizational strategy included appointing from each state a vice-president, whose primary task was to organize local grass-roots groups. One such officer was Rebecca Henry Hayes of Galveston, the vice-president for Texas, appointed in 1892. She spent a year contacting by mail prominent men and women throughout the state, enlisting their support for a Texas Equal Rights Association. At the same time Anthony wrote to women in several Texas towns, urging them to organize local suffrage associations. In April 1893, the first local society in Texas formed in Denison, enlisting thirteen members. A month later Hayes had enough support to organize a state-wide NAWSA affiliate. Fifty-two women and men met in Dallas to establish the Texas Equal Rights Association.³

During the next two years Hayes traveled over 9,000 miles to help organize more local Texas groups, aided by state organizer Sarah L. Trumbull of Dallas. By the time of the second Texas Equal Rights Association meeting, attended by fifty delegates in Fort Worth in June 1894, five more local societies had joined Denison--Dallas, Taylor, Belton, San Antonio, and Granger. Beaumont joined the list a month later. Suffrage support seemed to follow a geographic line stretching from Denison in the north to San Antonio in the south, with one deviation--Beaumont to the east.⁴

The following year, plagued by a lack of funds, the Association could not sustain Trumbull's activities. Organizing new locals thus became secondary to political activity and legislative lobbying. Supporters used their influence to get a "Suffrage Column" in local newspapers, even if they could not muster enough interest for a local society. During the summer of 1894, Association members attended the various state party conventions to lobby for suffrage planks in the platforms of the state Democratic, Republican, Prohibitionist, and People's parties. When the Prohibitionists complied, the Association argued the merits of endorsing the party. Since they could little afford to alienate any of their supporters, however, they decided to remain non-partisan.⁵

This early suffrage movement reached its peak in 1895 when an amendment enfranchising women was introduced in the

Texas House of Representatives. This was the first time woman suffrage was debated by a political body in the state since the Constitutional Convention in 1875. The amendment died in committee, and the legislature did not take up the issue again for sixteen years. The fledgling movement itself began to falter after the 1896 election. The conservatism of the McKinley era, the fusion of the Populist movement with the Democratic Party, and the middle-class rejection of radicalism as an avenue for social reform, heralded a retreat from the suffrage issue on the national as well as the state level. By 1897, the local and state societies in Texas were inactive. The national organization entered the doldrums as well, quietly rebuilding its strength for its endeavors after the turn of the century.⁶

The bare bones of the early movement's history in Texas indicate little of its significance. The suffrage campaign appears to have been little more than a minor flurry of activity which produced no apparent changes in Texas society. A close look, however, reveals much about the nature of the struggle to gain rights for women in the state, especially the deep-seated discontent of the feminists and the deeply-rooted fears of their opponents. This early movement forced the issue of woman's equality to be openly debated, and it focused the public's attention on

the question long enough to give its adherents some concept of the effort needed to make women's equality a reality.

The speeches made by the leaders of this earliest organized feminist movement in Texas indicate that these women recognized the extent to which society needed changing if equality for women was to be achieved. They sought changes in woman's status not only in the political sphere, but in the economic and social realms as well. Just as the northern women's rights groups forty years earlier had attacked the fundamental relationship between men and women as the root cause of inequality, so did Texas feminists. They challenged the church, the marketplace, the institutions of marriage and education, and the medical profession to revise their views of woman's nature and her role in society.⁷

Members of the Texas Equal Rights Association publicly charged that economic dependence was the most abject form of slavery, that "sex slavery is no more defensible than race or class slavery,"⁸ that "half the nation cannot be free if they are keeping the other half unfree."⁹ They attacked traditional education for women--"the time has passed when woman's education can be restricted to the one object of amusing men, and thereby securing a husband."¹⁰ They challenged a society that demanded that a wife be subordinate to her husband--"God does not require woman to dwarf herself so that men may grow to

giants."¹¹ They disputed the cultural expectation that women find fulfillment through their children. "There's no bliss like the bliss of motherhood," said Hayes during a speech to the Woman's Congress, "but even blessings grow stale with monotony."¹² Dr. Grace Danforth, who became a feminist during her medical school days in Chicago, told her fellow Equal Rights Association members that the medical profession promoted the concept of physical frailty in women because they could "reap golden harvests" from women's supposed weaknesses. She strongly advocated dress reform, particularly since corsets proved unhealthy for digestion and circulation.¹³

Elizabeth Frey of San Antonio, active in both the WCTU and the Equal Rights Association, blamed women's low status as much on women as on men. "As long as woman was content to be the toy and plaything of man, no reformation was to be expected," she charged.¹⁴ Another WCTU leader, Mrs. S. J. Sweeney, told an Equal Rights Association convention in 1895 how her temperance activities had convinced her that woman's traditional "power" was ineffectual. She had earlier thought that women should go to men with tears in their eyes and beg them for whatever changes in society they wanted. Now she believed that "women should cry less and vote more."¹⁵

Just as the NAWSA leadership realized earlier that expediency demanded moving away from radical positions on

such powder-keg issues as woman's role in marriage, the churches' demands for woman's subjugation, and sexual freedom for single women, so did the Texas group moderate its message. One member cautioned restraint on the grounds that the Equal Rights Association needed the support of all the state. "We must not force drastic measures on unprepared minds," she wrote.¹⁶

And what did the Texas Legislature think of this infant movement to obtain the vote for women? In 1894, thirty-nine politicians were polled on the issue. The majority had never even considered it an issue and indicated their opposition to it. Their opinions ranged from the one extreme, that the vote would degrade women, to the other, that women's votes would purify politics. Most who argued against it cited the traditional view of woman's nature, her role as wife and mother, her sphere being the home, and the fear that voting would reverse the accustomed roles of men and women. Another recurring theme of opponents was the paternalistic notion that women's needs were taken care of by their husbands.

One of the most powerful men in Texas politics, former United States Senator John H. Reagan, when asked his opinion of woman suffrage, retorted that women already had all the rights they could reasonably expect. "Woman's duties are of a household and social nature; she can't fight in battle nor work out a poll tax," so she should not vote. When asked if

he paid his poll tax, Reagan replied that he was kindly exempted from it, but he opposed extending this exemption to women. "I have no doubt of their mental qualifications," he said, "but for women to vote and men to take care of babies won't do!"¹⁷

Governor James S. Hogg opposed woman suffrage, as did Lieutenant Governor M. M. Crane, who joked that since every woman made her husband do as she pleased, she did not need the vote. State Senator George T. Jester said it more picturesquely, "Man is the head of the household, but woman is the neck, and the neck wags the head!" Another politician reiterated that women were represented by men. When asked about widows and single women, he dismissed them with the comment that every woman could get a man if she wanted to, so she had only herself to blame if she was not represented.

Some legislators criticized women as too impulsive, too easily swayed by emotional appeals. Other denied them the vote because their judgment was no better than men's. One allowed that women were evolving and would eventually get the right to vote. Another put women on a pedestal and vowed to do all he could to protect her from the vote.

Although not as often as in the Deep South, Texas politicians also brandished black-white antagonism--the "Southern Question," as historian Aileen Krador labeled it--when asked about woman suffrage. One Texas judge

opposed enfranchising women with the comment, "The white woman wouldn't vote if she could, and the negro woman would vote early and often. Southern women don't want to vote." But another legislator supported suffrage because a woman was "as qualified as the nigger. My mother," he said, "had a heap more sense than the four million men made white by the Constitution."¹⁸

Aware that the racial issue could polarize southern attitudes about support for suffrage, the Equal Rights Association itself disagreed over the best approach to the question. Southern opponents of woman suffrage generally complained that black women would gain political power. Their arguments, however, never referenced the effective exclusion of the black male from voting in the South, which presumably would prevent female participation as well. When suffrage opponents did mention black disfranchisement, they feared that approval of a federal amendment mandating woman suffrage would open the door to federal interference in black suffrage as well. Thus the racial issue became a sensitive subject for the suffrage associations in Texas. Most often they chose to avoid the question.

The choice to avoid the racial issue whenever possible almost split the Equal Rights Association in 1894. The quarrel arose over the possible visit to Texas by Susan Anthony and Anna Shaw, officers in the national organization, to publicize the cause of woman suffrage and

win support for it. At the annual summer convention, Hayes opposed the idea of northern organizers coming to the South, fearing that the abolitionist taint of the northern suffrage movement had not yet abated and would eliminate possible Southern supporters. Dr. Grace Danforth accused Hayes of waving the bloody shirt and argued that Anthony's visit would help the state campaign, for she would pack the halls during her visit. J. W. Baird, the only male delegate to the convention, agreed with Hayes, expressing fears that Anthony would be harassed and heckled if she appeared in Texas. Enough delegates disagreed with Hayes and Baird to pass a motion requesting Anthony to stump the state for suffrage.¹⁹

Anthony planned her Texas trip for the following January as part of a three week swing through the South before the NAWSA convention in Atlanta. Although Anthony requested a "full-fledged Southern woman" to accompany her and Shaw, to allay criticism of a Yankee interfering in southern life, Hayes continued her opposition to the visit. By December the state association's executive committee decided that Hayes was obstructing the organization's wishes and replaced her as president with activist Elizabeth A. Frey. Hayes refused to accept her removal from office, and Frey eventually relinquished her appointment. At the convention in June 1895, however, Hayes had clearly lost her

base of support, and the presidency of the organization went to Elizabeth Goode Houston of Dallas.²⁰

As Hayes's role in the state association diminished, so did the fortunes of the suffrage movement itself, both in Texas and across the country. By 1896 only four states had enfranchised women, all in the West. Wyoming and Utah had granted the vote to women while territories, and retained suffrage when they became states. Colorado and Idaho women won suffrage in their sparsely populated states by popular referenda, accomplished through the efforts of local suffrage societies aided by national organizers. Hard-grinding, well-organized campaigns in South Dakota, Kansas, and California failed, an outcome more typical of state suffrage campaigns. Between 1870 and 1910, suffrage supporters waged 480 suffrage campaigns in 33 states. These efforts produced a paltry total of seventeen referenda. Only eleven state legislatures provided a woman suffrage referendum during this period, eight of them in the West, and in only two states, Colorado and Idaho, did the people concur. Clearly, in the nineteenth century, granting political power to women was deemed unpopular, improper, and unnecessary.²¹

Although formal equal rights organizations disappeared in Texas after 1896 and did not reappear for seven years, other groups carried on activities which allowed women to move beyond their "ordained" sphere of home and church. The

two groups with the most impact were the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Both organizations not only provided a forum for women's issues, but also provided a training ground in organizational skills, a communication network for disseminating information to even the smallest community, and a socially acceptable framework for political involvement. These elements were the foundation on which the later revitalized suffrage movement built its support.

The WCTU established its first Texas chapter in 1882. Frances Willard, the national president, traveled to Paris, Texas, in May of that year, at the invitation of politician Eben LaFayette Dohoney, the father of prohibition in Texas. Willard spoke to women interested in the WCTU and helped them organize a local chapter. During the following year, enough local chapters had formed to warrant establishing a state organization to direct their activities.²²

Women reformers around the country had long viewed temperance as a means of protection for married women with alcoholic husbands. Because the laws of most states placed the wife under the "protection" of her husband, many women saw their own wages and property dissipated by their husbands' penchant for drink. They and their children often suffered physical abuse as well. The first attempt to attack alcohol as an enemy of family life came in 1874. An evangelical temperance movement briefly flourished in the

midwest and spread rapidly around the country. Its effects were short-lived, however, and many of the women involved realized the need for a permanent organization to accomplish any long-term results. The WCTU was established later that year in Cleveland, Ohio, first under conservative leadership, then, after 1880, guided by the more militant Frances Willard.²³

Willard used the WCTU to draw large numbers of women into the broader struggle for women's rights and did not limit the organization to just the temperance battle. During its lifetime, the WCTU enlisted a quarter of a million American women as dues-paying members. Willard's slogan for the Union was "Do Everything," and she organized activities to appeal to women at various levels of dedication to women's rights. At one time there were thirty-eight "departments" planning actions on issues ranging from kindergartens and hygiene to prostitution, prison reform, child labor, helping the unwed mother, and of course, woman suffrage.²⁴

The suffrage department of the WCTU was organized by Dr. Anna Shaw, later president of the NAWSA. She and Willard channeled the original humanitarian "pious" aspect of the temperance movement into political action. Women gathered petitions, pushed for local option elections, and began pressing for suffrage in order to achieve their goals. Waving the banner of "purity of the home," the leaders of

the WCTU brought the suffrage message to many people who otherwise had no interest in women's rights or who thought such a movement improper.

The WCTU in Texas followed the same pattern as the national group. Although initially organized around the temperance issue, Union members actively sought other changes to Texas society which would benefit women. Initially rejecting the vote as the way to accomplish their goals, the WCTU soon learned that the issues they deemed important had little appeal for legislators. By 1887, the Union publicly demanded votes for women, largely owing to the efforts of its leaders, especially presidents Helen M. Stoddard and Mrs. Sam C. Acheson, and later superintendent of the state Franchise Department for eight years, Elizabeth Frey. Many members participated in local suffrage societies, and this crossover in membership was reflected in their willingness to help each other's causes. Suffrage leaders advised each other to speak to prohibition groups. "You will get a chance to talk to women on suffrage that you could never get to a suffrage speech," one activist wrote to another.²⁵ Although with Willard's death in 1898 the WCTU began to narrow its focus to temperance alone, the Texas group continued to support actively a broad range of social reforms.²⁶

The WCTU encouraged political participation by its members, provided for direct involvement in changing women's

status, and raised the level of awareness of members and non-members alike about women's issues. By contrast, the activities of the many women's clubs in Texas appeared more innocuous to society. During the early years of the clubs' existence, study and discussion were the primary concerns, and political activism was shunned. Although many clubs had an Outlook Committee which monitored bills in the legislature, the members themselves used the time-worn method of "lobbying" for bills they endorsed by cajolling their male family members and friends to intercede in the world on their behalf. Although, on the surface, such mild activity seemed to provide little impetus to the women's rights movement, the women's clubs actually were important to the movement in two ways: they provided organizational and leadership training for women who later became leaders in the women's rights movement, and they provided a network for marshaling the grass-roots support needed to win suffrage for women.²⁷

Most of the women's clubs began as study groups or literary societies in the 1880's and 1890's, their names reflecting their activities--the Houston Lyceum, the Ladies' Reading Club, the Audubon Society, Shakespeare study groups, the Beethoven Society, the River Mutual Admiration Society, and the Houston Pen Women. These clubs became colleges for middle-aged middle-class women, few of whom had access to formal study. The question "Are women capable of the same

mental improvement as men?" was still debated. One club member remarked in 1883 that although she was aware that serious study was a bit outside women's sphere, she was unprepared for the unkind criticism her group received. By 1914, however, society viewed club membership as a positive influence for Progressive reforms, and many clubs focused their attention on civic matters and even political action.²⁸

The women's club movement proved as popular in Texas as it did around the country. In 1897 the individual clubs united in a statewide organization, the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. By 1903, the 232 clubs throughout the state had a combined membership of 5,000 women. They affiliated with the national group, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which numbered one and a half million women by 1914. Such a widespread organization provided a convenient way to reach a vast number of women, to acquaint them with such issues as suffrage, which it formally endorsed in 1914.²⁹

Jennie Croly, a leader in the national club movement and its historian, remarked that these groups provided "a means of freedom and opportunity for certain American women . . . a means for the acquiring of knowledge, the training of power."³⁰ Club membership provided organizational experience for its members. They raised funds, maintained extensive records, organized elaborate meetings, worked with

civic leaders, carried tasks from inception to completion, and gained the courage to speak before audiences.³¹

Beside the obvious benefit of providing leadership opportunities for women, clubs also supplied an occasion for women to share their experiences with one another, to find a commonality in their ideas and feelings. Croly said, "It is the spirit of the meetings even more than the word or written speech which gives them a peculiarly uplifting quality. There is a sense of freedom of social exhilaration which is hard to define."³² Although hardly the consciousness-raising groups prevalent a half century later, nevertheless, these clubs allowed women to discern that their reality often disagreed with the social myths of their time, a key element in the development of a social movement. And, although often criticized by historians for their "do-gooder" Progressive mentality, these women focused their reform efforts on issues of importance to women, something rarely done in an age of male hegemony.

What were some of the reforms these women and their WCTU counterparts believed in and worked for? They wanted equal educational opportunities for women, especially in vocational training, and a refutation of the "double standard of fitting boys for the world and girls for the home."³³ To this end they lobbied ten years for the establishment of the Girl's Industrial College, later known as Texas Woman's University. The state legislature created

the college in 1901, largely because of the efforts of WCTU president Helen Stoddard and prominent San Antonio business and club woman Eleanor Brackenridge. Its doors opened to 186 students in 1903.³⁴

Clubwomen wanted equal employment opportunities and equal compensation for women, even if they themselves did not work outside the home. Male school teachers' salaries were nearly twice those of female teachers in Texas. Through the urgings of clubwomen, the legislature finally voted for equal pay in 1919. Clubwomen also pressured for laws to limit the number of hours women were required to work, initially to no avail. Finally, in 1915, the state legislature enacted a maximum hours law. On the surface, the statute appeared to help working women by limiting the number of hours women could be required to work to nine hours a day, fifty-four hours a week, reducing the ten-hour work day, sixty-hour work week which most women (and men) then worked. The legislature emasculated the law, however, by exempting from the maximum hours limitation nurses, laundresses, telephone operators, retail clerks, and cotton mill workers--almost all the occupations predominantly employing only women. A more successful outcome of the clubwomen's concern for their laboring sisters was Faith Home, a childcare facility established by Houston clubwomen in 1892, where employed mothers might safely leave their children.³⁵

A different kind of working woman also captured the attention and sympathy of the Progressive woman--the prostitute. She was viewed as a victim, exploited by men for profit, usually engaging in the profession because of poverty, low wages, improper home conditions, and lack of training for meaningful work. Noted historian Mary Ritter Beard, an activist for women's rights during the Progressive period, lamented the double standard which punished the prostitute but not her customers or the proprietor who realized the profits from her business. Progressive female reformers advocated three measures to control prostitution: (1) rehabilitation for prostitutes--simply closing down the operation furnished no help for these women; (2) protection of young women from exploitation by raising the age of sexual consent (then called the age of protection); and (3) penalties for the owners of prostitution establishments through tax laws.³⁶

Texas clubwomen and WCTU members campaigned to raise the age of protection from the then current ten years to age eighteen. The legislature in 1891 responded by raising the age to twelve, and, under continued pressure, to age fifteen in 1895. Further persistent lobbying for age eighteen failed.³⁷

Another issue that stirred many clubwomen to action concerned married women's legal rights, particularly their right to control their own property and wages. Debate about

woman's role in marriage had long been part of the women's rights movement, both nationally and in Texas. Calls for marriage reforms ranged from the radical demand for the eradication of the institution to the more conservative call for legal identity for wives. Texas suffragists in the early 1890's had decried the prevailing marriage roles which fostered powerlessness in women and encouraged them to submerge themselves so their husbands could succeed. The northern activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton early on had pinpointed the imbalance of power in male/female relationships as the root cause of sexual inequality, and she urged marriage reform as the first priority for the women's rights movement.³⁸

True to their more conservative nature and purpose, Texas clubwomen at the turn of the century voiced no such revolutionary ideas, but instead advocated statutory changes to give wives more economic power in their marriages, and to remove the so-called "civil death" they incurred at the marriage ceremony. In most states, Texas included, a married woman's legal status was that defined by English common law.

By marriage the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least, is consolidated into that of the husband under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything.³⁹

This view was reflected in several statutes which grouped married women with children, prisoners, and lunatics in limitation of rights. Texas legislators, however, had also incorporated into marriage law parts of the Spanish civil code which viewed a wife as a partner, sharing with her husband the profits and losses of the marriage, capable of holding and controlling both property she acquired before marriage or as a gift or inheritance (separate property), and a portion of the property acquired during the marriage (community property). Thus, Texas law gave a married woman the benefits of community property but refused her the right to participate in its control.⁴⁰

An awareness of a married woman's second-class legal status spread among clubwomen as they discussed their ideas at meetings. Eventually, agitation for change resulted in laws passed in 1917 which gave a wife control of her separate property, income from this property, and her wages. Soon after, however, these laws were deemed unconstitutional by the Texas courts. More than half a century would elapse before married women received legal status equal with men in Texas.⁴¹

One group of married women living in the central Texas town of Belton acted in a unique way to alleviate their marriage problems. Dissatisfied that Texas law provided them no protection from autocratic or abusive husbands and gave them no control over their own property and wages,

these women formed a commune, led by Martha White McWhirter. Initially, in the early 1880's when the group began to try to meet each other's need for protection and economic sustenance, the women did not live together. Instead, they gathered together once a week as an interdenominational religious group, praying and seeking guidance, particularly in matters concerning marriages gone awry. Gradually their aid to each other became more practical, as they built up a common fund from the sale of milk and eggs to share among those wives whose husbands refused adequate financial support for their families.⁴²

As the group grew, they decided to open a laundry to provide a more reliable financial base. Eventually, many wives separated from their husbands and moved into a common residence, the McWhirter home. Bullet holes in the front door attest to the wrath of several husbands over such action. Because of their religious nature and the antipathy toward divorce during that time, Martha McWhirter developed a rationale for wives leaving their husbands, based on sanctification, the then-current Methodist belief in a second blessing. McWhirter taught that if one marriage partner experienced sanctification but the other remained an unbeliever, the sanctified mate could in essence dissolve the marriage bonds if the unbeliever caused trouble or deserted the family.

The Sisterhood, as they called themselves, thrived. At one time the commune housed fifty women and children. They gradually acquired property, built a successful hotel, and ran their own farm. Eventually they decided to leave Texas, and when they moved to Washington, D. C. in 1899, their wealth was rumored at \$200,000. After McWhirter's death in 1904 the group remained together, but their celibacy ordained a foreseeable end to the Sisterhood.

Although the Belton commune deviated greatly from the normal experiences of Texas women during this period, it is one more illustration of how women coped with their status at that time. Although culturally approved activities like the WCTU and women's clubs replaced the less acceptable suffrage agitation, the idea grew that the status of women was somehow untenable. Interwoven in this expanding awareness was the conclusion that changes in status depended on the activism of women, for the current power groups would institute few alterations to society's structure on their own.

NOTES

1. For details concerning woman suffrage prior to 1890, see Willie D. Bowles, "The History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1939).

2. The best works on the suffrage movement at the national level are Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959); William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969); and Andrew Sinclair, The Better Half: The Emancipation of American Women (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Firsthand accounts are found in Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others, eds., History of Woman Suffrage, 6 vols., (New York & Rochester: 1881-1922).

3. Stanton, History of Woman Suffrage, 4:931-33; Dallas Morning News, 2 September 1894.

4. Dallas Morning News, 11 May 1893, 20 March 1894, 26 August 1894, 2 September 1894, 9 September 1894, 30 September 1894; a detailed account of suffrage meetings can be found in A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," Journal of Southern History 17 (May 1951):194-215.

5. Dallas Morning News, 18 August 1894, 2 September 1894, 7 June 1895, 8 June 1895, 9 June 1895.

6. Texas Legislature, House Journal, Reg. sess., 1895, p. 514; Jane Y. McCallum, "Woman Suffrage in Texas," n.d., typed manuscript, McCallum Collection, Austin Public Library.

7. Dallas Morning News, 11 May 1893, 26 August 1894.

8. Dallas Morning News, 9 September 1894.

9. Dallas Morning News, 8 June 1894.

10. Dallas Morning News, 9 June 1894.

11. Dallas Morning News, 25 October 1894.

12. Ibid.

13. Dallas Morning News, 9 June 1894.
14. Ibid.
15. Dallas Morning News, 8 June 1895.
16. Ibid.
17. The comments of Texas politicians quoted here and in the next three paragraphs are found in an article in the Dallas Morning News, 20 March 1894.
18. Aileen S. Kraditor offers a good analysis of the race issue in the chapter entitled "The 'Southern Question'" in her book The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).
19. Dallas Morning News, 4 November 1894, 16 December 1894.
20. Ibid; Dallas Morning News, 8 June 1895; Stanton, History of Woman Suffrage, 4:251.
21. More information on these early suffrage campaigns can be found in Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, Woman Suffrage and Politics, the Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement (1926, reprint ed., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 222-25; and Alan P. Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Grimes makes a convincing argument that suffrage in the western states had little to do with frontier equalitarianism, which he labels "white man's" equalitarianism. Instead, he maintains, women were given the vote to keep the prevailing groups in power.
22. Dohoney advocated woman suffrage in the 12th and 13th legislatures in 1871 and 1873, and fought for its inclusion in the Constitutional Convention of 1875. He was a former Greenbacker, helped organize the People's Party in Texas in 1891, and was a member of the Prohibition Party when he invited Willard to Texas. S. S. McKay, "Eben LaFayette Dohoney," Handbook of Texas, Walter P. Webb and Eldon Stephen Branda, eds., 3 vols (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952, 1976) 1:511; Alwyn Barr, Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), pp. 85-6.
23. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 181-83.
24. Barbara K. Campbell, The Liberated Woman of Nineteen Fourteen: Prominent Women in the Progressive Era

(Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1979); Sinclair, The Better Half, pp. 223-24; Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 184-85.

25. Cora B. Megail to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 11 January 1918, Cunningham Collection, Houston Public Library.

26. Hortense Ward to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 6 August 1917, Cunningham Collection. For a more detailed view of the Texas WCTU, see Fanny L. Armstrong, To the Noon Rest: the Life, Work, and Addresses of Mrs. Helen M. Stoddard (Butler, Indiana: L. H. Higley, 1909) and Mrs. William M. Baines, The Texas White Ribboners, (n.p., 1935), both found in the Barker Collection of the University of Texas, Austin.

27. Johnowene B. Crutcher Menger, "M. Eleanor Brackenridge, 1837-1924, a Third Generation Advocate of Education" (M.A. thesis, Trinity University, 1964), p. 97; Campbell's study shows that women's club membership correlates markedly with activism in the suffrage movement, The Liberated Woman, p. 138.

28. Ruth A. Whiteside, "Survival to Suffrage: Houston Women in the Formative Years," Houston, 1978, typed manuscript, pp. 11-12, Cunningham Collection; Muriel Beadle and the Centennial History Committee, The Fortnightly of Chicago: The City and Its Women, 1873-1973 (Chicago: Henry Regency Co., 1973), p. 50.

29. Barr, Reconstruction to Reform, p. 230; Sinclair, The Better Half, p. 320.

30. Jane Cunningham Croly, The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America (New York: Henry G. Allen and Co., 1898), preface, n.p.

31. Barbara J. Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, the Woman and the City, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 266.

32. Jane Cunningham Croly, "Sorosis: A History, 1868-1893," cited in Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), p. 66.

33. Mary Ritter Beard, Women's Work in Municipalities (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1915), p. 35.

34. Handbook of Texas, 2:760.

35. Dallas Morning News, 4 November 1894; House

Journal, Reg. sess., 1919, pp. 1170. The U. S. Supreme Court earlier upheld laws regulating working conditions for women, in Muller v. Oregon, 208 U. S. 412 (1907), but ruled that improving standards for men was unconstitutional. For a discussion of Muller v. Oregon, Joan Harvill, "Is the Texas Equal Rights Amendment the Answer?" South Texas Law Journal 15 (1974):113-14.

36. Beard, Women's Work, pp. 100-108.

37. Whiteside, "Survival to Suffrage," p. 12; Eleanor Brackenridge to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 22 March 1918, Cunningham Collection.

38. Dallas Morning News, 25 October 1893, 9 June 1894; Rebecca Hayes, "Women and the Ballot," n.d., typed manuscript, McCallum Collection.

39. Cooley, Blackstone (2d ed., 1872) cited by Edgar H. Keltner, Jr., "Suggested Legislative Action to Liberalize the Contractual and Property Rights of Texas Married Women," Texas Law Review 25 (June 1947):658. This article contains detailed information about the origins of Texas law.

40. Texas Constitution Art. 16, sec. 15; Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., Study of the Equal Legal Rights Amendment, Study no. 4 (Fort Worth, n.d., p. 2), (hereafter cited as B&PW Study); Texas, Revised Civil Statutes, Annotated (Vernon, 1958), 16A: 207; 20: 200.

41. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1917, pp. 1549; B&PW Study, Study no. 3, p. 2.

42. Information of the Belton commune comes from Eleanor James, "Martha White McWhirter (1827-1904)," in Evelyn M. Carrington, ed., Women in Early Texas (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 180-90.

CHAPTER II

FINALLY, A PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

At the turn of the century, encouraged by the reform efforts of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the women's clubs, woman's suffrage supporters in Texas tried again to establish their own movement. As in the past, the organization initially sputtered, flaring into life briefly from 1903 to 1905, then again in 1908. After that year it died out until 1912, when it finally began an orderly development into a stable, ongoing, successful group, achieving its goal of suffrage in 1919. This transformation occurred when three developments coalesced: the growth of a skilled, politically astute suffrage leadership, both locally and nationally; society's acceptance of women's participation in activities outside the stereotypical bounds of home and church; and the perception of political power groups that women's votes could help them achieve the goals they sought.

The first revival of an association clearly dedicated to pursuing the vote for women centered around Houston, where its leaders, the wealthy Finnigan sisters, Annette, Elizabeth, and Katherine, lived. The Finnigans organized an

equal suffrage league in 1903, eventually enlisting about 150 members. Although they started a state association later that year, they had no success in establishing leagues other than those in Houston and neighboring Galveston and LaPorte. The group sponsored speeches by renowned suffrage leaders Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. Although hundreds of people attended these lectures, the fledgling Texas Woman Suffrage Association did not attract enough additional members to establish any new chapters. When the Finnigan sisters left Texas in 1905, the leagues died out.¹

The national suffrage movement itself lacked focus during the early years of the twentieth century. Catt, who had assumed the presidency of NAWSA in 1900, became increasingly involved in the International Woman Suffrage Association and left the leadership of NAWSA to Shaw in 1904. Susan B. Anthony's death in 1906 signaled the end of the early radical passion and influence, and the new generation of leaders floundered about, searching for a cohesive policy for achieving suffrage. In 1908, Catt asked President Theodore Roosevelt if a petition from NAWSA would influence him to support woman suffrage. When he replied, "No," NAWSA voted instead to petition Congress for a federal amendment. By 1910 they had collected a half million signatures. They sent the petition to Congress, but it had

little effect. The group decided then to return to its earlier strategy of achieving suffrage state by state. During the next few years the suffrage issue reached a popular vote in nine states, winning in six--California, Arizona, Washington, Kansas, Oregon, and Illinois--and losing in Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. By 1913, women's votes could influence the choice of seventy-four presidential electors in twelve states.²

Once more NAWSA tried to encourage an organized suffrage association in Texas. In 1908 Shaw again visited the state. Her speeches inspired the formation of a suffrage association of about fifty members in Austin, but it was the only suffrage society in the state for the next four years. By 1912, however, with the spirit of Progressivism strong in the nation and in Texas, the idea of women voting appealed to enough people that the movement began to gain the support needed to carry its goal to fruition. Seventy-five women formed a suffrage association in San Antonio in early 1912. By November of that year, 400 people were on its membership list. Sparked by another Shaw visit, groups organized in Dallas, Houston, Galveston, Temple, and Del Rio, and together with the Austin and San Antonio leagues, formed the Texas Woman Suffrage Association and affiliated with NAWSA. From that time forward, the group grew in strength and influence, and the Texas suffrage movement no longer waxed and waned. Local societies

numbered eight in 1914, twenty-one in 1915, eighty in 1916, and ninety-eight in 1918. The state association held well-attended conventions from 1913 until the federal amendment was ratified by the Texas Senate in 1919.³

A closer look at this period in the Texas suffrage movement's history reveals its early dependence on the dynamism of a few leaders, since widespread support among the general public was not forthcoming. When the leaders left the organization, for whatever reason, the movement lost its momentum. By 1915, as the drive for suffrage gained social approval, a new generation of young women, no more dedicated than the earlier leaders but greater in number, worked tirelessly to provide the necessary direction for the movement. They had learned from their predecessors' experiences that women's rights could be achieved only with well-organized hard work in every individual community. The activities had to be directed and coordinated, however, by a relatively small group of women who could provide coherency and stability at the state and national level. This necessary planning was provided nationally by Carrie Chapman Catt, who resumed the NAWSA presidency in 1915. Her predecessor, Anna Shaw, was a spellbinding speaker but a poor organizer and had provided little direction for the movement. Catt reversed this drift by establishing a strong working board of directors, sending directives to the

states, and insuring that state leaders not only worked hard but also provided continuity for their associations.⁴

Most of the women leading the suffrage movement around the country were from white middle and upper class families, were well-educated, often worked outside the home, and usually participated in other reform activities as well as suffrage. They campaigned for temperance, better conditions in the cities, higher wages for working women, and more educational opportunities for young women. The women who directed the suffrage movement in Texas fit this pattern, as a brief look at their lives shows.

Both Annette Finnigan and Eleanor Brackenridge belonged to wealthy, prominent families whose members were known for their philanthropy as well as their business acumen. Annette was the daughter of millionaire John D. Finnigan, an Irish immigrant who took advantage of the burgeoning cattle industry in Texas to start a successful meat-packing and hide business in Houston. Annette helped with the business, learning from her father not only the requisite management skills, but also a concern for the working class. John Finnigan's philanthropies included establishing the first Carnegie Library in Houston, and he "looked forward with no misgivings to radical changes which would bring about a fairer distribution of wealth."⁵ Annette later continued her father's philanthropy by donating seventeen acres for a park in the black community of Houston.⁶

As the Finnigan's business grew, John's business ties took him East, and the family began dividing their time between Houston and New York City. Annette and her sisters attended college, still a rarity for women in the 1890's, and Annette received her degree from Wellesley in 1894. She lived in New York until 1901, when the family returned to Houston. Her New York sojourn taught Annette much about women's reform movements, particularly the unionization of working women and the massive suffrage campaign occurring in the state. Her commitment to winning the vote for women led her to organize the suffrage leagues and activities in Texas in 1903, where she was president of both the Houston club and the state organization. Her connections in the East helped her bring NAWSA leaders Catt and Shaw to speak for the cause in Texas. Despite her efforts, however, Annette found Texas women "too timid" to organize. As testimony to her strength and the movement's weakness, the Texas Woman Suffrage Association faltered when the Finnigans temporarily moved back East in 1905. Her efforts were not unappreciated, however, for later the revitalized Association elected her honorary president at their state convention in 1912. Although her business affairs occupied most of her time (she had full control of the company after her father's death in 1909), Annette worked with the suffrage movement whenever she could. She was state president again in 1914, and spent the winter of 1916 in

Austin, lobbying for the vote at her own expense. Her health began to fail that year, although she was only forty-two, and she subsequently spent most of her time traveling or living in New York. She died in 1940 at the age of sixty-seven.⁷

When Eleanor Brackenridge was that age, she was just hitting her stride in reform activities. Like Finnigan, Brackenridge belonged to a wealthy family with a strongly developed social conscience. She and her brother George were bankers in San Antonio, and Eleanor was the first woman in America to serve as a bank director, a position she assumed in 1887 when she was fifty years old. She and George epitomized the Progressive reformer, giving support to many causes--temperance, higher education for both men and women, free legal advice for the poor, the welfare of mothers and their children, married women's property rights, raising the age of consent, and especially woman's suffrage. Eleanor supplied the impetus to the rejuvenated suffrage movement in Texas in 1912, contributing both time and money. Her leadership skills grew out of both her business experience and her activities in the woman's club movement in San Antonio. Eleanor and her mother had earlier established the first woman's literary society in the city, which evolved into the first woman's club in Texas. Through these clubs Eleanor accomplished many reforms benefiting women and the poor. She authored two books, The Laws

Pertaining to Women and Children, and The Legal Status of Women in Texas, in which she advocated broadening the property rights of married women. She established an Outlook Committee in each women's club to keep an eye on bills in the Texas Legislature and to recommend endorsement of those in line with the reforms they supported. When she helped re-establish the Texas Equal Suffrage Association in 1912, Eleanor Brackenridge was seventy-five years old. She served as president only from 1912 to 1914, but she remained one of its most active members and worked for suffrage and other reforms benefiting women until her death in 1925.⁸

Finnigan and Brackenridge provided the initial leadership necessary to rekindle the suffrage movement in Texas, but it was left to a cadre of dynamic women in their thirties, experienced in club work, to carry the Association to success. The two most influential leaders from 1915 on were Minnie Fisher Cunningham of Galveston, protege of Finnigan, and Jane Yelvington McCallum of Austin. These two women spent more than half their lives working in the public arena to secure not only the vote for women, but also all sorts of reforms to help the less powerful. They became fast friends in the process.

Cunningham was the leading light of the Texas suffrage movement. The fiesty redhead directed the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association, toured the state at Finnigan's urgent request to speak about suffrage, and in 1915 became

president of the state association, a position she held until the suffrage amendment was ratified. She inherited an interest in politics and reform from her father, who had served in the Texas Legislature. She was well-educated, completing a degree in pharmacy from the University of Texas Medical School in 1902, when she was twenty. That same year, she married Beverly Cunningham, an insurance salesman, which proved to be an unhappy union marred by her husband's heavy drinking. Perhaps because of this unsatisfying relationship and her childlessness, Cunningham devoted an amazing amount of time and energy to the suffrage cause, calling the Texas Equal Suffrage Association her only child.⁹

Cunningham's skill at organizing and her persuasiveness in speaking before the public caught Carrie Chapman Catt's attention. They became good friends, and whenever she could, Catt persuaded Cunningham to tour the country, campaigning for suffrage, particularly in the South during the ratification campaign. Although working at the national level for suffrage often took Cunningham away from Texas during some crucial periods, she nevertheless remained the rallying point and the chief planner of the successful Texas campaign for the vote.¹⁰

Cunningham continued her active public life long after suffrage had been won. She went to Washington in 1920 as executive director of the National League of Women Voters,

the organization which superseded NAWSA. While there she also managed the Women's National Democratic Club from 1923 until 1927, when she returned to Texas to manage her family affairs after her husband's death. A year later she ran for the United States Senate, the first woman in Texas to do so, but was defeated by the venerable Tom Connally. During the New Deal, the Roosevelt Administration called her back to Washington, where she worked in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. She returned to Texas in 1943, ran for governor unsuccessfully against Coke Stevenson in 1944, and remained active in the state's liberal Democratic politics until her death in 1964. One of her prize accomplishments was the establishment of the liberal publication, the Texas Observer, which she helped finance by selling off part of her family's farmland.¹¹

Cunningham's right-hand aide and chief confidant was Jane McCallum, an Austin newspaper columnist. McCallum had grown up in a ranching family where sexual equality was an accepted reality. When, as a young girl, she learned that women were not allowed to vote, she could not believe that such a preposterous condition could exist. Of course, she discovered that the vote was only one of the inequalities confronting women, but it was a tangible one she could work to correct. Like many other women, McCallum began her suffrage activities through her membership in various women's clubs in Austin. She joined the suffrage

association established there in 1908 and later became an officer in the state organization, working closely with Cunningham. She headed the state ratification committee in 1919 when Cunningham was out of the state campaigning at Catt's urgent request for the suffrage amendment in Mississippi.¹²

McCallum's special forte was lobbying the state legislature, for the other suffrage leaders realized that her beauty and charm could easily disarm a half-hearted opponent. Her own political connections as a reporter, as well as those of her husband Arthur, superintendent of the Austin public schools, aided her suffrage work. The fact that she had four children helped counter the contention of many legislative opponents that all suffragists were "childless, short-haired communists."¹³

McCallum's family supported her efforts in the suffrage movement. When the school board told her husband to keep Mrs. McCallum out of politics, Arthur replied that they could threaten to fire him but not his wife. Her children accepted her involvement in suffrage activities, often helping with such tasks as stuffing envelopes and cleaning the house before a meeting in the living room. The only time a difference of opinion arose was during McCallum's participation in a suffrage parade down the streets of Austin. One of her sons, embarrassed at his mother's

antics, claimed that she was his aunt from Dallas who "hadn't a lick of sense!"¹⁴

Like Cunningham, McCallum continued her political activities after suffrage was achieved. She helped organize the Joint Legislative Council, a coalition of women's groups which lobbied in Austin for bills of importance to women. She managed Cunningham's 1928 Senate campaign, while continuing her journalistic career, and served as Secretary of State under both Governors Dan Moody and Ross Sterling.¹⁵

While Cunningham and McCallum led the movement to establish a strong suffrage organization in the state, other women joined the fight and provided additional leadership. Chief among these was Jessie Daniel Ames, a young widow from Georgetown who, with her mother, owned and operated the only telephone company in town. Ames, like others, became involved in the women's rights movement when she discovered that, as a married woman in Texas, she had no economic identity. She could not even open a bank account without her husband's permission. As her confidence in her abilities grew with her business experience, she moved into the public sphere, first as an organizer of the Georgetown suffrage league, then as a suffrage speaker, lobbyist, and treasurer of the state suffrage association. Eventually she became the state president of the League of Women Voters and a leader of the Association of Southern Women for the

Prevention of Lynching. Although her reserved and somewhat distrustful nature kept her out of the charmed inner circle led by Cunningham and McCallum, she served the Texas suffrage movement well.¹⁶

Other leaders in the Texas suffrage movement included two attorneys, Hortense Ward of Houston and Edith Wilmans of Dallas. Ward, the first woman lawyer in Texas, was president of the Houston suffrage association and worked diligently with Cunningham in the state organization. Ward was particularly interested in legislation giving married women more property rights, as well as suffrage, and authored legislative bills for both goals. Wilmans helped organize the Dallas suffrage association and the Dallas Housewives League. After women received the vote, she was elected to the Texas House of Representatives and later ran unsuccessfully for governor.¹⁷

Also contributing to the success of the movement were schoolteacher Annie Webb Blanton, who was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction; nurse Helen Moore, later elected to the state legislature; and clubwoman, teacher, and author Anna Pennybacker, president of the National Federation of Woman's Clubs. Pennybacker, a latecomer to the movement, shunned involvement until Carrie Chapman Catt, in a judicious political move, appointed the influential Pennybacker to a prestigious NAWSA committee, the Leslie Commission. Her elevation to such a high-status

position in the national organization rankled the prime movers of the Texas movement. Cunningham wrote to Brackenridge,

I suppose it is mean of me, but I simply cannot bear, when I know that you and the women like you 'took the curse off' of Suffrage in public opinion in Texas back in the days when she [Pennybacker] wouldn't help a particle, for her to go to a National Convention [NAWSA] and reap the reward of the marvelous growth of public sentiment that there has been in the state this past year.¹⁸

Catt realized how valuable Pennybacker's involvement in the movement was, and to her credit, Pennybacker took her appointment seriously. She made speeches around the state, spoke in Austin during the legislative sessions, and wheedled funds from NAWSA when the Texas organization needed them. And, of course, her role as the leader of the woman's club movement increased the "respectability" of the suffrage activism.¹⁹

While most of the organizing and day-to-day activities in Texas were carried on by its homegrown leaders, NAWSA provided occasional help, both financially and personally. Lavinia Engle came to the state as a NAWSA organizer, aided Cunningham and her group by traveling around the state and establishing local associations to generate interest at the grass-roots level. Although each local group supported itself and also raised funds for the state association, NAWSA occasionally supplemented their meager resources. The national organization itself managed with sporadic funding,

often relying on contributions from wealthy benefactresses. Their financial worries were allayed, however, when a New York publisher, Mrs. Frank Leslie, bequeathed two million dollars to Catt for suffrage activities. Although Leslie's heirs challenged the legacy, the litigation consuming nearly half the money, the remaining amount helped fund individual state suffrage associations, including Texas, in the last years of the campaign. Catt even earmarked small amounts as a salary for Cunningham when her suffrage work consumed so much of her time that her personal finances were jeopardized.²⁰

The Texas association welcomed contributions from NAWSA and its own wealthy members, Finnigan and Brackenridge, but it also did its part to solicit funds both from its members and from outside sources. Each club was expected to meet its budget quota to support the state organization by whatever fundraising events proved successful. Some groups held "Self-Sacrifice Weeks," when members cut their household budgets, bought no new clothes, and otherwise saved money which they donated to the cause. In addition to such traditional activities as bazaars and pledges from members, the clubs appealed to businessmen for funds. One of their most successful strategies was the establishment of the Texas Century Club--one hundred men working for suffrage who agreed to pay five dollars a month to the association until women won the vote.²¹

Most of the money raised was used to educate both the general public and the state legislature about suffrage. Suffragists spoke at every gathering they could, attempting to win support from both enthusiastic and resistant audiences. They printed and distributed countless leaflets and pamphlets. They testified at legislative hearings and spent hours in the Driscoll Hotel dining room cajoling many a reluctant senator over an informal lunch. Very early, movement leaders learned the value of appearing "feminine" to the men and women in their audiences. They cautioned each other to dress conservatively and speak with soft voices in public, for they were aware that their opponents were portraying the emancipated woman as an unattractive spinster with a hooknose and corkscrew curls.²²

Speakers often mentioned their roles as wives and mothers to counteract the accusation that political activity might impair a woman's fertility or lead to the breakdown of the family. During one Senate debate, when she was challenged on this issue, McCallum refuted the argument by reading a list of more than a dozen local suffrage workers who each had more than six children. Suffrage speakers, when questioned about the possible loss of femininity if women entered the political arena, turned the argument on its head. On the contrary, they remarked, because women were so pure, so devoted to the home, their vote would strengthen the family. When suffrage was finally won,

Cunningham wrote to a friend that she was so glad that she could now leave the camouflage of innocence behind that she was going to wear a seductive bright red dress to a big political meeting and finally "appear in my true colors as the village vamp."²³

The Texas Equal Suffrage Association did not remain the sole organization in Texas devoted to getting the vote for women. The Congressional Union, a dynamic offshoot of NAWSA established in 1918, sent its organizers around the country to enlist support for a federal suffrage amendment. In early 1916 they concentrated on building support in the South, with Mrs. St. Clair Thompson, a southerner herself, as field secretary. In January Thompson established her Texas headquarters in Houston and shortly afterwards announced that one hundred Texas women had formed a state branch of the Congressional Union. This successful organizing drive was credited to the state legislature's failure to come even close to passing a state suffrage amendment during the 1915 session. Many Texas women turned their attention then to a federal amendment.²⁴

The Texas Congressional Union's membership list included many skilled clubwomen and prominent businesswomen from around the state. Heading the organization was Clara Snell Wolfe of Austin, wife of a University of Texas economics professor. A graduate of Oberlin College, Mrs. Wolfe had earlier helped organize the suffrage campaigns in

Ohio and Wisconsin. Other members included successful businesswomen Florence Sterling of Houston and Rene Maverick Green of San Antonio, and Benigna Kalb of Dallas, founder of the Texas Farm Women, an organization similar to the federated clubs of town women. Many members were also active in NAWSA activities in Texas, including Elizabeth Herndon Potter of Tyler, chairman of the legislative committee of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, Tex Armstrong, president of the Dallas Equal Suffrage Association, and Mrs. James M. Young, her counterpart in San Antonio.²⁵

Although their memberships overlapped, the Congressional Union and the NAWSA affiliates seldom coordinated their efforts. Most of their dissension stemmed from their basic disagreement regarding the means to achieving women's suffrage. Simply put, the Congressional Union believed that suffrage was a national issue and should be accomplished by an amendment to the federal Constitution. NAWSA, on the other hand, believed a federal amendment premature and preferred instead to win the vote in individual states, especially since the loss of states' rights was an argument used by suffrage opponents whenever a national amendment was mentioned.²⁶

This disagreement over the thrust suffrage activism should take was reflected in the different tactics used by the two groups. The Congressional Union, led nationally by

Alice Paul and her co-workers Lucy Burns, Crystal Eastman, and Mary Beard, adopted strategies used by the British suffragists, particularly the idea of holding the party in power responsible for failing to promote rigorously in Congress the passage of the suffrage bill. While this technique fitted the British parliamentary system, it proved divisive and ineffectual in American party politics. The Congressional Union refused to support the Democratic candidates in the 1916 election because of the amendment's defeat in the Democratic Congress of 1914-1915, and because President Woodrow Wilson refused to support a federal suffrage amendment. NAWSA objected to such a partisan stance by suffragists, citing that many Democrats were supporting suffrage on both state and national levels, and their defeat would adversely affect the movement.²⁷

While political expediency was the main issue dividing the two suffrage groups, the Congressional Union drove the wedge still further by their dramatic use of public demonstrations. Alice Paul and another young American social worker, Lucy Burns, had seen militancy in action during their days in the British suffrage movement. When they returned to the United States in 1910, they began working with the NAWSA Congressional Committee to press for the national suffrage amendment. Their energetic efforts infused NAWSA with new vigor. Their first spectacular demonstration occurred in 1913, on the day before President

Wilson's inauguration. Five thousand women marched peacefully down Pennsylvania Avenue to dramatize their desire to vote. The parade quickly became a near-riot when bystanders began jeering and crowding the marchers, and the police gave little aid to the suffragists. This near disaster became a triumph for the suffragists, however, for public support for their cause increased. The Washington Chief of Police lost his job after supporters demanded an investigation of the incident. The demonstration also sparked interest at the grass-roots level, where petitions to Congress in support of suffrage garnered more than 200,000 signatures.²⁸

Paul and her co-workers continued to keep the suffrage issue in the news through the Congressional Union. Spurred by Paul's driving energy and dramatic flair, they organized in every state, including Texas, and clearly outshone NAWSA's more conservative activities for the next few years. When the election of 1916 failed to turn out the Democrats, and the suffrage amendment was constantly thwarted in Congress, the Woman's Party, as the Congressional Union was then called, turned again to public protests and demonstrations to publicize their cause. They picketed the White House and went on hunger strikes when arrested. This time, however, because the nation was at war, their protests drew negative reactions from the public and threatened the

gains already made by both their own group and by
NAWSA.²⁹

Although historians have made much of the conflict between the two groups because of the difference in methods--the conservative plodding organizational techniques of NAWSA as opposed to the flamboyant, militant tactics of the Woman's Party, in truth both groups favored public demonstrations to dramatize their cause. NAWSA organized "walkless parades" of over five thousand women during both the 1916 Democratic National Convention in St. Louis and the Republican National Convention later that year in Chicago. The split over the advisability of this strategy occurred only when the Woman's Party continued such demonstrations after America's entry into the World War and refused to set the suffrage issue aside to devote their energies to war work, as did NAWSA. Public disapproval of such "unpatriotic" action put NAWSA members on the defensive and resulted in their disavowal of support for the Woman's Party's actions.³⁰

In Texas, the response of the Equal Suffrage Association to the Woman's Party activities reflected more than a mere disagreement over the means to attain the vote. Although some association members joined the Woman's Party and worked in both organizations, the top leadership of the Equal Suffrage Association, particularly Cunningham, McCallum, and Ward, psychologically and physically separated

themselves from Wolfe and her group. This alienation stemmed less from a philosophical difference than from a personal resentment toward the "latecomers" to the suffrage movement, as Cunningham and her group characterized the Woman's Party leadership. Ward wrote Cunningham, "I don't like Mrs. Wolfe--she always waits until we have things organized and then comes in and tries to get in on the game--she is not a good sport."³¹ Lavinia Engle, NAWSA's Texas organizer, urged Cunningham to quickly establish new Association locals before Wolfe and her organizers enlisted unaffiliated women into the Woman's Party. When Wolfe attempted to establish a group in Seguin, Engle wrote Cunningham of her displeasure, "Damn! . . . I have spent hours working up sentiment in that district and converted three of those women by sheer physical force!!!"³²

The Equal Suffrage Leaders also resented the political naivete of the Woman's Party members. Again Engle wrote Cunningham, "Mrs. Wolfe told them [the Galveston Equal Suffrage League members] all they needed to do was sign a Congressional Union card and soon, oh very soon, suffrage would drop in their laps. Is she crazy?"³³ Ward wrote, "I have held my breath every time she [Wolfe] has been in town for fear that something would happen to undo all our work."³⁴

The conflict was compounded in 1916 when the Woman's Party refused to support any Democrat running for office, whether he favored suffrage or not. Since Texas was clearly a state run by and for the Democratic Party, Cunningham and her associates had to mend many political fences, assuring their Democratic supporters that their group would not campaign against friends of the cause merely to hurt a political party. Later the Equal Suffrage Association expended even more energy disavowing any connection with picketing by suffragists at the White House. Cunningham wrote newspaper editors across the state, asking them to emphasize to their readers the distinction between the "misguided women who are endeavoring to get into the limelight" and the "thousands of patriotic women who believe in suffrage and are performing their duty to the country at this time."³⁵

This distinction had often gone unnoticed in the past, to the dismay of the Equal Suffrage Association leaders. They lost large contributions when businessmen mistakenly donated to the Woman's Party, thinking the suffrage movement was unified; and they suffered blame when the Woman's Party activities alienated conservative Texans. This castigation was especially vexing, since hard-core opponents to suffrage delighted in branding woman's suffrage a "socialist plot" even before the Woman's Party was established. Overall, the Women's Party in Texas made little impact in the campaign

for suffrage. They sponsored a visit by Alice Paul and a few other national leaders of the Party, but they used no militant tactics in the conservative state. They often commented among themselves about the "lack of fervor" among Texas women.³⁶

In the later stages of the movement, when suffrage was a foreseeable reality, the dissension between the two suffrage groups in Texas was intentionally minimized. Eleanor Brackenridge played peacemaker, convincing Wolfe and Cunningham to work out a compromise to ensure the appearance of harmony to outsiders. To Wolfe's credit, she agreed to let Cunningham take the lead in the final stages of the campaign, and followed her directives. By then, all efforts were aimed toward ratification of a federal, rather than a state, amendment. The conviction that the federal amendment was the only feasible means of achieving suffrage, the issue which had originally divided the groups, now brought them together.³⁷

NOTES

1. Houston Chronicle, 31 March 1903; Houston Press, 10 December 1903; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," Journal of Southern History 17 (May 1951): 201-202.

2. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 249-52, 255-57.

3. Austin Woman Suffrage Association, "Minutes Book," 1908-1912, n.p., McCallum Collection, Austin Public Library; San Antonio Express, 19 February 1912; Taylor, "Woman Suffrage," p. 203.

4. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 272-74.

5. New York Herald, 8 January 1909.

6. "Houston Scrapbook," vol. 9, n.d., n.p., Houston Public Library; "John Finnigan, 1835-1909," biographical file, Houston Public Library.

7. Houston Chronicle, 18 September 1940; Houston Press, 18 July 1940; "Houston Scrapbook," n.p. See also the Finnigan Collection in the Houston Public Library.

8. George Brackenridge was a regent for the University of Texas and Eleanor helped establish the state college for women. Johnowene B. Crutcher Menger, "M. Eleanor Brackenridge, 1837-1924, a Third Generation Advocate of Education" (M.A. thesis, Trinity University, 1964), pp. 52, 58, 62, 69; Marilyn McAdams Sibley, George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), p. 25; "Mary Eleanor Brackenridge," Handbook of Texas, Walter P. Webb, and Eldon Stephen Branda, eds. 3 vols. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952, 1976) 1:203.

9. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Jane McCallum, n.d., McCallum Collection; Jane McCallum to Mrs. Harris Masterson, 15 February 1930, McCallum Collection; Nettie R. Shuler to Anna J. Pennybacker, 28 November 1919, Pennybacker Collection, University of Texas Archives; Lillian Collier, "Minnie (Fisher) Cunningham," Handbook of Texas, 3:216; John Carroll Eudy, "The Vote and Lone Star Women: Minnie Fisher Cunningham and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association," East

Texas Historical Journal 14 (1976):52.

10. Jane McCallum to Mrs. Harris Masterson, 15 February 1930, McCallum Collection.

11. Interview with Tom Kreneck, Houston, Texas, 7 April 1978; Waco News-Tribune, 26 July 1928.

12. Interview with Kathleen McCallum Morley, Frances McCallum, and Janet Poage, Austin, Texas, 7 March 1980; Henry D. McCallum, "Jane Yelvington McCallum," Handbook of Texas, 3:552; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Jane McCallum, 7 February 1956, McCallum Collection.

13. Interview with Morley, McCallum, and Poage, 7 March 1980.

14. *ibid.*

15. McCallum, Handbook of Texas, 3:552.

16. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) is an excellent study of Ames as both a public and private person. Chapters 1 and 2 detail her life and accomplishments in Texas; Diary of Jane McCallum, 2 December 1925, McCallum Collection; Edith Hinkle League to Eleanor Brackenridge, 12 June 1918, Cunningham Collection.

17. Dallas Morning News, 15 May 1919, 30 March 1918; Edith Wilmans Malone, "Edith Eunice Therrel Wilmans," Handbook of Texas, 3:1116; Dallas Morning News, 8 July 1951.

18. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Eleanor Brackenridge, 8 October 1917, Cunningham Collection, Houston Public Library.

19. Rebecca Richmond, A Woman of Texas (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1941) provides a thorough biography of Pennybacker; Carrie C. Catt to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 20 June 1918, Cunningham Collection; Jane McCallum, Diary, 2 November 1916, McCallum Collection.

20. Suffragist vol. 3, 25 December 1915.

21. Dallas Morning News, 14 May 1915, 12 May 1916.

22. Ruth A. Whiteside, "Survival to Suffrage: Houston Women in the Formative Years," Houston, 1978, typed manuscript, p. 13, Cunningham Collection; Anna Pennybacker

to Mrs. Y. O. Scott, 20 August 1920, Pennybacker Collection.

23. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Lavinia Engle, n.d., Cunningham Collection; Marion E. Fenwick to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 22 January 1920, Cunningham Collection; Austin American, 14 November 1937.

24. Suffragist, vol. 4, 24 June 1916, 29 January 1916; Houston Post, 21 January 1916.

25. Suffragist, vol. 4, 29 January 1916.

26. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 265-66.

27. Ibid, pp. 207-70; Suffragist, vol. 4, 3 June 1916.

28. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 263-65.

Additional information about the Woman's Party can be found in Inez Haynes Irwin, The Story of the Woman's Party (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1921); Doris Stevens, Jailed for Freedom (New York: Liveright Co., 1920); the Papers of the Woman's Party in the Library of Congress; William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, A History of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969); and Andrew Sinclair, The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

29. The arrest and subsequent imprisonment of more than one hundred "Silent Sentinels," as the pickets were called, was a part of the wartime government's general denial of the civil rights of many groups and individuals. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 284-87.

30. "Report of Department of Editorial Correspondence," Leslie Bureau of Suffrage Education, 16 November 1916--16 November 1917, Pennybacker Collection.

31. Hortense Ward to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 10 January 1918, Cunningham Collection.

32. Lavinia Engle to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 26 June n.d., Cunningham Collection.

33. Lavinia Engle to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, n.d., Cunningham Collection.

34. Hortense Ward to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 10 June 1918, Cunningham Collection.

35. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Marcellus E. Foster, 13 February 1918, Cunningham Collection; Minnie Fisher

Cunningham to editor, Austin Statesman, 5 July 1917,
Cunningham Collection.

36. Marcellus E. Foster to Minnie Fisher Cunningham,
14 February 1918, Cunningham Collection.

37. Eleanor Brackenridge to Minnie Fisher Cunningham,
11 February 1919, Cunningham Collection.

CHAPTER III

WINNING THE VOTE

The progress made by the suffrage issue in the Texas Legislature paralleled the growing strength of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association. In 1911 the amendment was introduced in the state house for the first time in the twentieth century, but was adversely reported by the House committee. At the next session in 1913, the measure again was introduced in the House but never came to the floor for a vote. In 1915 the amendment reached the floor of the House and lacked only four votes for passage. In that same session a Senate bill died in committee. In 1917 several different kinds of suffrage bills were introduced in the House. Again an amendment for full suffrage reached a vote in the House, but failed by a larger measure than in the previous session. A bill permitting women to vote in party primaries, which was tantamount to full suffrage in a one-party state like Texas, failed in committee, as did a proposal to allow women to vote in the presidential race only. In 1918, however, the Legislature granted women primary suffrage, and a year later ratified the federal amendment. In 1920, when Tennessee became the thirty-sixth

state to approve the amendment, suffrage became a reality, not only for the women in Texas, but for every woman in the nation.¹

This bare chronology conceals the fascinating struggle waged by the suffragists and their supporters--a struggle which included racism, the impeachment of one governor and the political ambitions of another, a middle-of-the-night roundup of recalcitrant senators, a well-financed opposition campaign by the brewing interests and political bosses, and the diversion of suffragists' energies into homefront activities during the Great War. The struggle taught the Texas suffragists to forego idealism for expediency--that success in the venture depended on telling the public what it wanted to hear. To allay fears that suffrage would "desex" women and tear the traditional family apart, suffragists resorted to waving the banners of motherhood and patriotism when it suited the occasion. When opponents argued that woman suffrage would enfranchise thousands of black women and bring blacks back into the political equation, suffragists chose to ignore the issue of racial equality. They adopted the strategy of the mid-nineteenth century radical Republicans--limit the current fight to only one reform and save the other battles for a later time.

The suffrage campaign profited from the growing awareness of political leaders that the "woman vote" might strongly increase their party's power. Undoubtedly, some

parties supported woman suffrage for ideological reasons. Those which represented the working class, such as the Socialist Party of Texas and its predecessors, always included in their platforms the call for equal and unrestricted suffrage for both men and women. Although women played important roles in the Texas Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Party in Texas refused to include a woman suffrage plank in their platform, fearing that the issue was too controversial. The state's Prohibition Party continually failed to support woman suffrage until 1912, when it realized that the party's success might require the votes of women. The Progressive Party always supported woman suffrage, believing that women would vote for Progressive reforms and thus strengthen their party. When women in twelve states could vote in the presidential race of 1916, the Republican Party adopted a suffrage plank at their national convention, and their presidential candidate, Charles Evan Hughes, supported a federal suffrage amendment. This action never affected Texas politics, however, since the Republican Party was defunct in the state.²

The greatest political strength in Texas lay with the Democratic Party, and it was to them that the suffragists had to make their greatest appeal for support. Nationally, the Democrats gradually acknowledged the growing influence of the suffrage movement and the potential power of the woman vote. Delegations from the National American Woman

Suffrage Association (NAWSA) quietly but persistently persuaded President Woodrow Wilson to support woman suffrage and abandon his earlier pronouncement that the matter had never attracted his attention. Unwilling to alienate the southern wing of the party, however, Wilson and the party leaders steered clear of supporting a federal suffrage amendment and instead insisted on a platform in 1916 which recommended granting women the vote state by state. Not until January 1918, after the White House picketing by the Woman's Party and the recognition of the NAWSA women's war work, did Wilson support the federal amendment and urge Congress to approve it.³

Although the Texas Democrats usually presented a united front in support of the national Democratic Party, at home they often divided into many factions. In the early twentieth century, the state party split on the issue of progressive reforms, especially prohibition and woman suffrage. The conservative wets, led by former United States Senator Joseph Bailey and Governor James Ferguson, controlled the state party machinery from 1914 until 1918, and consistently opposed woman suffrage. Not only did both men successfully keep a woman suffrage plank out of the state party platforms, they also delivered a minority report against suffrage at the 1916 national Democratic convention. The state party organization did not endorse woman suffrage

until 1918, after the impeachment of Ferguson and the ascendancy of the progressive wing of the party.⁴

Extending the franchise was a departure in tactics for the Texas Democrats. The only other time they added a group of voters to the rolls was in 1895, when they passed a constitutional amendment to allow alien males to vote if they filed an application for citizenship at least six months before voting. More commonly they restricted the electorate, essentially to eliminate blacks from the political process, but also to defuse the political power of rival parties, such as the Populists and Socialists. In 1902 they amended the state constitution to establish payment of a poll tax as a requirement for voting. Two years later the State Democratic Executive Committee affirmed the already prevalent practice of allowing only white men to vote in their primaries. Even reform-minded Democrats supported these restrictions, claiming that they helped end the manipulation of the uneducated voter by the brewers and political bosses. Before these two legal measures effectively curtailed black political strength in Texas, force and intimidation had accomplished the same objectives.⁵

Because these measures worked so well to control blacks, as well as to preserve Democratic hegemony, party leaders feared any measure which might bring their voting restrictions under the scrutiny of the federal government.

When women began talking of a federal amendment to guarantee them the vote, Democratic leaders, not only in Texas, but in all the southern states, rallied behind the cry of "states' rights" in order to keep voting requirements in their own hands. Their carefully constructed white supremacist society depended on keeping the black disfranchised.⁶

Suffragists realized that "the bugaboo in all southern states [was] the colored vote," and eventually they split over the best method of dealing with the issue. NAWSA leaders attempted to appease the "states' righters" by delaying the call for a federal woman suffrage amendment. Instead, they organized state associations to work for the vote on a state-by-state basis. By 1913, every southern state had at least one state suffrage organization, controlled by southern women who understood the politicians' fears about the race issue.⁷

Some southern suffragists who themselves feared black enfranchisement, such as Kate Gordon of Louisiana and Belle Kearney of Mississippi, appealed to the racist sentiments of their political leaders by demonstrating that woman suffrage would strengthen white supremacy, not weaken it. They developed statistics which showed that, if their states opened the vote to women, more white women would be eligible to vote than the number of black men and women combined. Besides, said Gordon, the southern states could keep the

black women away from the polls by using the same tactics they were using to exclude black men.⁸

NAWSA leaders were in a quandary. They objected to the racist ideas of Gordon and Kearney, yet they realized that these women merely reflected the southern politician's prejudices. Since a federal amendment stood no chance of ratification without the assenting votes of several southern legislatures, NAWSA could not afford to alienate them. NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt, a political realist, chose the only expedient action open to her--she avoided the race issue in NAWSA pronouncements and downplayed the role of black suffragists in order to gain southern support for suffrage. Many northern suffragists accepted this strategy, for politicians in their region clamored for voting restrictions to keep the "ignorant immigrant vote" from being exploited by the political machines.⁹

Texas suffrage leaders, especially Annette Finnigan and Minnie Fisher Cunningham, tried to keep the race issue out of their state's campaign. When Kate Gordon appeared at their state convention in 1915, urging the Texas Equal Suffrage Association to affiliate with a southern suffragist coalition, the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference, Finnigan and Cunningham objected to linking the state association to the invalid constitutions of many Southern states and to the disfranchisement of blacks. Their opinions did not dissuade the Texas delegates, however, for

after a heated discussion, they voted to affiliate with Gordon's group.¹⁰

When NAWSA moved away from supporting individual state suffrage efforts and began to encourage a federal amendment, Gordon and some of her supporters broke away from the national organization and worked to defeat ratification of the amendment in Louisiana. By this time, however, the Texas group, firmly under the control of Cunningham, had repudiated the strong racist sentiments espoused by Gordon. They refused to exploit the race question to win support, and used statistical arguments concerning the number of white and black votes only when their opponents introduced the issue as a scare tactic.¹¹

Although racist fears were the prevailing undercurrent in southern politics, they did not constitute the main argument against woman suffrage in Texas. More prevalent was the fear that giving women some measure of political equality would end male hegemony. Texas was very much a part of the southern patriarchal tradition that placed women in the childlike position of being cared for by the menfolk in the family and the community. Time and again, opponents to woman suffrage expressed their concern that to tamper with the current arrangement would destroy the "natural" roles of the sexes.

Suffrage opponents often relied on the Bible to support their position. W. T. Bagby, of Hallettsville, leader of the

opposition in the Texas House, argued that the Bible clearly stated that women must be subject to their husbands.

Suffrage for women contradicted the laws of God and nature, he maintained. Although supporters of suffrage rebutted the argument with scriptural verse which showed women were equal to men, the Bible was used most often to justify the status quo.¹²

Anti-suffragists in the state legislature rarely disguised their fears of possible changes in the role of men and women. If women voted, "who would be the head of the family? How would property be divided?" asked one House member.¹³ Another opponent concluded that if women engaged in politics, "all men could do would be to go home and learn to sew and wash dishes." He recommended that men "revert to Stone Age methods--take a big stick and run his mate home where she belongs. Then he will again go forth and provide and bestow on her his love."¹⁴ One legislator masked his fears in humor by jokingly proposing that should a primary suffrage bill pass the House, each man should be given a dress and bonnet to wear.¹⁵

A favorite strategy of anti-suffragists was to brand suffrage activists as deviates from their rightful female role. One Texas congressman airily dismissed the "whole feminine movement" as "a simple expression of sex resentment." He remarked that the suffrage question "makes women less attractive to men and counteracts the whole

purpose of society--marriage."¹⁶ A legislator told suffrage lobbyist Jane McCallum that she "ought to be home with her children or darning socks," instead of wasting time in the halls of the capitol.¹⁷

To meet these challenges, suffragists decided to take the antis' arguments and turn them to their own use. To those who viewed women primarily as wives and mothers, they sweetly asked, "Wasn't government just a larger household that needed tending to? And," they added, "since woman's primary interest was the home and family, wasn't she best suited to vote in those interests?"¹⁸ To those who believed that women should leave political matters to their husbands, the suffragists reminded them that not all women were fortunate enough to have protective, loving husbands. Many were widowed, abandoned, or single, and needed the vote to exercise some control over their lives. Such arguments marked a shift in strategy, as noted by historian Aileen Kraditor:

The new era in suffrage activism saw a change from the emphasis by suffragist on the ways in which women were the same as men and therefore had the right to vote, to a stress on the ways in which they differed from men, and therefore had the duty to contribute their special skills and experience to government.

These alterations occurred, not because the younger suffrage leaders viewed women any differently than their earlier counterparts did, but because the eminent success of their

movement required fashioning various arguments to appeal to different audiences.

As the suffrage movement attracted more adherents, its opponents became more organized and more powerful. The opposition centered around anti-suffrage organizations invariably led by the wives of well-to-do businessmen and politicians. Legislative opponents to suffrage gleefully pointed to these women's organizations as evidence that women really did not want the vote. The largest and most effective group was the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, established in New York in 1911. A Texas branch was formed in 1915, led by the wife of political boss James B. Wells. Although the group did little local organizing, the state association printed and distributed large amounts of anti-suffrage literature, which contended that giving women the vote would increase socialism and "establish negro rule." They maintained that voting would defeminize wives and mothers, since they "would be forced to spend their time studying sordid political issues," and would abandon their household duties to hear murder and vice cases in the courts.²⁰

While undoubtedly some people supported the anti-suffrage associations because of their own individual prejudices, the greatest support of these organizations came from three groups who habitually opposed reforms: big business interests, who carefully concealed their

participation in the anti-suffrage activities; the liquor industry; and political bosses, who openly harangued against suffrage. Corporate interests, such as railroads, oil companies, textile mills, meat packing companies, and banks, opposed woman suffrage, fearing that women's votes would bring success to the Progressive demands for a graduated income tax, anti-trust legislation, better working conditions in factories, shorter working hours, a minimum wage, and a wider democratization of the political process. Certainly, in Texas, women had shown that, even without the vote, they had the power to influence the passage of reform bills in the state legislature. One group which attempted to ameliorate this influence was the Texas Businessmen's Association, which often anonymously sent anti-suffrage articles to newspapers for publication.²¹

More overt in their support of the anti-suffrage activities were the liquor interests. The link between prohibition and women's groups was obvious to them; therefore, woman suffrage was anathema to their economic well-being. To defeat woman suffrage, as well as state-wide prohibition, the local brewers and liquor dealers depended on the votes of the German immigrants in the hill country around Austin, the Mexicans in South Texas, and the blacks, who could still vote in general elections and on constitutional amendments, and they spent large sums of money to woo these voters both legally and illegally.²²

The liquor interests had their friends among the politicians in the state, and these elected officials loudly proclaimed their opposition to woman suffrage. The most vociferous were James E. Ferguson, elected governor in both 1914 and 1916, former Senator Joseph W. Bailey, who, suspected of bribery, resigned from the Senate in 1913, and the political boss of South Texas, James B. Wells, whose wife headed the Texas Anti-Suffrage Association. All three were anti-prohibitionists, had ties to big business, and suspected that their political power would suffer if women could vote. However, their opposition to suffrage stemmed not so much from political expediency as from a personal conviction that women had no right to leave their domestic sphere, much less expect voting privileges. All three consistently delivered bitter, disparaging diatribes against woman suffrage. Bailey said that the only things women were fit to vote for were their own club officers. Ferguson's daughter described her father as "a bit old-fashioned," since he believed that "woman's place is in the home," an irony since he would later have his wife Miriam run for governor as his surrogate.²³

Of the three major political opponents, Ferguson suffered the most at the hands of the Texas suffragists, for they participated with great gusto in the campaign to impeach him. Ferguson's troubles began when he tried to purge the University of Texas of six faculty members whom he

deemed his political enemies. These included the "clique" that had snubbed his family when they moved to Austin and those who had challenged his perceived prerogative to control the university's internal policies. Ferguson, riding the crest of political victory, overestimated his chance for success when tangling with the powerful university. Both the lofty issue of academic freedom and the base issue of political revenge brought together a large group of Ferguson opponents. When Ferguson continued to press for the firing of the six professors and finally resorted to vetoing the university's budget appropriations, his opponents organized a call for his impeachment, based on Ferguson's alleged financial misdeeds.²⁴

In the spring and summer of 1917, the leaders of the suffrage movement helped organize the opposition to Ferguson, using the local associations as a network for coordinating activities. Jane McCallum and Minnie Fisher Cunningham involved the Texas Equal Suffrage Association for two reasons: (1) Ferguson was an avowed enemy of woman suffrage and (2) many suffrage supporters had ties to the university. One of the professors marked by Ferguson for removal, A. Caswell Ellis, was a dedicated worker in the suffrage movement, formulating many of the ideological arguments and writing many of the leaflets distributed by the organization. Suffrage leader Eleanor Brackenridge's brother George had earlier served as a regent for the

university and offered to underwrite the university's budget when Ferguson vetoed its appropriation.²⁵

The suffrage groups mobilized support for Ferguson's impeachment by flooding the state with leaflets, writing letters to countless newspaper editors, organizing anti-Ferguson rallies, and marching in anti-Ferguson demonstrations. When the Texas Senate voted to impeach Ferguson and forbade him to ever hold public office again, the suffrage leaders had two reasons for rejoicing--one of their staunchest political opponents had been discredited, and the progressive faction of the Democratic Party was impressed by the power and effectiveness of the suffrage organization. Especially noted was Cunningham's leadership. "Her genius for organization, her unsurpassed knowledge of public affairs and public men of Texas and her sound judgment on all questions of policy were of untold value in the campaign," wrote one prominent Democrat.²⁶

Politicians who earlier had wavered on the issue of woman suffrage began to reconsider their position. Perhaps these women could mobilize enough opposition to their re-election to cause their defeat. They certainly took enough notes from the House and Senate galleries when the suffrage bills came up for a vote to know who their opponents were. The success of the Ferguson impeachment campaign signaled that the suffrage activists were a formidable group indeed. As more politicians perceived the

benefits of supporting woman suffrage, either to save their political careers or to enhance the issues they supported, the stage was set for a suffrage victory.²⁷

The first victory came in the spring of 1918, when the Texas Legislature granted women the right to vote in primary elections and all nominating conventions. This success was a tribute to the persistence of the suffragists. After Ferguson's ouster in 1917, Lieutenant Governor William P. Hobby, a politician who was not yet sure on which side of the party's faction fence he wished to place himself, moved to the governor's seat. With Ferguson's power dissipated, the reform-minded wing of the Democratic Party marshaled its forces to gain control of the party. Hobby, who owed several political debts to the anti-prohibitionist power brokers, waffled on the issues of prohibition and woman suffrage. Supporters of both questions tried to win Hobby's endorsement, but he stalled, keeping his foot in both the pro and anti camps to win votes in the primary election scheduled for the summer of 1918. Ultimately, Hobby joined the reform forces for two reasons: the federal government demanded a "moral" cleanup of areas around the many military training camps in the state, and Ferguson announced that he would run against Hobby in the gubernatorial primary.²⁸

While the prohibitionists and progressives were alternately coaxing and threatening Hobby, the suffrage activists quietly continued to build support for their

cause, although their major energies were directed toward war work. Carrie Chapman Catt had rightfully predicted that if the suffrage organizations backed the war effort with hard work, President Wilson would find it difficult to deny such patriotic workers the vote, especially since the Great War was ostensibly being fought to bring self-determination to the world. The Texas suffragists heeded the NAWSA directive and worked to the point of exhaustion in two war efforts: selling war bonds and establishing an anti-vice committee, later called the Texas Social Hygiene Association, which campaigned for the elimination of alcohol sales, pool halls, and prostitution around military bases. The elimination of prostitution seemed a necessary step in controlling the massive venereal disease epidemic that affected over a quarter of a million American military men during the war and, consequently, many women who were infected by their soldier husbands.²⁹

Although the Texas suffragist chose to soft-pedal their efforts to win the vote and instead emphasized their war efforts, they did not abandon their primary goal. As one suffrage leader wrote, "[we] ought to carry out suffrage work along with war work--men always push their political aspirations with every step they make."³⁰ Fueling the movement was the news that the British had granted suffrage to women in 1917. NAWSA decided to make the federal suffrage amendment its main thrust, and President Wilson

offered his support of this move in January 1918. The amendment was submitted to Congress that same month, and Texas suffragists bombarded their congressmen and senators with requests for support.³¹

When the measure was considered in the House, the anti-suffragists invited Joseph Bailey, long the nemesis of the Texas suffrage movement, to speak against the amendment. In a scathing attack on the suffrage leaders and a seemingly endless catalog of the evils of woman suffrage, Bailey railed against the vote long enough to fill twenty-five pages of the stenographer's report of the session. When Carrie Chapman Catt rose to rebut Bailey's arguments, he walked out in the middle of her speech. By this time, however, Bailey's reputation as a rigid demagogue blunted the impact of his exhortation. The amendment passed the House a few days later, supported by six of the eighteen Texas congressmen.³²

The biggest stumbling block in the Texas congressional delegation was Senator Charles A. Culberson, an old-line conservative who was battling alcoholism and broken health, as well as progressive reforms. Professor Caswell Ellis, the suffrage supporter from the University of Texas, took on winning Culberson's vote as his personal project. Ellis directed a campaign to convince Culberson that the South and womanhood would still prevail even if women could vote. The states' rights objection was invalidated by the war, Ellis

wrote Culberson. "The United States pledged its wealth, its word, its honor and its life to fight for democracy at home and abroad . . . at that moment equal suffrage became a national issue, not a state one," he continued.³³ Maud W. Park, the chief NAWSA lobbyist for the amendment in Congress, praised Ellis's efforts.

My experience in Washington leads me to believe that at least seventy-five percent of the congressional brain is inhibited by some personal factor from logical consideration of our question. For that reason I am delighted that you are planning the editorial, letter, and telegram campaign in order to convince ^{him} [Culberson] of the popularity of the issue.

The vote in the Senate did not come until early in the fall of 1918. The suffragists' arguments swayed Culberson, who with progressive Morris Shepherd, the other Texas senator, supported the amendment. The measure failed, however, falling two votes short of the necessary two-thirds approval. Most of the opposition clustered in the Northeast, along the East Coast, and in the South.³⁵

Although most of the suffrage work in 1918 centered around the federal amendment, the Texas suffragists voted at their state convention to press Governor Hobby for a primary suffrage bill. To be granted the vote in those decisive primaries required only a simple legislative act, not a constitutional amendment, and the suffragists thought that enough sentiment existed in the state legislature to pass this measure without draining either the suffrage workers'

energies or treasuries. They began writing Hobby, asking him to state his position on suffrage and requesting his support for the primary suffrage measure. Hobby's replies were just ambiguous enough to encourage some suffrage leaders and discourage others, in much the same way that prohibitionists wondered just what Hobby's stand on that issue was. Both suffragists and prohibitionists pressed Hobby to call a special session of the legislature to debate these issues. Hobby stalled until the federal government forced him to call the legislature together to deal with the "immoral" conditions around each military camp in the state.³⁶

The legislators of the special session, which met from 26 February until 27 March 1918, accomplished many tasks. As requested, they stripped the areas around the military bases of the bars, brothels, and pool halls. They ratified the national prohibition amendment and passed a constitutional amendment for statewide prohibition until the federal amendment took effect. Additionally, in the spirit of intense sectionalism burnished with patriotic zeal, they changed the election laws. In a measure aimed at the large German population in central Texas, aliens were required to have citizenship papers before they could vote in the primaries. And, in a final attempt to exclude blacks and other "undesirables" from the election process, they

instituted a literacy test as a requirement for voting in the primaries.³⁷

Through all this, Hobby delayed introducing the the primary suffrage bill for women, even though the majority of legislators were ready to pass the measure. Several friends of the bill frantically requested petitions from their constituents to indicate public support of woman suffrage. Finally, when he received petitions from the majority of both legislative houses, Hobby relented. The measure was carried through the Texas House by Charles B. Metcalf, a progressive independent from San Angelo and a special friend of Jane McCallum's. "Uncle Charlie" promised McCallum to lead the fight for the bill, but demanded that she "keep the masculine women and old maids off my back." The bill passed the House on 16 March by a margin of 84 to 34. Five days later it passed the Senate 17 to 4, and Hobby signed the measure on 26 March.³⁸

The anti-suffragists in the state continued their obstructionist activities. Although their attempts to weaken the primary suffrage bill were defeated in the special session, they attacked the legality of the new law because it included a one-time poll tax exclusion for women, allowing them to vote in the July 1918 primary. Suffrage opponents sought injunctions against women voting, and although they were unsuccessful, they nevertheless caused the suffragists to establish a Legal Defense Committee of

outstanding attorneys should the antis find a friendly judge.³⁹

Although exempt from the poll tax, the new women voters still had to register, and they had only seventeen days in which to do it. The local suffrage associations moved into high gear, instructing women on where and how to register, and holding voting schools. A single journal entry from Jane McCallum's diary marked her historic action, "Attained my majority at last, thank you, registered to vote!"⁴⁰ A lengthier entry reflected the strenuous work still ahead for the suffragists:

I've lost 18 pounds . . . under my right arm developed a rising the size of half a hen egg. I went on speaking and working but Thursday . . . it nearly drove me wild, but I had to go on . . . I wrote and wrote and phoned and phoned on this committee work until 8 o'clock when I telephoned the physician next door to come lance it as it must be ready. He had no cocaine and hesitated but I held to the bed, gritted by teeth and had it done.

For the first time, Texas women participated in the political process, not only as campaigners, but also as voters. Although Hobby's reluctance on the primary suffrage measure did little to endear him to the suffragists, they supported his candidacy against their arch-enemy Ferguson in the 1918 gubernatorial primary. All the candidates endorsed by the suffrage leaders won election. Hobby trounced Ferguson by a two-to-one margin, and Annie Webb Blanton,

candidate for State Superintendent of Education, became the first woman elected to statewide office in Texas.⁴²

Jubilation over suffrage progress was short-lived, however, since the federal amendment failed in the United States Senate in October. NAWSA still urged its state associations to forego attempts to get the vote individually, advising that energy and funds were better spent in defeating the antis in the November elections and in lobbying Congress. Nevertheless, four states submitted the matter for a vote in November. Suffrage became a reality in South Dakota, after four previously unsuccessful referenda; in Michigan; and in Oklahoma, although the victory cost NAWSA over \$20,000. In Louisiana, the suffrage question lost by only a few thousand votes, indicating that even the "solid South" might relent on the issue.⁴³

In January 1918, Texas suffragists were divided on what course to pursue in their own state--support only the federal amendment or push for full state suffrage as well. Cunningham was in Washington to marshal support for the amendment again, still alive in the Senate, due to strategical maneuvering by pro-suffrage supporters. She and her lieutenant Jane McCallum advocated channeling the state suffrage organization's activities toward lobbying the lame duck Democratic Congress. After all, they argued, this would be the final chance for the Democratic Party to claim credit for woman suffrage, since the November elections

decreed a Republican majority when the new Congress met in March. McCallum and her group persuaded the Texas Legislature to pass a resolution urging the federal Senate to pass the amendment.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, attorney Hortense Ward led a group of suffragists who wanted to "strike while the iron was hot" for a state suffrage amendment. Now that the war was over, they reasoned, a public grateful for the supportive war work performed by women was ready to grant full suffrage. Delaying the measure might inhibit the momentum generated by an Allied victory in the "war for democracy." Although NAWSA maintained it could pledge no support to such a state effort, Ward and her group believed that a statewide campaign would succeed. To that end, they persuaded Governor Hobby to submit an amendment to the state legislature in mid-January, which quickly passed both houses unanimously. It would be submitted to Texas voters for ratification on 24 May.⁴⁵

All conflict over strategy dissolved on 10 February, when the federal amendment failed once more in the United States Senate. Although suffragists believed that the amendment would pass the next session of Congress, Cunningham worried that a defeat of the state amendment would hurt the suffrage movement in two ways: it would further delay full suffrage, and it would provide the antis with ammunition to use against the state's eventual

ratification of the federal amendment. She believed, therefore, that a strenuous ratification campaign was necessary, and she returned from Washington to direct it.⁴⁶

Although events forced her to support a strong ratification effort, Cunningham was pessimistic about the outcome. As she wrote a friend, "the joker [Hobby] in the submission of the state suffrage amendment loaded it down with the disfranchisement of the 'first paper' voters."⁴⁷ Indeed, the governor, in the name of patriotism, had tied suffrage to citizenship for the first time in Texas. The suffrage amendment which he submitted read that the vote should extend to

every person, male or female, subject to no constitutional disqualifications, who shall have attained the age of 21 years and who shall be a citizen of the United States and who shall reside in the state of Texas one year next preceding an election.⁴⁸

While Hobby claimed to have made citizenship a qualification for voting "to reap the full benefits of our country's victory, and to preserve Texas for Americans who are true and loyal,"⁴⁹ suffragists questioned his sincerity about their right to vote, since the people who would be disfranchised by the amendment could vote against it, while those to be enfranchised could not vote for it.

Nevertheless, the suffrage associations campaigned vigorously, hoping that those voters turning out to ratify

the state prohibition amendment, also scheduled for a 24 May vote, would support the suffrage amendment as well. They also persuaded Hobby to call a special legislative session to enfranchise the returning soldiers who had not yet been discharged. NAWSA gave what financial support it could, about \$5,000, and sent Anna Howard Shaw to the state to make several speeches.⁵⁰

With the help of ten professional organizers, the suffrage associations organized units in 228 of the state's counties. They persuaded merchants to donate their regular advertising space to a message supporting suffrage. They posted placards on streetcars, flashed their message on movie screens, received support from every labor union in the state, and wrote and published a suffrage supplement, called the Texas Democrat, to the state weeklies. In an attempt to reach the rural voter, they even persuaded one school superintendent to distribute a pro-suffrage letter to the parents of his students. President Wilson, when informed of the Texas ratification campaign, cabled Cunningham from Paris that he entertained "confident hope that the men of Texas will by a very great majority render gallant justice to the women of the state."⁵¹

It was all for naught. The woman suffrage amendment lost by more than 25,000 votes out of a total of 308,666 cast in the referendum election. The suffrage leaders, disgusted by the outcome, spent long hours analyzing the

measure's defeat. Particularly puzzling to them was the discrepancy between their loss and the successes of the statewide prohibition amendment. Suffrage and prohibition were the two main items on the 24 May ballot, yet 30,000 more people voted on the suffrage issue than on the prohibition question. About 36,000 more votes were cast against the suffrage amendment than were cast against the prohibition amendment, although the difference in the support vote for each amendment was only about 7,000 votes. Although no one claimed that every prohibition supporter also supported suffrage or that all suffrage opponents automatically counted themselves anti-prohibitionists as well, suffragists had reason to believe that the two votes should align more closely than they did.⁵²

The most suspicious aspect of the vote to Cunningham and her advisers was the late reporting of the anti votes. For several days, the vote canvass indicated that the suffrage amendment would pass. Then, late returns turned the vote around. Carrie Chapman Catt suggested to Cunningham that Ferguson, who jubilantly claimed to be "back in the saddle now," was behind the defeat by ordering false election reports when it looked like the amendment would win. Her allegations could never be proved, however.⁵³

Other factors played a role in the amendment's rejection. Large numbers of Germans and Mexicans voted against the measure, not necessarily to oppose woman

suffrage, but to defeat the citizenship clause in the amendment, which would disfranchise many of them. Suffrage leaders noted, however, that a large part of the Mexican vote was controlled by James Wells, whose wife headed the Anti-Woman Suffrage Association in Texas. Another factor which Cunningham claimed had a deleterious effect on the amendment's outcome was a mixup in the printing of the ballots for twenty-nine counties. On these ballots the suffrage amendment appeared in a different position than on the official ballot used in the rest of the state, undermining the voter education efforts of the suffragists in those counties. Because of the ballot discrepancies, Cunningham threatened to file an injunction to protest the results of the election, but other events overtook the importance of this action.⁵⁴

When the inner circle of suffrage leaders compiled a list of the factors contributing to suffrage defeat, heading that list was voter apathy. Supporters, certain of the measure's success, had stayed home on election day. Many suffrage workers, tired from the war bond campaigns, had not recovered enough energy to plunge into another rigorous, demanding effort. Another negative factor was the absence of 200,000 soldiers, not yet returned home, many of whom the suffragists had expected would support their cause.⁵⁵

Suffrage leaders had little time to sit and reflect on their loss, however, for Congress had put the federal

suffrage amendment back on the agenda. Eleven days after the state amendment was defeated in Texas, the federal amendment was passed by both houses of Congress. Senator Charles Culberson again voted for the measure, despite personal lobbying by anti-leaders Mrs. James Wells, who tried to convince Culberson that the voters' rejection of the state suffrage amendment was a mandate for the Texas congressional delegation to vote against the federal amendment. The state suffrage associations around the country now turned their attentions to their state legislatures, for a total of thirty-six states had to ratify the amendment before woman suffrage would become part of the federal Constitution. Since, in many states, including Texas, the legislature met biennially, ratification either had to wait for the next session two years hence, or a special session had to be called.⁵⁶

Both suffrage supporters and opponents tried to influence Governor Hobby to call a special session to consider the suffrage question. The antis wanted the agenda to include repeal of the primary suffrage bill, claiming that the defeat of the state suffrage amendment mandated such action. The suffragists, on the other hand, wanted the session to include ratification of the federal suffrage amendment. To the surprise of both groups, Hobby did call a special session, but he ignored the suffrage issue completely. Appalled by what they considered a betrayal by

the governor, the suffragists searched for a way to circumvent the planned agenda. Professor Ellis researched the question and concluded that constitutionally, the matter was between Congress and the Legislature and did not concern the governor at all. Consequently, he advised the suffrage leaders to take their issue directly to the House and Senate.⁵⁹

As soon as the session opened, supporters in the House introduced a resolution for ratification. By unanimous consent, the committee withdrew to consider the issue immediately and brought back a favorable report in only a few minutes. A series of unanimous consents put it through to the Speaker for his signature on 24 June. The matter then went to the Senate, where the antis had more influence.⁵⁸

Suffrage opponents, led by ex-Governor Ferguson and ex-Congressman R. L. Henry, rallied in Austin the day before the suffrage question went to the Senate for consideration. The next day, Charlotte Rowe, an officer of the National Anti-Woman Suffrage Association, addressed the Senate, cautioning against the dangers of feminism and its link to bolshevism and socialism. Henry also spoke, advising the senators to follow the dictates of the recent state referendum on suffrage, claiming it proved that women did not want the vote. Opponents also raised the specter of

states' rights and black votes in opposing the federal amendment.⁵⁹

Debate raged for several days, but the suffrage supporters had a small edge on the antis, and the measure was favorably reported out of committee. When a poll of the Senate revealed that the measure would pass, the opposing Senators, led by J. C. McNealus of Dallas, planned to break the Senate's quorum and prevent the measure's passage. At first they proposed that all senators resign and stand for re-election on the suffrage issue. When that proposal died, they decided on what seemed to them a foolproof method of breaking the necessary quorum--they would simply disappear from Austin on the night train. The suffragists learned of this and sent Ellis and a few other friends to the railroad station, where they boarded the Pullman and persuaded the retreating senators to remain in the capital. The next day, 28 June, the Senate took a voice vote and ratified the amendment. Texas thus became the ninth state to do so, and the first one in the South.⁶⁰

The fight for the vote was by no means over, however. The measure still needed ratification in twenty-seven more states before it became the law of the land. One of the hardest tasks the suffragists faced was convincing the governors of the western states which had already granted full suffrage to women that it was still necessary for them to call special legislative sessions to ratify the federal

amendment. Suffrage associations in these states had disbanded long ago, and the necessary organization to lobby the politicians was non-existent. Despite the obstacles, however, twenty-two states ratified the amendment by the end of the year.⁶¹

The antis campaigned diligently in the thirteen states they targeted as amenable to defeating the amendment, predominantly in the South and Northeast. After all, it was of no consequence if the suffrage amendment passed in thirty-five states. The thirty-sixth ratification was the one that mattered. Antis adopted delaying tactics, in hopes that the next elections would bring more suffrage opponents into the state legislatures. They called for referenda to force the suffrage amendment to pass a vote of the people and not simply the state legislatures. Since most of the anti-suffragists were trying to defeat the prohibition amendment as well, they were doubly interested in strategies to obstruct the ratification process. Their hopes diminished, however, when in June 1920, the United States Supreme Court ruled that state referenda on federal amendments was unconstitutional.⁶²

The summer of 1920 saw the final battle for ratification centered in the five states which had not yet taken action on the amendment: Vermont, Connecticut, North Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. Carrie Chapman Catt's earlier prediction that the fate of the amendment depended

on swinging several southern states proved true, for polls of the various legislatures revealed that the best hope lay with Tennessee. After a bitter campaign, the Tennessee legislature approved the amendment on 24 August 1920. Two days later, the ratification reached Washington by registered mail. The Secretary of State signed the proclamation early on the morning of 26 August, and on that day, 26 million American women became voting partners with the men of the nation.⁶³

NOTES

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4. Lewis L. Gould, Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973) presents a comprehensive history of the Democratic Party in Texas during this period. See especially pp. 171-72; Carrie Chapman Catt, "Ferguson Is Foe of Woman's Suffrage," broadside, n.d., found in Enoch Dunlop Collection, Dallas Historical Society.

5. Barr, Reconstruction to Reform, pp. 201, 203, 205.

6. An incisive discussion of the "Southern Question" is found in Aileen S. Krador, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 163-218.

7. Nettie R. Shuler to Anna Pennybacker, 29 September 1919, Pennybacker Collection, University of Texas Archives; Kenneth R. Johnson, "Kate Gordon and the Woman-Suffrage Movement in the South," Journal of Southern History 38 (August 1972):365-92.

8. Johnson, "Kate Gordon," pp. 365-92.

9. Andrew Sinclair, The Better Half: The Emancipation of American Women (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 298-99, 304, 334; Kraditor, Ideas, p. 199.
10. Dallas Morning News, 24 February 1915.
13. Dallas Times Herald, 6 February 1917.
14. Fort Worth Record, 13 April 1919.
15. Dallas Morning News, 8 March 1918.
16. Representative Stanley Bowdle, speech delivered in U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D. C., 12 January 1915, copy in McCallum Collection, Austin Public Library.
17. Jane Y. McCallum, "An Old Timer Returns," typed manuscript, n.d., McCallum Collection.
18. Jane Y. McCallum, "Woman Suffrage in Texas," typed manuscript, n.d., p. 10, McCallum Collection.
19. Kraditor, Ideas, p. 66.
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21. See Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 294-305.
22. Gould, Progressives, p. 50.
23. Ouida Ferguson Nalle, The Fergusons of Texas (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Co., 1946), p. 104; Sam Hanna Acheson, Joe Bailey: The Last Democrat (New York: MacMillan Co., 1932); Elizabeth C. Stanton and others, eds. History of Woman Suffrage 5 (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1922):586.
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26. Dudley K. Woodward to Jane McCallum, 29 January [1920], McCallum Collection.

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30. Edna Annette Beveridge to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 27 April 1918, Cunningham Collection.
31. McCallum, "Woman Suffrage," p. 15.
32. Stanton and others, History of Woman Suffrage, 5:586-93; Houston Post, 7 January 1918; Dallas Morning News, 29 May 1919.
33. A. Caswell Ellis to Charles A. Culberson, 31 January 1918, Ellis Collection, University of Texas Archives.
34. Maud W. Park to A. Caswell Ellis, 9 February 1918, Ellis Collection.
35. Dallas Morning News, 2 October 1918.
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40. Diary of Jane Y. McCallum, 29 June 1918, McCallum Collection.
41. Ibid., 20 July 1918.
42. Hortense Ward, "To the Women of Texas," broadside, 15 May 1918, McCallum Collection; Gould, Progressives, p. 245.

43. Jane Y. McCallum to members of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, 23 January 1919, Pennybacker Collection; Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 311.
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47. Minnie Fisher Cunningham, "Ellis--Suffrage," typed manuscript, n.d., p. 10, Ellis Collection.
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49. Dallas Morning News, 17 January 1919.
50. Annie Webb Blanton to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 24 April 1919, Cunningham Collection; San Antonio Express, 3 March 1919; Edna Annette Beveridge to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 18 April 1919, Cunningham Collection.
51. Woodrow Wilson to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, cable [1919], McCallum Collection; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to local suffrage associations, 10 March 1919, McCallum Collection; A. Caswell Ellis, handwritten suffrage plan, 29 April 1919, Ellis Collection; Superintendent J. A. Fulles to school principals, 17 May 1919, McCallum Collection.
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53. Carrie Chapman Catt to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, 2 June 1919, Cunningham Collection.
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55. Marie B. Ames to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, n.d., Cunningham Collection; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Carrie Chapman Catt, 5 June 1919, Cunningham Collection.
56. Dallas Morning News, 4 June 1919; Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 314-15.

57. Cunningham, "Ellis--Suffrage," p. 12, Ellis Collection.

58. House Journal, 2d Called sess., 1919, p. 102.

59. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to members of the state suffrage associations, 19 June 1919, McCallum Collection; Dallas Morning News, 24 June 1919, 25 June 1919.

60. Dallas Morning News, 28 June 1919, 29 June 1919; Cunningham, "Ellis--Suffrage," p. 13, Ellis Collection.

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CHAPTER IV

AFTERMATH OF SUFFRAGE

With the frenzy of the voting campaign behind them, suffrage workers turned their attention to becoming full participants in the political process. For ten years, the momentum generated by both the suffrage campaign and the spirit of reform spurred women to continue their redefinition of woman's place in society. They sought and won political office, formulated demands for legislation of concern to them and lobbied for its passage, and proposed an Equal Rights Amendment to the federal constitution.

During the Depression and war years of the 1930's and 1940's, these activities continued on a smaller scale and hardly constituted an organized movement. But in Texas during the decade of the more tranquil anti-feminist 1950's, the discontent of "non-traditional" women, the ones who worked outside the home by choice or necessity, began to coalesce into a renewed effort to gain more rights for women, particularly married women. The thwarting of these efforts and the disregard of the validity of equal rights for women on the part of the state legislators laid the foundation in Texas for a second women's rights movement.

Initially, when the right to vote became a reality, Texas suffragists, like their counterparts around the nation, optimistically believed that the votes of women would make a decided impact on their society. While historians are quick to point out that no real "woman's voting bloc" resulted from granting women the suffrage, they do not deny that the full political participation of women had an impact on state and national politics, although its strength varied over the next half century. In 1919, each local branch of the National American Woman Suffrage Association became a part of the League of Women Voters, dedicated to educating women on how to vote and informing its members about issues confronting the state legislature. In the early 1920's, the political activism of the Texas suffrage workers found expression in the traditional activities of party politics and special interest lobbying.¹

The first political contest in which the ex-suffragists joined was against their old nemesis, former United States Senator Joseph Bailey, who once again used a campaign of racism and reaction, this time in an attempt to gain control of the statehouse. Capitalizing on the uneasiness generated in the state by labor unrest in Galveston during the summer of 1920 and a race riot in Longview the year before, Bailey ran for governor on a platform appealing to the backlash to these events. Coinciding with the national paranoia about

Bolshevism, Bailey continued to attack woman suffrage as a manifestation of all that was wrong with the country. Long time opponents of Bailey, Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jessie Daniel Ames, and Jane McCallum, rallied the suffrage forces behind Bailey's opponent in the Democratic primary, Pat Neff, who handily defeated him. Bailey retired to the sidelines in state politics, blaming his defeat on "the women and the preachers."²

Bailey's defeat did not signal the end to reactionary activity in the state. The most notable repressive group was the Ku Klux Klan, which enjoyed a rebirth as a culmination of the nativist and racist sentiments generated by the labor unrest, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the Great War. The Klan gained enough political power in Texas that by 1922 its candidate for the United States Senate, Earle B. Mayfield, won the runoff election in the Democratic Party against another longtime foe of woman suffrage, James Ferguson. Stunned by a choice of what they considered to be two evils, the newly-emerged League of Women Voters refused to support either candidate.³

Mayfield's election transferred the control of the Democratic Party to the Klan temporarily, but its influence was blunted in the gubernatorial election of 1924. Once again, the Klan's opponent bore the name of Ferguson, but this time it was Miriam Amanda Ferguson, the wife of the impeached former governor, running for election as her

husband's surrogate. As before, the League of Women Voters refused to support either Ferguson or the Klan candidate, Judge Felix D. Robertson, in the Democratic gubernatorial primary. One former suffrage leader broke with the group this time, however. Jessie Daniel Ames, a member of the Committee for Interracial Cooperation, strongly opposed the Klan and threw her support to the Ferguson camp. She had earlier in the year been one of the few Texas delegates to the Democratic National Convention who was not controlled by the Klan. Ames defended her stand in the gubernatorial campaign by pointing out that she always spoke against the Klan candidate and never extolled the virtues of "Ma" Ferguson.⁴

The other women's groups did not follow Ames's example, however, restrained either by their personal animosity toward the Fergusons or by the prohibition issue (Ferguson was a long-time "wet," whereas Robertson supported the "drys"). When Miriam Ferguson won the primary, the majority of the women's groups voted Republican. For the first time since Reconstruction, the Republican gubernatorial candidate garnered nearly 300,000 votes in the general election, a significant increase over the usual 11,000 to 30,000 Republican votes. Jane McCallum complained that the men voted the straight Democratic ticket, however. Since Texans were not yet ready to relinquish political power to the Republican Party, the voters gave the victory to a woman.

No one, however, was naive enough to believe that "Ma" was the real governor of Texas.⁵

Two years later, in the next gubernatorial race, the women's groups found a candidate they could wholeheartedly support, Dan Moody. Moody had earned the admiration of Ames during his days as prosecuting attorney of Williamson County, Ames's home, when he helped convict two Klansmen of attacking a black salesman. Jane McCallum also approved of Moody's progressive stance and worked for his election both in 1926 and 1928. Moody rewarded McCallum's loyalty by appointing her as Secretary of State during his second term. Such unanimity among the women was short-lived, however, as the long-simmering rivalry between Ames and McCallum flared into an open rift during Moody's governorship. Ames accused Moody of betraying his progressive coalition by supporting Al Smith for president in the 1928 election. McCallum believed that Ames was merely angered by her lack of influence over Moody, characterizing Ames as "just brainy enough and attractive enough to be dangerous."⁶

During the 1920's, the emergent women political leaders were not merely concerned with supporting various factions within the Democratic Party. They also were particularly interested in electing women to public office. Four women, all former suffragists, won seats in the state legislature during the decade. Attorney Edith Wilmans, long active in the Dallas Suffrage Association, won a term in the House in

1922. In 1926, Margie E. Neal of Carthage, a newspaper editor and publisher, became a state senator and served four terms. Long-time suffrage activist Helen Moore, a nurse from Texas City, and Laura Negley of San Antonio, won terms in the House in 1928. That same year, Minnie Fisher Cunningham, who a year before had returned to Texas from Washington, D. C., where she had directed the National League of Women Voters since 1920, ran for the United States Senate. Jane McCallum was her campaign manager, but the results proved them unsuccessful. Cunningham ran fifth in a field of six Democratic candidates.⁷

The actions of the women elected to the Texas Legislature during the 1920's confirmed the suffragists' contention that female legislators would promote a women's agenda. Although the reform measures advocated by the women activists during the decade seem little more than ordinary progressive demands, they reflect a priority of improving the condition of women, a priority usually absent in previous legislative sessions. The legislative agenda developed by women's groups included a government-sponsored health care for mothers and babies, county assistance to mothers with no means of support, child labor laws, improvement of the state girls' reformatory including better rehabilitative training, upgrading public schools, family law reform, and better workplace conditions and wages for working women.⁸

To accomplish these goals, not only was the presence of women in the legislature a boon, for they sponsored many of the bills and helped marshal them through the legislature, but the development of a well-organized lobby helped achieve success. In 1922 several women's groups formed a political coalition called the Joint Legislative Council. Dubbed the "Petticoat Lobby" by the Thirty-eighth Legislature, the participating groups included the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, the Texas League of Women Voters, the Texas Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations, the Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and the Women's Christian Temperance Association. In 1924 the Texas Graduate Nurses Association joined the group. The legislature gave the coalition a room in the capitol building, which served as their headquarters. From there the women issued press releases, met with legislators and committee chairmen, conferred with the governor, monitored support of their program in the legislature, and sent circular letters to their constituent groups informing them of the progress of their agenda. During the election campaign in 1924, the coalition collected pledges from candidates in support of their program and worked for the defeat of their opponents. By the end of the next legislative session, when the coalition concluded its activities, nearly two-thirds of their legislative goals had been incorporated into law. The bills could not have passed

without the support of male legislators, but it was the "Petticoat Lobby" and the women legislators who saw to it that the measures were on the legislative agenda.⁹

The most radical piece of legislation advocated by women's groups during this period was state funding for the Sheppard-Towner Act, the nation's first federally-funded health care program, passed by Congress in 1921. Designed to reduce the mortality rate associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy, the Sheppard-Towner Act embodied a new concept in America: the responsibility of the government to provide health care for its citizens. The legislation provided states with matching funds for local public clinics whose sole function was to furnish health care for mothers and their babies. Staffed primarily by public health nurses and female physicians, these clinics were primarily educational, instructing women on proper nutrition, hygiene, and other factors to prevent illness and disease, both in themselves and their children. Clinic patients also received physical examinations, and the clinic's staff referred them to private physicians when needed.¹⁰

Despite the fact that the Sheppard-Towner Act was developed and sponsored in the United States Senate by a Texan, Morris Sheppard, the state legislature dragged its feet in approving the necessary matching appropriation for the establishment of the clinics in the state. The opponents of the bill applied the same arguments they had

used against woman suffrage--(1) the act infringed upon states' rights, and (2) it was a Bolshevik plot to undermine the family. Women's groups sent letters and petitions to their state senators questioning their sincerity about states' rights. After all, they argued, the Senate had no qualms about accepting federal funds for highways and agriculture. Eventually the state legislature appropriated funds in 1923 and continued support in the next two legislative sessions.¹¹

Another request that the state assume more responsibility for the welfare of its citizens--that mothers with no means of support be given county assistance--was not as successful. Earlier the Texas Legislature had awarded mother's pensions to widows, but in the 1920's, women's groups proposed that any mother with children to care for and no funds with which to do it, for whatever reason--widowhood, divorce, desertion, or an incapacitated husband--be given support by some arm of the government. Edith Wilmans introduced such a bill in the Thirty-eighth Legislature, where the measure passed the House, but it never reached a vote in the Senate.¹²

A different aspect of the protection theme running through the women's legislative program of the post-suffrage period was the attempt to halt the exploitation of women and children as cheap sources of labor. Regulating child labor proved an easier task than improving the working conditions

of women. The state legislature, in 1925 and 1929, forbade the employment of children under fifteen years of age in factory, mill, workshop, laundry, or messenger service and under seventeen years in mines or quarries. Concomitantly, the law required attendance in school for at least 120 days per year for children between seven and sixteen, which guaranteed the elimination of most child labor.¹³

The question of improving the conditions of some workers went deeper than the mere protection of a particular sex. At issue was also the question of protecting all workers, male and female alike. Earlier attempts to limit the hours required of male workers were overturned by the courts as limiting the worker's right to contract for employment. The door to protective labor legislation opened, if only a few inches, in 1907 when the United States Supreme Court ruled that laws could protect women workers because "differentiated . . . from the other sex, she is properly placed in a class by herself and legislation designed for her protection may be sustained, even when like legislation is not necessary for man and could not be sustained." This decision spurred many states to pass laws limiting the number of hours women could be required to work.¹⁴

In 1915, Texas lawmakers established a female work week as a maximum of fifty-four hours, or nine hours a day, six days a week. This statute, however, contained loopholes

that exempted large numbers of women workers from even its meager protection. Laundry workers could work eleven hours a day, cotton mill employees ten hours a day, six days a week. The law excluded stenographers, waitresses, and sales clerks from any coverage at all. In the 1930's, Helen Moore introduced legislation to close these loopholes, and additionally, effect an eight-hour day, but her bills failed. Later, in the 1940's, the legislature revised the maximum-hours law, but instead of creating an eight-hour work day for women, it increased the number of occupations excluded from the nine-hour day limitation. Pickers and processors of fruits and vegetables, as well as nurses, no longer were covered. Further attempts to protect women workers by establishing a minimum wage in the state also failed, although fifteen states had passed such a law by 1923.¹⁵

The issue of protective legislation caused a rift in the women's rights movement in the early twentieth century, a schism not yet fully reconciled. On one side were the feminist reformers, working for the immediate goal of improving conditions for women--from factory workers faced with grueling hours and low pay to mothers needing assistance in supporting and rearing their children. On the other side were the radical feminists, working for equality first and welfare second. These women believed that the best course of action lay in putting "into everyone's hand

the power to look after themselves." To this end they proposed that an equal rights amendment be added to the federal Constitution, an amendment intended to eliminate discrimination based on sex.¹⁶

The group carrying the radical banner was once again the National Woman's Party, reorganized in 1921, and now dedicated to lobbying for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in Congress. The social reformers clustered in the League of Women Voters, successor to the more conservative National American Woman Suffrage Association. Both groups made valid arguments for their respective viewpoints. The Woman's Party correctly asserted that protection invariably implied inferiority. The majority opinion in Muller v. Oregon, the case which allowed protective labor laws for women, illustrated this view:

Woman has always been dependent upon man. He established his control at the outset by superior physical strength, and this control in various forms, with diminishing intensity has continued to the present . . . It is impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that she still looks to her brother and depends upon him. Even though all restrictions on political, personal, and contractual rights were taken away, and she stood, so far as statutes are concerned, upon an absolutely equal plane with him, it would still be true that she is so constituted that she will rest upon and look to him for protection.¹⁷

Feminists in the Woman's Party wanted to rid legislation of this patronizing air, and they were willing to forego privileges and protection to do so. Besides, they argued,

worthwhile protections could still be preserved under the ERA by extending them to men as well.¹⁸

To the women in the labor movement who had seen attempts to provide humane conditions for male workers struck down by the courts, this cavalier dismissal of the immediate need for protective legislation for wage-earning women provoked outrage. They could overlook the patronizing language and attitudes of male judges and legislators who were willing to provide some relief for women working long days in the factories, and for mothers who often saw their babies die in the first year of life because of inadequate health care. Proponents of protective legislation for women, however, found that their biggest obstacle was not the ERA but the courts. In 1923 the United States Supreme Court struck down the Washington, D. C. minimum-wage law, ruling that protective laws were no longer necessary, for the suffrage amendment had established equality of the sexes. From then on, the impetus for protective legislation slowed. It remained for the New Deal to establish protective labor legislation for both sexes through the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Although riddled with exceptions, the law established minimum wages and defined overtime standards for many workers in interstate commerce and opened the door for such standards in most occupations.¹⁹

Fledgling labor unions offered little assistance to wage-earning women. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) for the most part refused to admit women into affiliated unions and rebuffed any attempts by the women to organize sexually segregated locals. The clustering of women workers in occupations of little concern to organized labor exacerbated the problem. Women tried to organize their own unions, but by 1929 only one in thirty-four female workers belonged to a union, as compared to one out of every nine male workers. Half of these women were from the garment industries. The best hope for women workers lay in the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), organized in 1903 to help women form unions. Although originally fulfilling this purpose, particularly in aiding the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), the WTUL gradually became an educating and lobbying force, attempting to get better working conditions for women through legislation.²⁰

In Texas, wage-earning women depended more on protective legislation than on unions for better working conditions. Unions for either men or women had little power in the state, although, by 1920, Texas had one of the highest union memberships in the South. From 1920 to 1927, however, union membership in the Texas State Federation of Labor dropped by half--from 50,000 to 25,000, significantly because of the open-shop concept promulgated by the chambers of commerce in the state. Since women were not admitted to

the men's craft or industrial unions, they had to depend on themselves for any organizing.²¹

In the 1930's, when the labor movement regained its momentum, both locally and nationally, the organized wage-earning women in the state became more militant. In 1935, the Dallas local of the ILGWU struck thirteen of the city's garment manufacturers. Charlotte Graham, one of the leaders of the strike, went to jail several times during the confrontation. Eventually, she and others were blacklisted by their employers until federal legislation made such discriminatory action illegal, and they their jobs. Three years later, Emma Tenayuca led a strike in San Antonio by 12,000 pecan shellers, protesting against a meager salary of three dollars for a sixty-hour week and working in hot dusty sheds with poor lighting and no ventilation. These strikes alerted the public to the needs of the workers, but few employers changed their practices or the wages they paid. Women learned that the more acceptable way to try to achieve their goals was through legislation.²²

The issues facing working women in Texas took a new turn as the state experienced some of the economic pressures of the Depression-racked 1930's. As the unemployment rate rose in the state, women found that their jobs were in jeopardy, no matter what their occupation. Men and women alike urged those women who were working for "pin-money" and those who could support themselves without a job to forego

employment so that men with families would not have to compete with them for jobs. Hardest hit were married women. They were the first to be laid off, and most could not get new jobs if their husbands earned a minimum of \$100 a month. The City of Dallas, like others, considered firing all wives whose husbands were employed, but the city manager never adopted such a drastic measure. Even though many of the married women worked in occupations where few men were employed, such as teachers, retail clerks, secretaries, and telephone operators, public opinion demanded that husbands and fathers be given the first opportunity for employment during hard times. "Implicit in such a belief . . . was the assumption that women did not deserve the same treatment as men."²³

Although economic problems occupied the public's consciousness during the 1930's, two other issues concerned women in Texas during the decade: the legal rights of women, particularly married women's rights, and birth control. Advocacy of the use of contraceptives, which began in the pre-World War I years of radicalism in the United States, achieved public acceptance during the 1930's. However, the legality of disseminating either information about birth control or contraceptives themselves was a federal offense--a violation of the Comstock Law passed by Congress in 1873. This legislation prohibited the sending of "obscene" material through the mail, and specifically

defined information about birth control and the contraceptives themselves as obscene. Deliberate violation of this law occurred sporadically early in the twentieth century, but it was the opening of Margaret Sanger's first birth control clinic in Brooklyn and her subsequent arrest that marked the beginning of a sustained movement to legitimize birth control.²⁴

Sanger's activities were a direct response to two arguments for birth control--one socialist, the other feminist. Socialists advocated birth control to improve the lot of the working class, so that they could avoid producing the countless children who became the cheap labor supply for the capitalists and the "cannon fodder" for their wars. Feminists, some of them socialists, carried the issue beyond class lines and argued for birth control as a means of freeing women from sexual subjugation. Both groups considered birth control only within the context of marriage, however, and considered it a way to help women be better wives and mothers.²⁵

In the 1920's, the birth-control movement came under the domination of the professionals, particularly doctors and sociologists. The arguments for birth control began to focus on the reformist proposition of helping the poor, rather than embodying the earlier concept of changing the role and condition of women. This change in focus came about for three reasons. First, the socialists became

apathetic about birth control, for the male leadership considered it of negligible importance in their pursuit of a classless society. Second, the proponents of birth control discovered that their movement was acceptable to more people if they dressed it in the trappings of medical respectability. And finally, the fondness of some Americans for the eugenicist argument of "selective breeding" allowed for public acceptance of birth control if it meant limiting the number of "undesirables."²⁶

In the 1920's the birth control clinic thus became more of a dispenser of charity to the poor than a grass-roots movement designed to affect the lives of all women. Much of this trend was a necessity, since the clinic itself was still technically an illegality. Not until 1938 did the federal courts strike down the Comstock law. Contraceptives were no longer obscene, said the judge, because the medical experts recommended them. The birth-control movement became institutionalized with the establishment of the Birth Control Federation of America, later called the Planned Parenthood Federation to project a "positive" image and remove the sexual connotations of the earlier name.²⁷

Many Texas women endorsed the birth-control movement in the 1930's. Following Sanger's lead, women opened clinics, despite the legal ramifications of such action. In Dallas, Kate Ripley, working with her doctor, opened the first birth-control clinic in the city, financed by funds from her

husband's shirt manufacturing company. To circumvent the prohibition against mailing contraceptives, Ripley instructed Margaret Sanger to send the needed diaphragms to her in Ripley shirt boxes. Once birth control was legalized in 1938, more clinics began functioning in the state, providing services for those unable to afford a visit to a private physician.²⁸

The final strand woven into the post-suffrage era in Texas, the attempt to broaden women's legal rights, centered in yet another group of women--those who owned and operated their own businesses or engaged in one of the professions, such as law or medicine, or worked in a white-collar job. Those who were married found that their ability to derive direct benefits from their employment or to do business was severely hampered by the restrictions placed on wives by Texas law. A wife could not control her own wages, could not sign contracts without her husband's signature, could not dispose of her separate property (that which she owned prior to the marriage or received as a gift) without his consent--in fact, her legal identity was suspended during the marriage. Unless a woman had her own business or possessed a significant amount of separate property, she was usually unaware of such legal restrictions and her low status before the law. Initially, only those women directly affected by this legislation realized the discrimination embodied in Texas law. Many of them joined together to form

their own service organization--the Federation of Business and Professional Woman's Clubs (B&PW). Established in Texas in 1916, these clubs provided their members the opportunity to share expertise in their professional and business fields, voice complaints about the legal inequalities which hampered them, and devise strategies for lobbying the legislature to change discriminatory laws.²⁹

Only occasionally during the post-suffrage period did the Texas Legislature allow the broadening of married women's rights. In 1929, Laura Negley introduced a bill which gave a wife sole management of her separate property. The measure passed, but only after an amendment weakened it by requiring a husband's signature on the sale of the wife's lands or securities. Businesswomen found the shell of "protection" surrounding a wife hard to crack. Most legislators supported the husband's control of separate and community property on the grounds that wives could be taken advantage of by "unscrupulous" persons, for they assumed that all women were unschooled in coping with the world outside the home. Since there were no laws protecting the single woman wishing to do business or dispose of her property, married businesswomen were puzzled as to why the act of matrimony suddenly rendered them incompetent to manage their own affairs. Thirty years would pass before the state legislators seriously questioned this presumption.³⁰

Texas women experienced greater success in convincing the legislature that they were capable of serving on juries--that they did not need protection from the "sordidness" of the courtroom. Beginning in 1935, when House members Helen Moore and Sarah T. Hughes proposed a bill allowing women to serve on juries, the issue was introduced in the legislature every session but one until the public finally approved the constitutional amendment in 1954. In 1947, the measure passed the House but lost in the Senate. The next session, when a woman, Neveille Colson, served as senator, the resolution passed. The supporters of the amendment, including the B&PW, the League of Women Voters, the Parent-Teacher's Association, and the American Association of University Women, emphasized that Texas was one of only seventeen states which disqualified women from jury service. Opponents countered that women should stay home and care for their children, a popular argument against enlarging women's rights. They also stressed the expense involved in building dormitory quarters for women jurors. On 8 November 1949, Texas voters narrowly defeated the amendment. Five years later, the public changed its mind and approved the measure by nearly 80,000 votes.³¹

Although the post-suffrage period, after the flurry of activism in politics and reform measures in the 1920's, indicated a lack of focus on women's rights as a social movement of consequence in Texas and the nation, several

important outcomes occurred. A tradition of women's participation in politics, as voters, lobbyists, and as elected officials, was established. Women served in the Texas Legislature from 1923 on, except for the Thirty-ninth Legislature in 1925 and the Forty-fifth Legislature meeting in 1937. Perhaps of even greater importance in the long run was the acceptance of birth control, for it allowed women to select if and when to become mothers, and freed them from having to choose between marriage or career.³²

Nevertheless, these gains were not immediately apparent to the old-line activists, and they rightly lamented the passing of the fervor which had gripped them during the height of the suffrage movement. Minnie Fisher Cunningham, in a reminiscent moment in 1940 wrote Jane McCallum,

It was maddening to think that we somehow didn't carry on as vigorously as we could have done. It was puzzling to wonder why? Can you answer it? Did the League of Women Voters turn us away from fighting to studying? Something happened. What?³³

No new issue had appeared as a rallying point for women, for the split between the protectionists and the ERA supporters was at its widest. No new generation of women had yet experienced the jolt of a society quashing their expectations. The nation as a whole had its attentions turned to the economic problems of the Depression, the resultant reforms of the New Deal, and a war more debilitating to the nation than the one fought earlier in

the century. But for women, things were going to get worse before they got better. The post-war decades of the 1950's would impose such rigid choices for women that a new feminist movement would arise, building on the foundations of the first.

NOTES

1. William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Role, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 29-32; William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 264-65.
2. Lewis L. Gould, Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), pp. 266-67; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 47-48.
3. Seth S. McKay and Odie B. Faulk, Texas After Spindletop (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1965), p. 86; Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, p. 54.
4. Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, p. 115. Hall's book provides a valuable deliniation of the anti-lynching movement in the South during the 1920's and 1930's; McKay, Texas, pp. 91-92.
5. Jane Y. McCallum, untitled typed manuscript, n.d., p. 34, McCallum Collection, Austin Public Library; Texas Almanac (Dallas: A. H. Belo, 1975), p. 541.
6. Minnie Fisher Cunningham moved to Washington, D. C. in 1920 to direct the National League of Women Voters and remained there until 1927, so she was unable to mediate the disagreements developing between Ames and McCallum. John Carrol Eudy, "The Vote and Lone Star Women: Minnie Fisher Cunningham and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association," East Texas Historical Journal 14 (1976):56; Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, p. 116; Diary of Jane Y. McCallum, 21 December 1926, McCallum Collection.
7. Cunningham had returned to Texas to look after family affairs after her husband's death. By this time Ames had also split with Cunningham and refused to support her campaign for governor. Eudy, "The Vote," p. 56; Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, pp. 116-17; "Margie Elizabeth Neal," Handbook of Texas, Walter P. Webb and Eldon Stephen Branda, eds., (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952, 1976) 3:640-41; Texas Almanac (1929), p. 243.
8. Although the women in the Texas Legislature in the

1920's and 1930's concentrated their efforts on bills of concern to women, their activities in the various sessions were not limited to women's issues alone. See the Texas Legislature, House Journal and Senate Journal, for the sessions from 1923 through 1935.

9. For bills sponsored by women in the legislature see Texas Legislature, House Journal, Reg. sess., 1923, pp. 47-48, 1222, 1508, 1711, 1714-15; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1929, pp. 65, 644, 1676; Texas Legislature, Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1927, pp. 159, 173. All House and Senate Journals hereinafter cited are those of the Texas Legislature. Jane Y. McCallum, "Joint Legislative Council," Handbook of Texas, 2:929; Lorraine Barnes, "Leader of the Petticoat Lobby," Texas Star, 3 October 1971, pp. 10-11.

10. \$1.25 million was appropriated for the Sheppard-Towner program during its existence in the 1920's. During the time it provided health services, the infant mortality rate declined from 75 per 1,000 live births in 1921 to 64 per 1,000 in 1927. The maternal mortality rate also declined. J. Stanley Lemons, The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920's (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 175. Further information on Sheppard-Towner, an analysis of its effectiveness, and its eventual defeat by the medical establishment is found in Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), pp. 136-53. See also Chafe, American Woman, pp. 27-29, and June Sochen, Movers and Shakers: Women Thinkers and Activists, 1900-1970 (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1973), pp. 113-14.

11. Austin American-Statesman, 6 October 1946; Texas Legislature, House Journal, Reg. sess., 1927, p. 345.

12. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1923, p. 1222.

13. Ruth A. Allen, "Child Labor Legislation in Texas," Handbook of Texas 1:338.

14. The case of Muller v. Oregon, 208 U. S. 412 (1907), sanctioning sex discriminatory legislation, is discussed in Joan Harvill, "Is the Texas Equal Rights Amendment the Answer?," South Texas Law Journal 15 (1974):112-15; O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, p. 152.

15. Texas, Revised Civil Statutes (Jenkins, 1925) 2:1957, see Art. 5168-5172; Texas, Revised Civil Statutes, Annotated (Vernon, 1958) 15:185; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1937, pp. 71, 216; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1943, pp. 118,

184; Chafe, American Woman, p. 80.

16. Quotation is found in O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, p. 288; Dallas Morning News, 12 November 1922; Sochen, Movers and Shakers, pp. 115-17; Chafe, American Woman, pp. 112-15; Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, pp. 156-62.

17. Muller v. Oregon, 208 U. S. 412 (1907), at 327.

18. Harriot Stanton Blatch, "Do Women Want Protection?" The Nation 116 (31 January 1923):115.

19. Adkins v. Children's Hospital, 261 U. S. 525 (1923); Chafe, American Woman, p. 80; William Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 236, 262-63; Fair Labor Standards Act. Statutes at Large 52, sec. 2475, 1060 (1938).

20. Chafe, American Woman, pp. 68-79; O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, pp. 246-49.

21. George B. Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 331-32, 338; Gould, Progressives, p. 270.

22. Richard Croxdale and Melissa Hield, eds., Women in the Texas Workforce: Yesterday and Today (Austin, Texas: People's History in Texas, 1976), pp. 5, 8, 9, 11-13, 24-31.

23. Dallas Morning News, 28 April 1933, 16 July 1933, 9 August 1933; Sochen, Movers and Shakers, p. 162; Chafe, American Woman, pp. 107, 109. The quotation is found in Chafe, American Woman, p. 109.

24. Linda Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 24; Margaret Sanger, Autobiography (New York: W. W. Norton, 1938), pp. 215-20.

25. Gordon presents an excellent analysis of the socialist and feminist arguments for birth control, particularly in Chapter 9 of Woman's Body, Woman's Right, pp. 186-245.

26. Margaret Sanger, Woman and the New Race (New York: Brentano's, 1920) advances the eugenicist argument; Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right, pp. 250-51, 272, 279, 284, describes the prevalence of eugenics in the American culture during the Progressive period. See also Donald K. Pickens, Eugenics and the Progressives (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).

27. Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right, pp. 341, 344; Dallas Morning News, 3 January 1934; Museum exhibition, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Austin, Texas; Sherna Gluck, ed., From Parlor to Prison: Five American Suffragists Talk About Their Lives (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 49-53.

29. Interview with Hermine Tobolowsky, Dallas, Texas, 10 October 1975; interview with Judge Sarah T. Hughes, Dallas, Texas, 30 October 1975; Edgar H. Keltner, Jr., "Suggested Legislative Action to Liberalize the Contractual and Property Rights of Texas Married Women," Texas Law Review 25 (June 1947) discusses the origins of Texas law regarding married women; Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., Legal Discrimination Against Women in Texas (Fort Worth, 1958), pp. 10-11.

30. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1929, pp. 65, 644; Texas B&PW, Legal Discriminations, p. 1.

31. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1935, pp. 1378, 1996; Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1947, p. 1372; Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1949, pp. 620, 621, 3023; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1947, pp. 191, 1142; Dallas Morning News, 31 March 1949, 11 November 1949, 20 November 1954.

32. See the rosters in the various House and Senate Journals, 1923 to the present.

33. Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Jane McCallum, September 1940, McCallum Collection.

CHAPTER V

A NEW MOVEMENT BEGINS

Although some Texas women in the post-World War II years continued to press for legislative changes in the status of women, this activity was sporadic and largely confined to altering conditions for business and professional women. With the exception of the issue of jury duty for women, women's rights agitation in the late 1940's and throughout the 1950's concentrated on broadening the property and contractual rights of married women. Initially, members of the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women (B&PW), the dominant group pressuring the state legislature to improve the legal status of married women, sought change through piecemeal legislation. When the members of the Senate Committee on State Affairs ignored their evidence at a 1957 hearing, however, they altered their strategy. The B&PW leaders decided to support an Equal Legal Rights Amendment (ELRA) to the Texas Constitution rather than fight endless legislative battles to gain legal equality statute by statute. In the ensuing years they worked diligently to build a strong pressure group to lobby for the ELRA, elect legislators who favored

the issue, defeat its opponents, and create an aura of legislative respectability for the amendment. By the time the women's liberation movement created a concomittant aura of respectability for women's equality as a social issue, the B&PW had created the necessary legislative foundation for the passage of the measure in the state legislature in 1972.

The post-World War II era, dominated by a desire to return to the "normalcy" of the stable happy family which the Depression and the war had upset, brought many changes which again limited women to the roles of wife and mother. Returning servicemen needed the jobs held by women during the war, industrial production once again turned from war materiel to consumer goods, and housing subsidies helped many families own their own home and promoted the rapid growth of homogeneous, middle-class suburbs. Many women welcomed these changes and returned to the roles of wife and mother, seeking the psychological comfort of a family life denied them by wartime separation.¹

Those who rebelled against this "return to the cave," as anthropologist Margaret Mead characterized such enforced domesticity, found that the social sciences, particularly psychology, labeled them neurotic and unwilling to make peace with their "natural" feminine nature. Neo-Freudian psychiatrists writing in the 1940's and 1950's enshrined Freud's theory of "penis envy" as the cause of women's

discontent. They labeled women who wanted to participate in events outside the family sphere man-haters, castraters, and women with a "masculinity complex." The popular media praised the housewife and mother who submerged her own desires and lived for and through her husband and children. Many colleges and universities returned to the ideal of the female academy, where women learned the art of cooking rather than the art of Picasso, and relinquished studying philosophy to study "Marriage and Family Life."²

Coinciding with the conservatism implicit in the postwar definition of woman's place was the growing political conservatism both nationally and locally. The Cold War, which polarized the differences between the United States and Russia, fostered a kind of political paranoia which found expression in the McCarthy hearings in Washington and the gubernatorial politics in Texas, particularly during Allan Shivers's administration. The prevailing atmosphere of extremism and suspicion provided no encouragement for reformists.³

While the anti-feminist climate of the 1950's demanded that women leave the workforce, return to the home, and be happily adjusted to this arrangement, many women remained in the job market or entered it for the first time. By 1960, twice as many American women were working as in 1940. In Texas, working women continued to promote the enlargement of their property rights. Little progress was made, however,

despite the support by the most powerful lobby in the state--the oil industry--for one of the measures: the repeal of the separate acknowledgement. This law required that whenever a married woman was a party to the sale of real estate, she must acknowledge to a notary, outside the presence of her husband, that she was signing the deed willingly and was aware of what the transaction signified. Originally incorporated into law to protect wives from coercive disposal of their homes or separate property by their husbands, the law had deteriorated into fraudulent use. Property once sold could be reclaimed by a married woman who said that the requirements of the separate acknowledgement were not complied with at the time of the sale. Oil companies were the primary losers in such cases. Their support of the repeal of the separate acknowledgement, therefore, had little to do with enlarging women's rights and more to do with minimizing their losses. Women's groups, such as the B&PW, however, supported the repeal of the separate acknowledgement to protest the notion that married women needed legal protection in matters of property and contracts.⁴

During the 1950's, two members of the B&PW served in the state legislature--Virginia Duff of Ferris, elected to six terms in the House beginning in 1951, and Maud Isaacks of El Paso, who served six terms in the House starting in 1955. Slowly the women built a base of support in the

legislature for improving the legal status of women. In 1955 state Senator Rogers Kelley of Edinburg requested that the Texas Legislative Council, a joint committee of ten representatives and five senators with a full-time research staff, study the laws regarding Texas women and recommend changes. The Council recommended two bills: one granting married women control over their separate property, which pleased the women's groups, and another repealing the separate acknowledgement, which pleased the oil companies. The bills would be introduced at the next legislative session, and several women's groups were invited to testify at committee hearings regarding the matter.⁵

The B&PW sent as their representative to the 1957 hearings attorney Hermine Tobolowsky. Although she felt that the two bills under consideration hardly scratched the surface of legal inequities for women, she was, nevertheless, determined to present the best possible case for their passage. Armed with a briefcase full of documented evidence of the difficulties facing married business and professional women in Texas because of Texas law, Tobolowsky entered the committee room of the Senate Committee on State Affairs, confident that her careful legal research would provide a framework for reasonable discussion of the matter with the Senate committee members. She listened patiently as the sponsor of the bills, Senator Doyle Willis of Fort Worth, explained their purpose. Four

women representing other women's groups supporting the changes read their brief statements to the committee. Finally, Tobolowsky took the microphone and began presenting her evidence. To her surprise, she was not greeted with questions concerning the implications of the separate property bill, but instead was bombarded with emotional comments. "Women never had it so good," said one committeeman. "What's your quarrel with your husband? Why don't you just go home and settle your family arguments instead of bringing them before us?" Shaken by the outburst, the thirty-five-year-old Tobolowsky, nevertheless, continued her testimony. Members of the ruling clique of the Senate pointedly ignored her, talked loudly among themselves, roved aimlessly about the room, and finally hurled the typical epithet of the times, "If you're so anxious to be a man, here--smoke this cigar."⁶

This meeting marked the turning point in the method used by the B&PW to secure equal legal rights for women. Heretofore, a coalition of women's groups, including the B&PW, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Zonta Clubs, had pressed for changes through individual laws. When Tobolowsky saw that many legislators viewed equal rights for women as a comical issue rather than a serious one, she realized that securing piecemeal legislation was too arduous a task. She decided

that the only possibly successful strategy was to concentrate time, energy, and money on a single campaign, a campaign for an Equal Legal Rights Amendment to the Texas Constitution.⁷

A similar decision to support a federal Equal Rights Amendment had been made two decades earlier in 1937 by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women, but the Texas group, more conservative in nature, had avoided such a commitment to the issue. At the 1957 State B&PW Convention the summer following her committee testimony, Tobolowsky recommended that the organization commit its political activism to a state Equal Legal Rights Amendment (ELRA). She offered to do the legal research needed to compile a collection of discrimination cases if the Federation would publish her findings. The convention delegates enthusiastically accepted her offer and voted to establish a legislative fund to carry out her recommendations.⁸

Tobolowsky's contention that piecemeal legislation for women's rights was an almost futile effort was borne out by the results of the 1957 legislative session. The separate property bill passed the house with only two dissenting votes, but the statute was weakened by an amendment in the Senate. Wardlow Lane of Center, Tobolowsky's nemesis in the earlier Senate hearing, added several clauses to the original bill; namely, that, if a wife was twenty-one or

over, she could control her separate property only if she spent time and money filing a statement with her County Clerk acknowledging her intent to do so. Lane's justification for this change to the bill seemed preposterous to Tobolowsky, for he claimed that he only wanted to keep fourteen-year-old girls from marrying to gain control of their separate property. Tobolowsky wondered just how many fourteen-year-old girls were married, and of that small group, how many owned separate property? Lane also deleted the repeal of the "free trader" statute, which had been included in the original bill. The repeal would have allowed a married woman to open a business with her own funds without her husband's signature. With this kind of help from the legislature, said Tobolowsky, removing discriminatory legislation from Texas lawbooks seemed an endless task, for she found forty-six statutes and many court decisions which adversely affected women's equality. Under her leadership, the B&PW launched a fifteen-year campaign to change those laws by a single amendment.⁹

Hermine Tobolowsky was the antithesis of the "ideal" woman of the 1950's. Never compliant, complacent, or "adjusted" to the domestic role decreed by the culture, Tobolowsky was the proverbial "iron fist in a velvet glove." She was always soft-spoken in her public appearances, but she never used traditional "feminine" wiles to cajole her opponents or take the sting out of her arguments. She

attracted many adherents to the ELRA by her no-nonsense, well-developed rationale for the need for such an amendment. That very same manner, however, alienated some people unused to an aggressive woman so sure of her position. There was little middle ground in the feelings Tobolowsky stirred--people either greatly admired her or hated her.¹⁰

Tobolowsky came to her role as leader of the equal rights campaign through a natural extension of her upbringing. Reared in San Antonio, Tobolowsky worked alongside her parents in their dry goods store. Her mother had worked as a bookkeeper and cashier before marrying and continued this activity in the family business. Tobolowsky's father encouraged his daughter to attend law school, remarking that if she could take care of herself, no one could ever take advantage of her.¹¹

It was in law school at the University of Texas in Austin that Tobolowsky experienced sexual discrimination in large measure. Initially, the discrimination appeared only in facetious remarks made by professors about the advisability of women learning law. Later it was more overt. Tobolowsky, because she was one of the top ten students in her class, was eligible to work as a quizmaster. Her professor, however, urged her to take a library job instead, since an earlier female quizmaster had "not worked out." In her inimitable style, Tobolowsky replied that the

school had not stopped using male quizmasters just because one did not work out; subsequently she served in that position.¹²

Tobolowsky graduated with honors in 1943, but she quickly discovered that few jobs existed for women lawyers. She managed to get an interview for a position as law clerk with the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court. The jurist rebuffed her immediately, however, stating that no woman was smart enough to clerk in his court. Tobolowsky lectured him sternly, questioning his ability to render an impartial judgment in cases involving women if he had such an attitude. When she realized that she, a fresh law school graduate, was brashly addressing the Chief Justice of the state, she made a hasty exit.¹³

Both her experience as a lawyer dealing with the legal problems of women and her own frustration at the legal entanglements she faced as a married woman doing business in Texas impelled Tobolowsky to publicly support legal equality for the women in her state. In 1946 she joined the B&PW because it was lobbying for jury duty for women. She later volunteered her legal expertise to the group, offering to draft nondiscriminatory bills and to testify about them before legislative committees. When her hard work was ridiculed by the lawmakers, her anger found release in initiating and carrying out the ELRA campaign.¹⁴

In order to marshal support for the ELRA, the B&PW leaders decided that their first efforts should concentrate on educating the B&PW membership itself. Tobolowsky, Modelle Scruggs, Ruth Fox, and a few other Federation leaders crisscrossed the state at their own expense between the legislative sessions of 1957 and 1959, speaking to local B&PW clubs about the need for an amendment. Although many members had experienced discrimination firsthand in their business lives, those who had not were made aware of the problems by the recounting of various cases. Invariably, each speech triggered a spate of letters from members and friends, cataloguing case histories to add to the ones already known.¹⁵

While educating the B&PW membership to form an effective lobbying group and communication network, the B&PW leaders worked diligently to mobilize support for the amendment in the legislature as well. Tobolowsky was assured of assistance in the state Senate by George Parkhouse and Abraham Kazen, Jr., both members of the committee hearing Tobolowsky's testimony in 1957 who had apologized for Lane and his allies' behavior. Kazen had originally opposed amending the legal status of married women, but changed his mind after that hearing.¹⁶

The measure was introduced early in the Senate in 1959 by Parkhouse and ten others and was referred to the Committee on Constitutional Amendments for hearings. Lane

and three of his close political friends, Dorsey Hardeman of San Angelo, Crawford Martin of Hillsboro and William Fly of Victoria, attempted to stall the amendment by sending it to Attorney-General Will Wilson for a legal reading on its correctness. Wilson quickly okayed it, sent it back, and it was voted favorably out of committee. However, Lieutenant Governor Ben Ramsey, leader of the Senate, managed to keep the measure off the calendar.¹⁷

The bill fared better in the House, where it was introduced in mid-April by four Dallas representatives and unanimously voted favorably out of committee two weeks later. House Speaker Waggoner Carr placed it at the top of the House calendar for a vote, but the previous day's unfinished business kept any constitutional amendment from being heard during the session. He later wrote Tobolowsky that the amendment was a good one and would eventually succeed. The main task of its supporters, he said, was to keep legislators aware of the problem of discrimination and the need for the amendment.¹⁸

Heartened by the Speaker's remarks, Tobolowsky, Fox, Scruggs, and other B&PW leaders gathered to consider future strategies. The most obvious obstacle to the amendment's favorable reception in the legislature was the opposition of the powerbrokers in the state Senate, led by Lieutenant Governor Ramsey. Ramsey argued that the majority of Texas women did not want to lose the protection afforded by Texas

law and claimed that the women in his district did not have the sense to manage their own affairs. He arrogantly boasted that as long as he was in charge of the Senate, equal rights legislation would never pass. Lane, another powerful politician from rural East Texas, reiterated Ramsey's argument that only a small group of "silly women" wanted equality. He further claimed that the anti-female sentiment was far greater among the state's legislators than was apparent, a claim which later proved true.¹⁹

Supporters of the ELRA knew that the success or failure of the amendment rested in the hands of the legislative leadership. By far, the most influential persons in Texas government are the speaker of the House and the presiding officer of the Senate, the lieutenant governor. They wield great power through their authority to appoint committees and their chairpersons. They also interpret rules and points of order, recognize members who want to speak from the floor, put motions to a vote, and decide voice votes. When a bill comes under the jurisdiction of several committees, they can control its success by their committee assignments. A simple word to a committee chairperson by the speaker or lieutenant governor can keep a bill bottled up in committee for the duration of the legislative session. Should such a bill make it out of committee in spite of the leader's disapproval, he can still kill it by substantially controlling the agenda of business each day. Support of

both presiding officers, or at least no active opposition by them, is thus necessary for a bill to successfully pass both houses.²⁰

Proponents of the ELRA felt assured of Speaker Carr's support in the House, but they knew they stood no chance in the Senate as long as Ramsey was in charge. They turned to the election process for possible relief from his hold on the Senate. Their first success came in the 1960 election with the defeat of Ramsey's ally William Fly, a legislator since 1947 and a member of a politically prominent family. His opponent in the Democratic primary, William Patman, approached the B&PW and promised his support of the ELRA in return for their help in his campaign. With the B&PW behind him, Patman, the underdog, won. The other members of Ramsey's clique, Lane, Martin, and Hardeman, would lose their bids for re-election later.²¹

By the 1961 legislative session, the B&PW had become a creditable pressure group, able to persuade legislators to support the amendment. The Texas Federation of the B&PW consisted of over 185 local clubs with a membership of 8,400 women. While all professions, including lawyers, doctors, and government employees, could be counted among the membership, most were office employees or women who owned their own businesses. Ranging in age from about thirty-five to fifty-five years, most of the women were married, earned average incomes, and were considered politically

conservative. The Federation provided a framework for disseminating information about equal rights issues to its members and was a training ground for the dozen women who assumed the major role in wielding the collective clout that the B&PW represented.²²

By 1961, these women skillfully used the media to educate not only their own members, but the public at large. Tobolowsky aided in taping a television documentary, was interviewed by national columnists Sylvia Porter and Clair Boothe Luce, and along with other B&PW members was the subject of a lengthy Saturday Evening Post article, "The Revolt of Texas Women." As in the earlier suffrage movement, ELRA advocates welcomed the opportunity to speak at any gathering, and they formed a speakers bureau to handle the many invitations from such diverse groups as home demonstration clubs, church groups, and men's clubs. At each gathering, the speaker collected new names to add to the B&PW's growing mailing list. They then contacted those people when an issue of importance surfaced. These activities caught the attention of Lillian Collier, State Democratic Committeewoman and a leader in the General Federation of Women's Clubs. She became an activist in the ELRA movement and convinced her group to lend its support as well.²³

Despite the gains made by their education and lobbying techniques, Tobolowsky and her coworkers did not expect the

ELRA to pass the 1961 legislative session, because of Ramsey's opposition in the Senate. As expected, the amendment quickly passed the House, but its Senate opponents devised a strategy to nullify its effect--they proposed a change in the wording to provide for equal rights "except where otherwise provided by law." This modification, which would keep discriminatory laws intact, was introduced by Ramsey's ally, Crawford Martin. Many politicians welcomed it as a panacea--they could appear to be for equal rights for women while allowing "protective" laws to remain on the books. ELRA supporters found they had to educate legislators all over again regarding the deleterious effect of this "unequal" equality.²⁴

Martin's desire to keep existing discriminatory laws on the books stemmed from a long-standing argument about protective legislation versus an equal rights amendment. The issue first surfaced in the 1920's when all workers, women and men alike, needed protection from exploitation but the courts permitted legislative relief only for women. At that time, the issue was so controversial that it was never resolved. But by 1960, when labor conditions had improved for both women and men, many working women found that legislation designed to protect them usually provided instead for legalized discrimination. Some found employers reluctant to hire them because of the maximum hours laws passed in earlier times. Others found they could not work

overtime at its higher rate of pay, even if they desired to do so. Married women who worked found the laws which "protected" them were more likely to give their husbands full control over their finances. Many married women who did not work outside the home and had not experienced the legal problems or the feelings of powerlessness built into protective legislation, however, feared that the ELRA would no longer require husbands to support them, or that the relationship between husband and wife would be damaged.²⁵

This latter attitude surfaced at a House committee hearing on the ELRA in 1961. Representative Myra Banfield of Rosenberg, who had solicited B&PW support for her campaign in 1960, promising to vote for the ELRA if elected, consistently voted against the amendment in the 1961 session. As a member of the House Committee on Constitutional Amendments, Banfield was present when Tobolowsky presented her arguments in support of the ELRA. Banfield indicated her lack of understanding of the amendment's intentions when she remarked to Tobolowsky that she would not want her husband to stop pulling out her chair for her. Tobolowsky reduced Banfield to tears by replying that the ELRA would not change a husband's attitude toward common courtesies, and she hoped Banfield's husband did not need a law to keep him well-mannered.²⁶

Tobolowsky's quick wit and pointed jibes often turned her political enemies into personal ones as well. While others joined the attack occasionally, Wardlow Lane was her most consistently hostile opponent in the Senate. The B&PW felt that Lane's defeat during the 1962 senatorial campaign would brighten the chances for the ELRA in 1963. Lane's opponent in the primary, Jack Strong, met with Tobolowsky in Dallas to pledge mutual support--Strong would work for the ELRA and the pro-ELRA workers would campaign for his elections. Tobolowsky herself visited Lane's senatorial district several times, recounting Lane's voting record, not just on the ELRA, but on other issues of importance to his constituents. Lane, who had served in the legislature since the 1940's, lost his re-election bid.²⁷

Coupled with Lane's defeat was another favorable event for the ELRA supporters. Lieutenant Governor Ramsey left his powerful post as the leader of the Texas Senate to accept an appointment to the Railroad Commission, an influential agency which regulated the state's oil and gas industry. Ramsey's longtime ally, Crawford Martin, a vocal opponent of the ELRA, ran for the vacated lieutenant governor's post in 1962 and was favored to win. The B&PW threw its support behind his runoff opponent Preston Smith, since he had favored women's rights when he served as state representative. In addition to sending election bulletins to each local B&PW chapter and letters to thousands of

people throughout the state, B&PW members hosted coffees for Smith in their hometowns. Tobolowsky gave a party for four hundred guests to introduce Smith to potential voters. Their efforts helped Smith win the runoff election and subsequently the general election itself.²⁸

The ELRA supporters had reason to believe their measure would pass in the 1963 legislative session. Although the bill still had its opponents in the Senate, the leadership of the Senate was now firmly behind the amendment. Early in the session, it passed the ELRA, twenty-six to five. The House, which had passed the measure easily in the previous two sessions, suddenly balked in its support, largely due to the obstruction of the new Speaker, Byron Tunnell of Tyler.²⁹

Tobolowsky and her fellow workers learned some harsh political realities during the 1963 legislative session. They discovered that it was easier to fight an overt opponent than a hidden one. At least Ramsey, Lane and the other vocal ELRA opponents had openly proclaimed their objections. The opposition which surfaced in the House in 1963 hid behind voiced support for the amendment. William Heatley, a powerful West Texas politician, volunteered to sponsor and carry the bill through the House. Encouraged by his apparent willingness to back the ELRA, supporters expected the resolution to see early action in the House. Instead, the measure bogged down in committee. Regretfully,

the amendment's backers found that a legislator could effectively kill a bill which he did not favor by volunteering to carry it through the session and then delaying action on it.³⁰

The House Committee on Constitutional Amendments, chaired by James Cotten, had unanimously favored the ELRA since 1959. During the 1963 session, however, Cotten refused to report the bill out of committee, even when the House voted 109 to 32 to demand such action. Legislative supporters finally succeeded in moving the amendment to another committee, which eventually reported it favorably. During the last days of the session, however, Speaker Tunnell blocked further action on the measure by ruling out of order a motion calling for a vote. Tobolowsky and her group were puzzled over Tunnell's actions, for as a representative in earlier sessions, Tunnell had supported the ELRA. When questioned after the 1963 session Tunnell assured Tobolowsky that he would support the measure in the next session, and that his current legislative maneuvers had been misunderstood. The amendment supporters never had a chance to test Tunnell's sincerity, though, for Governor John Connally appointed him to the Railroad Commission before the next session. They did have a chance to register their dissatisfaction with Cotten, however, by working for his opponent in the 1964 election, which he lost to Tom Holmes.³¹

Thus, by the 1965 legislative session, the ELRA supporters had earned their political stripes. They had learned the importance of having the House and Senate leaders firmly behind their issue. They knew that a strong supporter had to carry the bill in each house in order to marshal it through the parliamentary mazes. They established a network of legislative supporters who kept them posted on the bill's circuitous progress during each session. Tobolowsky and her crew, in turn, sent a steady stream of legislative and election bulletins to the individual B&PW clubs, so that members could contact their legislators at the most auspicious moment, could travel to Austin en masse to testify before an important committee, or could fill the House and Senate galleries during a crucial vote.³²

Also, by 1965, the B&PW had organized effective election support for ELRA advocates and effective opposition for its opponents. They kept careful tabulations of legislative voting records and distributed them to each club. They targeted chief opponents for extensive "anti" campaigns. Such techniques as massive mailings to constituents, personal contact via telephone committees, hosting coffees for favored candidates, and speaking before groups of all sizes increased the B&PW's influence. Members garnered pledges for support and sponsorship of the amendment from various candidates and filed them for later

reference. Although the B&PW could not make political contributions itself, individual members often sent money to candidates supporting the ELRA. As many of the ELRA opponents began to lose their reelection bids, both the legislators and the B&PW perceived the ballot to be an effective political weapon. Other factors may have contributed to the defeat of these adversaries, but many lawmakers believed, by 1965, that a candidate's position regarding the ELRA could influence an election's outcome.³³

By the mid-sixties another strand was woven into the campaign for women's equality in Texas--a new wave of feminism began its spread across the state and the nation, an offshoot of the growing demands for racial equality. As the "Women's Liberation" movement coalesced with the lobbying efforts expended by the ELRA supporters in Texas, a decade of renewed legislative activity and profound cultural change began.

NOTES

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4. Chafe, American Woman, p. 218; Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., Legal Discriminations Against Women in Texas (Fort Worth, 1958), pp. 10-11.

5. Interview with Hermine Tobolowsky, Dallas, Texas, 3 November 1976; Texas Legislature, Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1955, pp. 832-33, 1107, 1193. All House and Senate Journals hereinafter cited are those of the Texas Legislature.

6. Interview with Tobolowsky.

7. Interview with Wilma Comfort, executive secretary, Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Fort Worth, Texas, 26 October 1976.

8. Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, Rebirth of Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 79; interview with Tobolowsky; research results were printed in the pamphlet Legal Discrimination Against Women in Texas; Wilma Comfort, History of the Texas Federation (Fort Worth: Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs,

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9. Texas B&PW, Legal Discriminations, pp. 3-4; B&PW Legislative Bulletin, 4 February 1959, Tobolowsky Collection, North Texas State University Archives.

10. Interview with Comfort; interview with Alonzo Jamison, former state representative, Denton, Texas, 21 October 1976.

11. Interview with Tobolowsky; Peter Wyden, "The Revolt of Texas Women," Saturday Evening Post, 14 January 1961, p. 55.

12. Interview with Tobolowsky.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. See various letters and legislative bulletins for the years 1957-65, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Tobolowsky.

16. B&PW Legislative Bulletin, 4 February 1959; interview with Tobolowsky.

17. Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs., Inc., An Educational Program, 1959, Tobolowsky Collection.

18. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1959, pp. 2118; Waggoner Carr to Tobolowsky, 3 May 1959, Tobolowsky Collection.

19. Texas Observer, 30 April 1957, 21 March 1958, 22 July 1961; Wyden, "Revolt," p. 55.

20. James E. Anderson, Richard W. Murray, and Edward F. Farley, Texas Politics: An Introduction, 2d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 103, 113, 120; Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 309.

21. Texas Observer, 6 November 1959; interview with Tobolowsky.

22. Interview with Comfort; Comfort, History, p. 10.

23. Interview with Tobolowsky; various letters in the

Tobolowsky Collection; see also Wyden, "Revolt."

24. Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1961, pp. 290, 1668-70; interview with Tobolowsky; interview with Jamison.

25. Joan Harvill, "Is the Texas Equal Rights Amendment the Answer?," South Texas Law Journal 15 (1974):114-16; interview with Tobolowsky.

26. House Journal, Reg. sess., 1961, p. 160; interview with Jamison; interview with Tobolowsky; conclusions about Banfield's understanding of the ELRA come from various letters written by her, found in the Tobolowsky Collection. Banfield's voting record on the ELRA is found in the House Journals, Reg. sess., 1961, 1963.

27. B&PW press release, 19 October 1962, Tobolowsky Collection; B&PW election bulletins, 1962, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Tobolowsky.

28. B&PW election bulletin, 1962, Tobolowsky collection; interview with Tobolowsky.

29. Houston Chronicle, 6 February 1963.

30. Tobolowsky to Juanita Camfield, 23 April 1963, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Tobolowsky.

31. Governor John Connally to Tobolowsky, 26 September 1962, Tobolowsky Collection; B&PW election bulletin, 1962, Tobolowsky Collection; San Antonio Express-News, 12 May 1963; interview with Tobolowsky; interview with Jamison; Austin American, 18 May 1963, 23 May 1963; Modelle Scruggs to Tunnell, 12 March 1964, Tobolowsky Collection; Tobolowsky to Lizette Palmer, 9 May 1964, Tobolowsky Collection; Lizette Palmer to Tobolowsky, 22 September 1964, Tobolowsky Collection.

32. B&PW Legislative Bulletin, 1961, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Margie Wallace, B&PW member, Dallas, Texas, 7 October 1975; interview with Comfort; "Texas Business and Professional Woman," February 1959, p. 3; V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964), pp. 128-66, details pressure groups' activities, which, coupled with the respectability of the groups taking such action, increase the chances of positive results.

33. Interview with Tobolowsky; interview with Jamison; various bulletins and letters, copies of the sponsorship pledges, found in the Tobolowsky Collection.

CHAPTER VI

EQUAL RIGHTS AT LAST

While the Texas Business and Professional Women's Club (B&PW) members were marshaling support for a state Equal Legal Rights Amendment (ELRA), both the political and social climate of Texas and the nation were gradually changing. The conformity and conservatism of the post-World War II era slowly gave way to a mood of individuality, dissent, and reform. The nation's anti-communist extremism began dissipating in 1954, when the Senate censured the red-baiting activities of its member, Joe McCarthy. That same year the Supreme Court focused the nation's attention on the failure of the country to remedy racial inequality. By rejecting the prevailing doctrine of "separate but equal" in the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case, the Court set in motion a renewed national debate on civil rights and equality, not only regarding blacks, but many other minority groups as well.¹

By the time John F. Kennedy won the presidency in 1960, many women were applying the concept of equality to their own situation. Equality of rights based on sex had been a public concern since 1923, when the Equal Rights Amendment

(ERA) was first introduced before Congress. Since that time, the National Woman's Party, later joined by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women (B&PW), had advocated the amendment. The matter was largely ignored by other women's groups, however, because of the issue of protective legislation. Over the years, as these protections were incorporated into the reforms of the New Deal, the concept of "protection" appeared to encourage discrimination, rather than offer any real benefits to women. By the 1960's, the ERA began to exert an appeal as the best way to eliminate legal discriminations based on sex.²

The first federal action taken to investigate the condition of American women was President Kennedy's establishment of a Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. Although several women on the Commission believed it was established to downplay the need for the ERA, the Commission publicized the need for granting women more equal opportunities in employment. Concurrently, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of 1963, an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, to require equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Since the original Fair Labor Standards bill exempted executive, professional, and administrative employees, the Equal Pay Act was limited in application. It was, however, an attempt to take seriously the issue of sex discrimination.³

Of equal importance was the Commission's recommendations regarding woman's role in society. It urged that young girls receive counseling in school to encourage them to think beyond stereotypical women's roles and interests. Here the Commission touched the raw nerve in many women--their discontent with the narrow range of roles prescribed for them by psychologists, the media, and other segments of the culture. The middle-class housewife and mother, constantly told how fulfilling it was to drive her husband to the station, support his career aspirations in every way, breastfeed her baby, bake bread, make her children's clothes, "keep her husband from dying young and her son from growing into a delinquent," felt guilty and neurotic if she was dissatisfied. She found release from her personal discontent when she read Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique, published in 1963. Friedan found that this dissatisfaction, this "problem that has no name," was not a personal quirk, a failing, but a shared response to the definition of "female" in mid-twentieth century America. She wrote, "The problem . . . from which so many women in America suffer today, is caused by adjustment to an image that does not permit them to become what they now can be."⁴

As middle-class American women of Friedan's generation began questioning their role in society, another group of younger women were beginning to do the same. These were the

women involved in the New Left activities: civil rights marches, anti-war demonstrations, and college student demands for more humane, relevant universities. Originally a part of the dissenting radical groups which called into question most aspects of the "American Way of Life," these young women gradually found that radical men were no different in their treatment of women than were those in the society they were criticizing. In most cases, the women were expected to carry out policies made by the male leaders, do the housekeeping and clerical chores required of the movement, and provide sexual services on demand. When several women questioned this traditional stereotyping, the men ruled their complaints trivial. By 1967, many of the New Left women adopted the separatist notions advocated by the Black Power groups in the civil rights movement. These women created their own movement and excluded men from participation, just as radical blacks had excluded whites a few years earlier.⁵

Thus, by the mid-1960's, there were three groups of women agitating for women's equality: the middle-class discontented housewives, the disillusioned young radicals, and the businesswomen who had been activists for women's rights for several decades. Although each group focused on different aspects of the equality question and advocated different methods for achieving equality of the sexes, they were bound together by a common goal--to change the role of

women. They were determined to achieve a society where women could actively pursue their individuality, unhindered by barriers of gender.

This new feminist consciousness and the resultant social movement it spawned had little effect in Texas in its incipient stage. When the state legislature met in 1965, the B&PW leaders were still the principal lobbyists for the ELRA. By then, their skills at marshaling support for the amendment were finely honed. They recruited an influential representative from Houston, Paul Floyd, to carry the bill through the House. Although the measure was favorably reported out of committee, it failed a floor vote. ELRA supporters acquired a powerful ally during this session, however, Speaker of the House Ben Barnes. Barnes, like many others, originally opposed the ELRA for fear that court calendars would be clogged with cases testing the constitutionality of discriminatory statutes in the Texas lawbooks. Whether convinced by the arguments of Hermine Tobolowsky and other ELRA advocates of the unreasonableness of such a view, or convinced by the changing political climate of the times, Barnes began to actively support the amendment.⁶

In the Senate, opponents continued their long-standing argument that the ELRA would remove necessary legal protection for women. As in earlier sessions, Dorsey Hardeman altered the proposed amendment to grant unequal

equality; that is, "equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex," except for those laws already in effect. By now, the ELRA supporters had educated the legislators as to the nullifying effect of Hardeman's rider. To their consternation, Lieutenant Governor Preston Smith, whom they had helped elect, cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to approve the Hardeman addition that session. Tobolowsky and other amendment advocates were aghast at his action and kept his phone busy all night, asking for an explanation. Smith pleaded that, not being a lawyer, he did not realize the implications of Hardeman's action and promised to quickly rectify his own error. The next day he sent the ELRA back to its committee with instructions to remove the rider, but the time lost during these proceedings killed its chances for passage that session.⁷

During the 1965 session another formidable opponent to the ELRA surfaced--the State Bar Association. Its position was not surprising, for it had previously opposed jury duty for women. Officials of the organization often testified against the ELRA, maintaining that in a 1964 poll of its members, the majority viewed the measure as a legal disaster and feared chaos in the state's community property system. A close look at the Bar referendum, however, revealed that of the 15,000 members polled, only a third responded to the ELRA questionnaire. It was a majority of the respondents,

not a majority of the Bar members, who opposed the amendment. In reality, only twenty percent of the membership voiced opposition to the ELRA.⁸

The Bar Association's objection to the ELRA proved to be a boon to the women's rights movement, for it resulted in the adoption of a new Family Code. This Code embodied most of the changes originally requested by the B&PW regarding married women's property rights. After the 1965 legislative session, the Bar Association decided to take the initiative in drafting new marital rights legislation, primarily to remove the need for the ELRA. Louise Raggio, a Dallas attorney who headed the Family Law Section of the Association, asked that the revision be given to her section. She spent the next two years, and much of her own money, working on the project. Eventually, several major foundations in the state helped finance the recodification. Raggio discovered that, not only did the revision require much work, but also much political maneuvering had to be done, first within the Bar Association itself to get approval of her committee's work and then in the legislature.⁹

The revised marital property rights laws were presented to the 1967 legislature, and it was in this arena that Raggio and Tobolowsky locked horns. Each viewed the other as an opportunist willing to sacrifice women's rights for their own aggrandizement. Tobolowsky was outraged that

Raggio not only testified against the ELRA, but also undercut its passage by proposing to change the very laws that the B&PW had tried to change for over a decade. It was the failure of the legislature to equalize married women's property rights that caused Tobolowsky to propose an equal rights amendment in the first place.¹⁰

On the other hand, Raggio could not understand why Tobolowsky and the other ELRA supporters testified against the revised marital property rights legislation. If they were sincerely interested in women's rights, why didn't they applaud her efforts? Raggio believed herself to be a pragmatist who saw no hope for the passage of the ELRA and was willing to settle for equalizing women's rights through legislation instead.¹¹

The irony of the situation was that each one's animosity toward the other actually furthered the cause of both. The new Family Code legislation regarding married women's property rights passed in that 1967 session, in large measure because of the hostility many of the legislators felt toward Tobolowsky and the ELRA. They felt that if she was against the measure, it must be something they could support. Tobolowsky herself believed that the new Family Code would never have passed if certain legislators had not viewed it as a way to subvert the ELRA. On the other hand, by removing the discriminations from married women's property rights through the new Family Code,

the legislature removed the grounds for the Bar Association's argument that the ELRA would create legal chaos. If the laws were now nondiscriminatory, the courts would not be clogged with cases challenging their constitutionality.¹²

The amendment itself provoked another vigorous campaign in the 1967 legislature, although it still lacked the necessary support to pass. First, the measure came before the Senate, where Hardeman proposed his rider to keep what he termed the "benefits now enjoyed by females." This time, however, Lieutenant Governor Smith did not help his cause. When Hardeman conducted a filibuster to stall a vote on the ELRA, he asked Smith for a rest period. Smith refused to vote to recess, and the filibuster ended. Then Senator Don Kennard of Fort Worth introduced a change in the wording of the amendment, so that it read, "Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed or national origin." ELRA supporters were convinced that the racial issue was introduced to defeat the amendment, but the amendment passed and was sent to the House. There it reached the floor for a vote, lacking only seven of the 100 votes required for final passage of an amendment.¹³

During the 1967 session, opponents of the ELRA developed sophisticated arguments against its passage. No longer was it politically astute to belittle women asking

for equal rights, to maintain that women were incapable of managing their own affairs, or to argue that only a few disgruntled women wanted to change the state constitution. Opponents now adopted more high-minded objections to the ELRA--it would create chaos in the courts, and more commonly, it would remove "the protection of special rights women now enjoy." Senator Franklin Spears of San Antonio, one of the amendment's leading opponents, claimed that women would be forced to work sweatshop hours again if the ELRA passed, and that rape would no longer be prosecuted. Another avid opponent in the House, Rayford Price, worried that the University of Texas would no longer have a curfew for women if the ELRA passed. Senator Martin Dies, Jr., of Lufkin, maintained that if after having a family a woman went back into business, she should have a slight advantage over men. He never mentioned what this advantage should be, however. Hardeman feared the ELRA would nullify the exemption from jury duty for housewives with young children. To all these arguments, ELRA supporters replied that if the laws were worth the protection they afforded, they could extend that protection to both sexes and thus avoid discriminatory provisions.¹⁴

Occasionally, some ELRA opponents betrayed a different set of fears and misunderstandings than the ones voiced in the arguments over protective legislation. Spears maintained that the natural order demanded that the man

should be the head of the house. Price stated, "We know there has [sic] to be reasonable distinctions between the sexes."¹⁵ State Bar president W. O. Shafer from Odessa, when testifying at a committee hearing, said, "I speak on behalf of Mrs. Shafer, who is very happy at home, which perhaps indicates the position of these lovely and vivacious ladies [the seventy-five ELRA supporters at the hearing] is not unanimous."¹⁶ Senator H. J. "Doc" Blanchard, Hardeman's partner in the filibuster, indicated that facetious attitudes toward the amendment still existed when he commented, "Down on the beach in Galveston, men wear only trunks. Would this [ELRA] allow women to go topless?"¹⁷ One historian wrote that in this era of reform, antifeminism was "the only respectable prejudice left in America."¹⁸

The trivialization of women's rights and the concomitant idea that women were somehow inferior to men, whether expressed openly or covertly in the theme that women needed protection, by 1968 had a name: "sexism." Groups of women meeting to discuss women's rights analyzed the opposition to women's equality and found at its core the belief that a woman's identity depended on her relationship with a man. Her importance came from whom she married or whom she mothered. Conversely, they posited, a man's identity presupposed that women depended on them, were inferior to them. Because the psychological and sociological underpinnings of such assumptions closely

resembled those of racism, women's rights advocates coined the term "sexism" to explain the phenomenon as it pertained to women. Coincidentally, they used the phrase "male chauvinism" to represent the idea of male supremacy. These terms became part of the group language of the growing woman's movement, a shorthand way to identify the "outsider."¹⁹

By the late 1960's, the number of women active in their own movement had not only grown but had become organized. Discouraged by the failures of the various Commissions on the Status of Women to question the role of women in American society and encouraged by the analysis provided by Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique, women's rights activists started their own militant organization in 1966--the National Organization for Women (NOW). They felt that to effectively pressure the government to take the issue of sex discrimination seriously, they needed an organization similar to those generated by the black civil rights movement. The actual formation of such a group happened on the spur of the moment in 1966. At the third National Conference of the various State Commissions on the Status of Women held in Washington, Friedan and several disgruntled conference delegates agreed to form an action group. Later that year they held a formal organizing conference, enlisting three hundred charter NOW members.²⁰

Prior to NOW's formation, women's rights had received little serious consideration by the federal government. Civil rights for blacks held center stage, and many people considered women's equality a trivial issue compared to racial discrimination. Women's rights advocates felt that both issues deserved attention, and saw no reason why the advocacy of one must exclude consideration of the other. Before 1966, the 1963 Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act were the only laws addressing sex discrimination. In fact, in the Civil Rights Act, the inclusion of the word "sex" in the list of prohibited discriminations was not introduced to enlarge women's rights but was a ploy to defeat the Civil Rights Act itself. Opponents of the bill, designed to eliminate racial discrimination, hoped that the addition of the word "sex" to the drafted bill would cause enough controversy to kill it. The strategy failed, the entire Civil Rights Act passed, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was established to enforce Title VII. The legislation still allowed for sex discrimination, however, by permitting an employer to hire only one sex if he considered it reasonably necessary to carry out the task. Once again, women discovered that equality based on sex could still allow inequality. In December 1967, NOW organized perhaps the first national demonstration for women's rights--picketing the various state EEOC offices to protest listing of

help-wanted ads under separate sex headings. The EEOC issued new guidelines supporting this request the following year, although a suit by the American Newspaper Publisher's Association delayed their implementation until January 1969.²¹

NOW members were not content to be just a national organization to pressure Congress for equal rights legislation, as the National Woman's Party had become. Instead, they developed a grass-roots organization, and slowly chapters formed in cities and towns throughout the country in the late 1960's. As in the early days of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, nation-wide organization and communication was haphazard, records often being stored in boxes in officers' homes, the boxes changing hands when new officers were elected. Thus, each local group felt enough autonomy to address whichever women's issues they wanted. Some groups conservatively worked within the establishment to attain legal changes to women's status. Others focused on changing the socialization of women by attacking the media's presentation of women, or the textbooks which showed little girls applauding the exploits of little boys. Still others focused on the personal lives of their own members through "consciousness-raising" (CR) groups. These groups not only provided political education for their members, but also provided a mechanism for discussion of the psychological oppression of women.

Although CR groups resembled the earlier women's clubs of the suffrage movement, since they provided a means for self-esteem and group solidarity, they differed in that the members felt no need to justify the group by adopting a goal like the study of Shakespeare or flower arranging. The CR groups' stated function was to provide a means for resocialization of women, to share personal experiences and feelings, to encourage the view that their problems were societal, not personal.²²

While NOW was developing into a mainstream women's rights organization, another group of women formed a highly visible faction in the burgeoning women's movement. These were the women active in the civil rights and New Left movements who became disenchanted with their groups' failures to view women's demands for equality as a significant issue. The radical Women's Liberation Movement began in Chicago in 1966, spread to New York City in 1967, and by 1968 spontaneously formed in many areas around the country, particularly on college campuses.²³

The women in these new radical groups differed from those in NOW and other more structured groups. They were not caught up in any legalistic definition of women's rights. As radicals, they were accustomed to getting down to the roots of an issue. Because they were not in the mainstream culture, they began with "a high level of shared alienation. Personal life had already been politicized

. . . in the emergence of new, alternate lifestyles, in life-shattering decisions about resisting the draft, leaving school, going to jail."²⁴

While both radical and mainstream women had developed an affinity for demonstrations to publicize their causes, the radical women directed their protests toward what they viewed as the root of the women's rights problem: the sexism in the culture that denigrated women and treated them as objects for sexual pleasure or as extensions of a man's identification. Consequently, the issues they adopted clustered more around female socialization than legal rights. Their first important public demonstration against "sexism" occurred at the 1968 Miss America contest. Members of several East Coast groups crowned a live sheep as Miss America and set up a freedom trash can in which women dropped items symbolic of their identity as sex objects--bras, curlers, girdles, and high-heeled shoes. This type of street theater demonstration garnered the movement's first large-scale press coverage, although much of it ridiculed the movement.²⁵

As the Women's Liberation movement developed in other parts of the country, women radicals in Texas, many of them college students, began to form their own "women's lib" groups. Although they still participated in the anti-war movement, they began to direct some of their energy toward dramatizing the "sexist" activities on campus. At the

University of Texas at Austin, six women, known as the Guerrilla Theater Troop, spray-painted the words, "This exploits women" on seductive fraternity posters. They later defended their actions at a mock trial attended by 500 students.²⁶

Although radical women liked to strike out against the cultural attitudes toward women, they also worked to change campus policy. They wanted the university health centers to dispense birth control pills instead of morality lectures. They advocated the establishment of free twenty-four-hour child care centers on campus, so that women with small children could more easily continue their education. They urged the legalization of abortion, questioned the safety of some birth control methods, such as the pill, and shared information with each other regarding female sexuality. They questioned the male definition of "free sex," which meant that "men will be able to have all the women they want." And they differed markedly from the middle-class women's movement by cautioning against adoption of the male value system. They celebrated the traditional female virtues of pacifism, cooperation, intuition, and an emphasis on personal feelings. In an article entitled "Women for Fun and Profit," published in the underground leftist Texas newspaper The Rag, Barbara Gibson cautioned women to redirect the way the system works instead of being sacrificed to free enterprise. In "Love Is the Liberator,"

she wrote that liberation was a sex role revolution for both men and women, that women were not free if they merely embraced the male sexual role.²⁷

When the 1969 legislature met, this budding feminist movement, coupled with an openness toward equality generated by the civil rights movement and a climate of political reform, encouraged the B&PW to expect passage of the ELRA. Legislators were more amenable to equal civil rights, because the electorate included more minorities since the courts declared the poll tax unconstitutional. Legislative redistricting in 1966 granted more power to the urban areas of the state, dissipating some of the conservative influence of the rural politicians. Redistricting also forced several politicians to run against each other, giving ELRA advocates an opportunity to strengthen their cause in the legislature. In 1968, the perennial anti-ELRA senator Dorsey Hardeman lost his re-election bid to Pete Snelson of Midland. Bill Moore of Bryan, a strong worker for the ELRA in the Senate, was pitted against another long-term state senator, Neveille Colson. Colson, the only woman in Texas to serve thirty years in the legislature, had neither opposed the ELRA nor actively worked for its adoption. Her vote for the Hardeman amendment in the 1965 session, coupled with Moore's active sponsorship of the ELRA, left the B&PW no choice but to support Moore in the 1966 election, which he won.²⁸

With Hardeman gone and ELRA supporter Ben Barnes running the Senate as lieutenant governor, the amendment passed the upper house easily and early. Tobolowsky expected the measure to pass the House as well, for 107 representatives had promised to vote for the amendment, seven more than needed. However, the ELRA stayed bottled up in committee most of the session, on instructions from the new speaker, Gus Mutscher. During the last days of the session, friends of the amendment tried to force it out of committee, but the vote failed. They never learned why Mutscher opposed the measure.²⁹

By the 1971 state legislative session, the "women's movement" had caught hold as a major movement in both the country and the state. Class action suits were filed by various women's groups in an attempt to end sex discrimination in universities, law and medical schools, large corporations, and the publishing industry. The United Auto Workers endorsed the ERA, as did some women in the AFL-CIO, although the national AFL-CIO opposed it. In 1970, the ERA itself finally was debated on the floor of the United States House, after being held in committee since 1948, and was passed by a majority of 352 to 15. For the first time since 1956, the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the ERA, but Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina substituted a proposal which preserved pre-existing protective legislation, as the Hardeman amendment had done

earlier in Texas. By the time the Senate voted on the ERA, so many controversial riders weighed it down that it was defeated.³⁰

Despite the gains and impact made by the women's movement nationally, the movement in Texas in 1971 was still amorphous. No one had yet organized a NOW chapter in the state. Women's centers sprang up in various communities. These centers acted as clearinghouses for the needs of women, coordinating information about the various groups offering services which promoted the changing image of women. Although little formal organization existed, women began meeting in small CR groups, taking university courses which approached the social sciences from a woman's perspective, and reading newly published feminist books, such as Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch and Kate Millett's Sexual Politics. Universities held symposia to explore issues of interest to women. Some churches included feminism as a topic in their adult Sunday School literature. The state chapters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) voted to make the ELRA a part of its study agenda in 1968. Governors John Connally and Preston Smith each convened a Committee on the Status of Women.³¹

When the 1971 Texas Legislature met, the longtime supporters of the ELRA still worried about its chances, even though feminism garnered much attention. Previous experience had taught them that victories in the legislature

depended more on political machinations than on public opinion. To make the way as smooth as possible, Tobolowsky recommended that the B&PW, still the major group advocating the ELRA, hire a lobbyist. Since the biggest unknown quantity in the amendment's success was House Speaker Gus Mutscher, with whom Tobolowsky could establish no rapport, the B&PW board decided to ask their old friend Waggoner Carr, who had Mutscher's ear, to serve as lobbyist for the ELRA during the 1971 session.³²

The measure passed the Senate early in the session, supported by Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes. When the amendment reached the House, Mutscher did not obstruct its progress. The representatives approved the ELRA 119 to 25. Tobolowsky credited much of the victory to Carr's skillful lobbying tactics. Another factor in the amendment's successful passage in the House could have been Mutscher's preoccupation with the Sharpstown Bank bribery scandal which affected high-placed state politicians, including Mutscher himself. He expended much of his energy in the 1971 session trying to avert the scandal's effects and may have been less inclined to create more political enemies by blocking the ELRA as he had done in the previous session.³³

Tobolowsky and her coworkers wasted no time in planning a winning strategy for the ratification campaign. The amendment was scheduled to go before the voters in November 1972, so the ELRA supporters had more than a year to

convince the public of the amendment's benefits. B&PW leaders spoke to groups around the state. By then, Tobolowsky was recognized as the expert on the legal aspects of the ELRA and was interviewed, consulted, and sometimes villified by the press, radio and television.³⁴

To enlist the rank-and-file membership in securing voter approval of the ELRA, the B&PW headquarters distributed information packets to each club president with a letter detailing how members could and must get involved in the issue. Each kit contained sample newspaper ads, letters to the editor, and radio spot announcements. To insure that every club used the material, each club president was to file a report with B&PW headquarters detailing their club's activities.³⁵

The B&PW printed and distributed brochures appealing to various groups for ELRA support. The recurring theme in the pamphlets was equality for all, not merely women's rights. Since the amendment stated that "equality under the law should not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed, or national origin," minority support was courted by printing some brochures in Spanish. One pamphlet pitched its appeal toward men, another toward the business person, explaining how their interests would be served by the amendment's passage. A brief explanation of the laws which the ELRA would repeal, skillfully worded to reveal their discriminatory provisions, was printed on postcards

which each club sent to voters in their community. Bumper stickers were distributed urging a vote for "Amendment Seven," to insure the ELRA's identification with the corresponding amendment on the November ballot. A statewide "stick-on" campaign was coordinated to coincide with the first day of National Business Woman's Week in October.

The B&PW encouraged its members to distribute ELRA campaign literature at supermarkets, fairs, carnivals, and other club meetings. To help fund the ratification campaign, members sold ELRA buttons, stationery, and bumper stickers. A few days before the election, members contacted voters by telephone to remind them to vote for the ELRA. The Sunday before voting day, many churches announced support from the pulpit or published a supporting message in their bulletins.

Various feminist organizations around the state, such as Women for Change in Dallas, helped the B&PW promote the amendment. Conservative women's groups, such as the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the American Association of University Women, supported the ELRA. Although the State Bar Association still opposed the measure, several local bar associations gave it vocal support. Ironically, the League of Women Voters, descendent of the old suffrage association, refused to support the amendment, claiming their function was purely a nonpartisan, educational one.³⁶

Coincident with the Texas ELRA campaign was the passage of two important pieces of legislation by Congress. One was the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which for the first time extended the anti-discrimination provisions of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to the public sector. The other was the Equal Rights Amendment. Since the majority of Texas lawmakers favored women's rights, having passed a resolution to amend their own state constitution the year before, they ratified the ERA in a special session in March, one week after its passage in Congress. The momentum generated by this action, coupled with the hard work of the ELRA advocates, carried the state ELRA to success in November. Texas voters overwhelmingly approved the state amendment by a four-to-one margin.³⁷

The November election also resulted in voters sending five women to the Texas House, one to the state Senate, and promoting state Senator Barbara Jordan to the United States Congress. This action was partly due to the rise of a new organization in the state, the Texas Women's Political Caucus (TWPC). Established to provide women interested in running for political office training and support, the TWPC, an affiliate of the National Women's Political Caucus, held its organizing conference in Austin in 1971 and its first state convention in Dallas in March 1972. Local caucuses in various counties across the state provided the grass-roots organization needed to give the TWPC effective political

clout, while the National Women's Political Caucus gave it direction. The Caucus was nonpartisan but supported candidates who favored their agenda on women's issues. Many of its members were women who had been active in their own party until they realized that the party leadership did not take them or their platform seriously.³⁸

Caucus members did not naively believe that electing women to public office guaranteed support of women's issues, but like their early counterparts, the suffragists, they found that many women officeholders placed a high priority on legislation which benefited women. In the 1971 session just completed, one woman, Frances Farenthold, had served in the House and helped marshal the ELRA through the parliamentary maze to its passage. In the state Senate was Barbara Jordan, who, while not actively working for the ELRA did not ignore it and did cosponsor the measure during the session it passed. Both women aspired to higher office--Jordan, to the United States House of Representatives, and Farenthold, to the governorship. Jordan won her election and Farenthold seriously challenged the Democratic establishment by garnering a million votes in the primary. She defeated both Governor Preston Smith and Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes, to win a runoff slot, but lost the runoff to favored candidate Dolph Briscoe. While Farenthold's victory over Smith and Barnes reflected public dissatisfaction with their involvement in the Sharpstown

Bank bribery scandal, her strong showing also indicated that many Texans considered a woman to be a viable candidate for high state office.³⁹

This electoral success infused the Texas women's movement with new vigor. A statewide NOW organization, established by Martha Dickey in 1973, brought Texas women an affiliation with a powerful national organization. NOW chapters sprang up around the state, attracting a wide spectrum of women of different ages and occupations. Annual NOW conferences brought women from around the state together to discuss political strategies for equalizing opportunities for women. They held workshops on how to start a CR group, discussed birth control and abortion, and studied the ways women were socialized by the media and other aspects of the culture to be passive and dependent.⁴⁰

When the six newly elected women legislators took their seats in the capitol for the 1973 session, the TWPC, which now had more than 2,000 members, presented an agenda which spoke to women's concerns. The issues they addressed included child care funding, family planning services, maternity leave, removal of credit discrimination, and homestead law reform. With the help of TWPC lobbyist Cathy Bonner, and the sponsorship of newly-elected women in the House, several of these goals became law. Sarah Weddington sponsored a successful bill prohibiting sex discrimination in granting loans and other credit. Chris Miller sponsored

an amendment extending the homestead exemption to single unmarried adults, rather than just married couples. The following November, the voters ratified the amendment which also prevented a husband from abandoning and selling a homestead without his wife's consent. Eddie Bernice Johnson sponsored a successful bill to allow pregnant schoolteachers to use maternity benefits without losing their jobs. The legislature passed a bill providing state funds for family planning services, but Governor Briscoe vetoed the measure.⁴⁷

The House passed a bill to provide state-funded day care centers for mothers on welfare, so that they could take jobs, but it was blocked in the Senate by newly-elected Republican Betty Andujar. A bill to conform the remaining twenty-three discriminatory Texas laws to the Texas Equal Legal Rights Amendment, supported by all five women representatives and the House Judiciary Committee, never came to a vote because of the time spent on reform legislation that session. However, the next year those laws which limited the number of hours a woman could work without her consent were struck down by Texas Attorney General John Hill, claiming they denied men the same benefits. The legislature also revised the Penal Code and finally removed from the Texas lawbooks its infamous paramour statute, which had allowed a husband to claim justifiable homicide for killing his wife's lover. The new Penal Code also reflected

the trend to treat women as responsible persons by revoking the common-law assumption that a wife who commits a crime with her husband has been coerced, and therefore, should not receive equal punishment.⁴²

Another issue with high priority for feminists was changing the public's attitude toward the crime of rape. Heretofore, rape had been a crime in which the victim's trauma was intensified by the attitude that the rape was somehow her fault--that she had "asked for it," by dressing a certain way or leaving her windows unlocked. If she prosecuted the rapist, she found her own character on trial. The laws in Texas did not help her much, for if she were not sufficiently battered when she reported the crime, her testimony was discounted. A major goal of feminist groups in the 1970's, particularly NOW and the Women's Liberation groups, was a re-education of the public that rape was not "'liberated' fun," but was criminal violence. They wanted people to see that the victim of a rape suffered psychological pain even if physical lacerations were not evident. To that end, feminists established rape crisis centers, where rape victims could go for help and counseling. They held educational programs for police officers and hospital personnel to elicit a more sympathetic response to the victim than had previously been given. They also worked to change state laws regarding rape. In the 1973 legislative session they achieved a small victory by

successfully supporting a bill which assigned the costs of medical examinations required as evidence in a rape case to the law enforcement agency needing such evidence.⁴³

The 1975 legislature approved more rape reform legislation. Introduced in the House by Sarah Weddington and Kay Bailey, the measure encouraged a rape victim to report and prosecute the attack by changing the legal definition of rape. The old law read "A person commits an offense if he has sexual intercourse with a female not his wife without the female's consent." The revised code redefined "without consent" to mean reasonable resistance, or that the act was committed under a threat that would prevent resistance. The new law also removed the "trial of the victim" aspect of rape prosecution by requiring the defense to inform the court out of hearing of the jury of any evidence concerning the victim's past sexual conduct. The judge was to decide in chambers if the evidence was admissible; that is, if it was material to the case at issue. A third reform allowed for prosecution of rape even if the victim made no "immediate outcry," often the case because of psychological stress. As long as the victim informed any person, other than the defendant, of the offense within six months of the attack, her uncorroborated testimony sufficed to indict the rapist.⁴⁴

Other than the ERA, the feminist issue which generated the most controversy was abortion as a legal means of

reproductive control. The issue of a woman's right to have a safe, legal abortion was settled temporarily by the United States Supreme Court decision in January 1973. In the case of Roe v. Wade, argued before the Court by Texas attorney and state representative Sarah Weddington, the justices ruled unconstitutional these state laws which prohibited abortion.⁴⁵

The abortion question was part of the larger issue of reproductive self-determination, which included the legalization of birth control, the development of effective contraceptive techniques, sex education, and "the restoration of the legitimacy of female sexual pleasure."⁴⁶ The availability by the 1960's of a reliable, easy-to-use contraceptive, the anovulent pill, even with its risk factors, provided women with an effective method of controlling the biological determinism facing women of previous generations. As birth control became more acceptable in American society, the Supreme Court in 1972 ruled that birth control information and devices should be legally available for all people, married or single. The concept that a legal abortion was just one more method of reproductive control was a logical extension of the birth control movement.⁴⁷

The Supreme Court abortion decision jarred its opponents into action. "Right-to-Life" groups organized around the principle that a fetus had rights. Rhetoric on

both sides of the abortion question tended to cloud the real moral issues about the sanctity of human life, and the right-wing's adoption of an anti-abortion stance tended to discredit the contention that abortion was murder, for they argued that capital punishment and war were not. In Texas, the anti-abortionists supported a bill in the 1973 Texas Legislature which prohibited any requirement that a health care facility had to perform an abortion. Pro-abortion advocates defeated the measure on the grounds that it discriminated against women who lived in a community with only one hospital or clinic.⁴⁸

The feminist movement encompassed several groups of women who sometimes had conflicting interests, although the overriding bond of equality for women held them together. Black women, Chicanas, and lesbians worked within feminist organizations with varying measures of success. Black women were often divided on the question of where their primary loyalty lay--with black rights or women's rights--for the civil rights leaders, as had the earlier anti-slavery leaders, asked black women to forego their demands as women and concentrate on the "larger" issue of blacks as a group. Black women were encouraged to support the black male as he strived to equalize his position with the white man. Additionally, black women often felt estranged from white feminists, whose complaints about American society sometimes seemed applicable only to white middle-class women. The

resultant strain of these pulls upon their loyalties created in many black women an ambivalence about their involvement in feminist issues. When NOW and other feminist groups adopted as part of their agenda issues of interest to black women--day care centers, reform of the welfare system, racism--black women felt more comfortable working in the movement. The three black women serving in the Texas Legislature in 1973 and 1975--Eddie Bernice Johnson, Senfronia Thompson, and Wilhelmina Delco--supported feminist issues as well as those benefiting blacks.⁴⁹

The Chicana found herself in the same double-bind as the black woman. Did her first loyalty lie with the feminist movement or the Mexican-American movement? Again, the response varied. Some Chicanas worked in both movements. They participated in the decision-making for La Raza Unida, the Chicano political party established in 1970, which strongly supported women's issues and political participation, and in the state Women's Political Caucus. Most of the Chicana Caucus members felt that the organization was dominated by Anglos insensitive to the political priorities of the Chicana experience and voted to establish Chicana Caucuses which would function locally within the larger context of the TWPC. They also participated in groups which were dedicated to bringing about change in policies and opportunities for minority

women, such as the Women of Low-Income Task Force of San Antonio.⁵⁰

The third group of women unsure of their position in the women's movement were lesbians. Both they and the heterosexual women in the movement argued over what role, if any, the lesbians should play. The gay/straight split created havoc in the movement in the early 1970's. At one extreme were lesbians who demanded that men be seen as the enemy and that all feminists become lesbians. On the other extreme were those straight feminists who feared the movement would be categorized as merely "a bunch of dykes" if lesbianism was adopted as a feminist issue. Somewhere in between were feminists who viewed sexual preference as an equality issue and affirmed gay rights as part of the larger feminist plea for women's equality. The conflict was somewhat ameliorated by the concomitant development of a Gay Rights Movement which had as its primary aim the elimination of legal discrimination based on sexual preference. In Texas, as elsewhere, the acceptance of lesbians within the mainstream feminist organizations, such as NOW and TWPC, varied with each local chapter. The conflict over the issue sometimes resulted in a greater understanding between gay and straight women, but in other instances, the hostility never abated.⁵¹

As the 1970's progressed, feminism in Texas continued to gain greater influence. In 1974, each woman legislator

won re-election to the Texas Legislature, and two new women joined their ranks. The number of women elected to other Texas offices increased from 6.4 percent in 1972 to 14.1 percent in 1974. But as the movement began to reach its peak, its opponents established a counter-movement of their own, led nationally by Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly, an Illinois Republican, was a loyal member of the John Birch Society and a campaign leader in Barry Goldwater's presidential race in 1964. Her group focused on preventing ratification of the ERA, using the same arguments against women's rights as had the anti-suffragists--that it would lead to a breakdown of family life and everyone would have to use the same public bathroom. As the STOP ERA movement gathered momentum, capitalizing on the reactionary backlash against the disruption and change of the 1960's, anti-feminism became a rallying point for various right-wing organizations around the country, including the Ku Klux Klan.⁵²

In Texas, anti-feminism found expression in several groups, the most visible being Women Who Want to Be Women (WWWW) and the Committee to Restore Women's Rights. Many members were from church groups, such as the Church of Christ, the Mormons, and certain dioceses of the Catholic Church. These women followed the tactic begun by Schlafly--ask the legislature to rescind its ratification of the ERA. To that end, they convinced Fort Worth

Representative Bill Hilliard, a former supporter of the ERA, to introduce the rescission resolution in the 1975 session. WWW members, borrowing a page from the lobbying tactics of the B&PW, descended en masse on Austin for the anti-ERA hearings. They wore pink dresses and white gloves and distributed homemade bread to the legislators in the capitol halls.⁵³

Once the resolution to rescind the ERA was introduced into the House, the anti-ERA groups discovered, as earlier did the B&PW, that the legislature does not like to handle controversial issues. The measure stayed buried in committee through the parliamentary maneuvers of its chairman, Ray Hutchinson of Dallas. The bill was never introduced in the Senate, although three senators, Tom Creighton, Walter Mengden, and John Traeger, held a press conference to explain that they were waiting for the House to pass the resolution so they could bring it before the Senate. As Hutchinson pointed out, however, if they were as eager as they said to bring the matter before the Senate, they could have done so at any time. A later bill to schedule a statewide referendum on the ERA was reported out of committee but did not pass in the House.⁵⁴

Although the constitutionality of rescission and recall of the ratification of the ERA was debatable, the actions of the STOP ERA, the WWW, and other anti-feminist groups slowed the momentum of the women's rights movement in Texas,

as did the actions of the anti-abortion groups. Feminists found their energies diverted from promoting additional legal and attitudinal changes affecting the role of women. Instead they had to fight rear-guard actions to keep the changes they had already accomplished. Hermine Tobolowsky again found herself working for the ERA as head of a coalition including the B&PW, the AAUW, Women in Communication, Common Cause, and, at long last, the League of Women Voters. They, and the eight women in the 1975 legislature, fought successfully against the ERA rescission and bills limiting abortion rights.⁵⁵

With the legislature tied up considering the anti-ERA and anti-abortion measures, only a few new feminist measures saw legislative action. Rape reform legislation passed, as did a ban on pay toilets at Dallas-Fort Worth Airport, a matter which had been a minor thorn in the side of women for years. The Senate overwhelmingly passed a bill to establish a permanent Commission on the Status of Women, as Texas was the only state without one, but an unfriendly House subcommittee refused to support the measure. Another bill, supported by family law attorney Louise Raggio, provided for a readjustment allowance for "displaced housewives," those middle-aged women with no marketable skills or property whose husbands divorced them after long-standing marriages. Raggio's proposal permitted payments to ex-spouses for five years to allow them time to become self-supporting. The

bill never received much attention because its supporters were engaged in fighting the anti-ERA actions. The other changes in the status of Texas women occurred outside the bounds of the state legislature. Women were allowed to keep their own name after marriage, ruled Attorney General John Hill, and as part of a new federal Equal Opportunity Credit Act, married women could establish credit in their own name, rather than being limited by their husband's credit rating.⁵⁶

Although it was evident by the end of 1975 that the movement to counter the legislative and societal changes brought about by the women's rights movement was growing, equality advocates in Texas remained optimistic. The addition of the Equal Legal Rights Amendment to their state constitution assured them a basis for challenging legal discriminations, present and future. The state NOW organization continued to expand, with new chapters established in local communities. Women continued to be elected to public office and many supported women's issues. Although the feminist movement's momentum was slowing, the gains already made seemed to guarantee an increased measure of equality for Texas women.⁵⁷

NOTES

1. A good brief analysis of this change is found in William L. O'Neill, Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960's (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971).

2. For a discussion on protective legislation and the ERA, see Chapter IV.

3. See the comments by Commission members Esther Peterson, who opposed the ERA, and Marguerite Rawalt, who favored it, in Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, Rebirth of Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 18-24, 28-29; Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: Longman Inc., 1975), pp. 52-53, 174-77.

4. Quotations in this paragraph are found in Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), pp. 15, 311.

5. Freeman, Politics, pp. 57-62; Sara Evans, Personal Politics: the Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 159-69; Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 109-14; Roberta Ash, Social Movements in America (Chicago: Markham, 1972), p. 240.

6. Modelle and Jack Scruggs to Hermine and Hyman Tobolowsky, 28 February 1964, Tobolowsky Collection, North Texas State University Archives; interview with Hermine Tobolowsky, Dallas, Texas, 10 October 1975; interview with Alonzo Jamison, former state representative, Denton, Texas, 21 October 1976.

7. Dallas Times Herald, 15 March 1967; various letters in the Tobolowsky Collection confirm Smith's predicament, as does the Tobolowsky interview.

8. Hermine Tobolowsky to Lizette Palmer, 9 May 1964, Tobolowsky Collection; State Bar Association to all state legislative candidates, 4 April 1966, Tobolowsky Collection; Hermine Tobolowsky to Senator Walter Richter, 5 March 1965, Tobolowsky Collection.

9. Interview with Louise Raggio, Dallas, Texas, 31 October 1980, conducted by Gerald Saxon.

10. Interview with Tobolowsky.

11. Interview with Raggio.
12. Ibid.; Dallas Times Herald, 1 January 1968.
13. Hardeman's comments are in the Dallas Times Herald, 14 March 1967, 15 March 1967; Kennard's amended version of the ELRA is found in Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1967, pp. 480-81; for House activity see Texas Legislature, House Journal, Reg. sess., 1967, pp. 2412-17, 2813; Dallas Morning News, 25 May 1967; interview with Tobolowsky. All House and Senate Journals hereinafter cited are those of the Texas Legislature.
14. The "protection" argument is found in the Dallas Morning News, 25 May 1967; Spears's comments are in the Houston Chronicle, 6 February 1963; Price's statement is found in the Dallas Morning News, 19 April 1967; Dies's objections are in the Dallas Morning News, 13 April 1965; Hardeman's statements are in the Dallas Times Herald, 14 March 1967; the replies of ELRA supporters are in Hermine Tobolowsky to B&PW members, n.d., Tobolowsky Collection; Hermine Tobolowsky to Franklin Spears, 24 February 1968, Tobolowsky Collection.
15. Dallas Morning News, 25 May 1967.
16. Dallas Morning News, 19 April 1967.
17. Dallas Times Herald, 15 March 1967.
18. O'Neill, Coming Apart, p. 198.
19. Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 197, 229. For a broader discussion of woman's cultural identity, see Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1953) and Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (New York: Morrow, 1970); Anica Vesel Mander and Anne Kent Rush, Feminism as Therapy (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), p. 75.
20. Freeman, Politics, pp. 54-55; Hole and Levine, Rebirth, p. 82.
21. Caroline Bird, Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1968), Ch. 1.
22. Interview with Gail Paire, NOW member, Dallas, Texas, 20 March 1982; Freeman, Politics, pp. 83, 116-18.
23. Evans, Personal Politics, Chs. 7 and 8, gives a

detailed history of these events. See also Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 114-16, 119-23; Freeman, Politics, pp. 57-62.

24. The quotations are found in Evans, Personal Politics, p. 206. For an analysis of young radicals see Kenneth Kenniston, Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968).

25. Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 123-25.

26. Daily Texan, 1 October 1970.

27. The Rag, 27 April 1970, 10 February 1970, 3 February 1970, 27 January 1970, 12 January 1970.

28. George Norris Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 206; Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequences Since 1945 (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 312; telephone interview with Neveille Colson, Huntsville, Texas, 11 October 1976; Mary Yeager to Neveille Colson, 25 February 1965, Tobolowsky Collection; Neveille Colson to Gladys Hanrick, 27 March 1959, Tobolowsky Collection; San Angelo Standard-Times, 26 May 1966.

29. Interview with Tobolowsky; B&PW Legislative Report, 1969, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Wilma Comfort, executive secretary, Texas Federation of B&PW, Fort Worth, Texas, 26 October 1976; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1969, pp. 245, 257, 2349, 3803.

30. Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 56-57, 414-24; U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, The "Equal Rights" Amendment, Hearings on S. J. Res. 61, 91st Cong., 2d Sess., Washington, D. C., 1970.

31. Equal Times, publication of the Women for Change Center, Dallas, Texas, September 1975; interview with Nancy Franke, NOW member, Denton, Texas, 22 March 1982; interview with Carla Crisford, attorney and Denton Women's Center organizer, Denton, Texas, 20 March Dallas Morning News, 11 February 1971; United Methodist Church adult Church School literature (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1969); Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1970).

32. Interview with Tobolowsky; interview with Comfort;

B&PW Legislative Report, 1969, Tobolowsky Collection.

33. Senate Journal, Reg. sess., 1971, p. 249; House Journal, Reg. sess., 1971, p. 2351-57; interview with Tobolowsky.

34. Barbara Richardson, "Marriage and Lunacy Equal?" Dallas Times Herald, 2 November 1972.

35. Details concerning the ratification campaign are found in the B&PW information packet, Tobolowsky Collection; the amendment is found in House Journal, Reg. sess., 1971, p. 2351.

36. Gloria Steinam, Speech, Southern Methodist University, 3 February 1972; "Organizations Supporting the Equal Rights Amendment" included in the B&PW information packet, Tobolowsky Collection; interview with Bobette Higgins, League of Women Voters board member, Denton, Texas, 28 October 1976.

37. B. L. Schlei and P. Grossman, Employment Discrimination Law (Washington, D. C.: BNA Books, 1976); The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 (Washington, D. C.: The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 1972); Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 4 September 1974; Freeman, Politics, pp. 219-20.

38. Jane Hickie, TWPC co-founder interview, 27 January 1982; Dallas Morning News, 23 August 1973; Dallas Times Herald, 12 July 1972.

39. Dallas Morning News, 24 May 1975; William Broyles, "The Making of Barbara Jordan," Texas Monthly, October 1976, p. 127; Dallas Morning News, 20 April 1975; Suzanne Coleman, "The Politics of Participation: The Emergent Journey of Frances Farenthold," (Masters thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 1973), pp. 32-33, 42, 24.

40. Interview with Gail Paire; interview with Edra Bogle, NOW member, Denton, Texas, 11 April 1982; NOW Newsletter, May 1975, in possession of Edra Bogle.

41. Texas Women's Political Caucus, Texas Legislative Report (Austin, 1973); Dallas Morning News, 25 May 1973; interview with Chris Miller, Fort Worth, Texas, 16 October 1975; Elizabeth W. Fernea and Marilyn P. Duncan, eds., Texas Women in Politics (Austin, Texas: Foundation for Women's Resources, Inc., 1977), pp. 71, 75.

42. Texas, Codes, Annotated (Vernon, 1974) 1: xxxii,

234; TWPC, Texas Legislative Record; Dallas Morning News, 22 March 1974.

43. Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 395. This work is foremost in the history and analysis of rape. Dallas Morning News, 19 August 1973; interview with Gail Paire, co-founder of the Rape Crisis Center in Denton, Texas.

44. The definition of rape is found in Texas, Session Law Service (Vernon, 1975) 3: 476-79; interview with Rep. James Mattox, member of the House committee debating rape legislation, Dallas, Texas, 14 October 1975.

45. Roe v. Wade, 410 U. S. 113 (1973); Monika Maeckle, "The Double Life of Norma McCorvey," Westward, supplement to Dallas Times Herald, 18 October 1981.

46. Linda Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 409.

47. Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 461; Eisenstadt v. Baird, 405 U. S. 439 (1972).

48. Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), pp. 285-89; TWPC, Texas Legislative Record.

49. Alice Walker and others, "Other Voices, Other Moods," Ms., February 1979, pp. 50-52, 70; see also Michele Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Super Woman (New York: Dial Press, 1978) for an excellent analysis of the black woman's dilemma; Gloria Steinam, Speech; Fernea and Duncan, Texas Women, pp. 57-59, 70-72, 77.

50. Fernea and Duncan, Texas Women, pp. 119-23, 124-26, 101-3.

51. Hole and Levine, Rebirth, pp. 239-42; Freeman, Politics, pp. 134-42; interview with Edra Bogle.

52. Dallas Times Herald, 3 March 1975; Lisa Cronin Wohl, "Phyllis Schlafly, 'the Sweetheart of the Silent Majority'," Ms. (March 1974), p. 54; Dallas Morning News, 14 February 1975.

53. Interview with Chris Miller; "Pink sheets" distributed by the WWW, publicized their position, such as "Ladies! Have You Heard?" (Fort Worth, n.d.), in possession of Rep. Miller, Fort Worth, Texas; the religious affiliations of ERA opponents are found in Dallas Morning News, 20 April 1975, 1 March 1975, 7 January 1975; Dallas Times Herald, 21 May 1975, 5 March 1975.

54. Dallas Times Herald, 1 June 1975.

55. Dallas Morning News, 6 January 1975; Dallas Times Herald, 7 January 1975.

56. Dallas Morning News, 19 July 1974, 19 March 1975, 15 April 1975; interview with Meri Westergaard, vice-president, Dallas Chapter of NOW, Dallas, Texas, 7 October 1975; Dallas Times Herald, 9 December 1974; National Observer, 11 October 1975; interview with Chris Miller; Dallas Morning News, 22 March 1974, 30 October 1974, 15 August 1975; Dallas Times Herald, 26 October 1975.

57. Interviews with Gail Paire, Edra Bogle; House and Senate Journals, Reg. sess., 1977, 1979 show women serving in both houses.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In a period of a little more than fifty years, Texas women won the vote, the right to serve on juries, and equal legal rights under the state constitution. What brought about this recognition of women as equal citizens? Two factors interacted to alter the status of Texas women: a core group of leaders determined to bring about equality, and a reform spirit in the state and nation which promoted change. In both major Texas movements for women's rights, the suffrage movement and the equal legal rights movement, each factor was present. Although the cast of characters changed over time, the strategies and political "know-how" of the participants laid the foundation for change. The rise of a climate for reform coalesced with this foundation to bring about success.

The strategies used by the cadre of women who led the movements for women's equality in Texas developed "on the job." Belief in the validity of their demands left them initially unprepared for the resistance they encountered from opponents. Over the years, they learned how to use existing groups, such as the WCTU, women's literary and

social clubs, and the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, as well as new organizations strictly promoting women's rights, as a communications network. Through newsletters and meetings, they kept women informed of legislative action, when to pressure their representatives on key issues, and whom to support or defeat at election time. The leaders themselves became friends with key legislators and newspaper editors to win support for their cause. Years of this kind of work and a demonstrated power at election time created an amenable atmosphere in the state capitol. When Progressivism brought to Texas an attitude which promoted change in the early twentieth century, the suffragists had built a reservoir of support which merged with the willingness of many people to grant women the vote. Likewise, when the movements for civil rights and equality occurred in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the work done by women's rights activists coalesced with the mood for change, and the ELRA gave Texas women equal legal rights. Neither factor on its own could bring about these changes.

How could such change come about in Texas, long considered a conservative "southern" state by many historians and political analysts? First of all, Texas combines its southern roots with a western tradition of individualism, a tradition that has often viewed women as partners. The southern chivalric notion that females are delicate creatures needing protection, while prevalent in

many arguments against granting women equal rights, never held complete sway in Texas. Secondly, the racial issue, which found expression in the lofty sentiments of states' rights and the baser actions of the Ku Klux Klan and black disfranchisement, did not have the intensity in Texas that it had in other southern states. The black population in Texas was easily a minority in all areas, even East Texas, and white power groups had only a little success in creating the fear that suffrage or equal rights for women would disturb the balance of power between blacks and whites.

Although Texas is considered a conservative state, it occasionally produces a progressive senator or congressman, such as Morris Shepperd, Maury Maverick, and Lyndon Johnson. Some elected officials are conservative on certain issues, such as limiting government functions or being anti-union, but they support women's issues regardless, as did politicians like George Parkhouse and Bill Moore. The liberal or conservative label has not been a predictor of a politician's stand on women's rights in Texas. Perhaps more studies of women's activism in other states, particularly in the south, will yield enough evidence to accurately determine which variables were present in Texas which promoted a change in women's status, variables missing in other southern and border states.

Although this study focuses on the two major women's movements of the twentieth century, the truth is that the

promotion of women's issues in Texas has been an ongoing activity. Since the 1880's, some group or other has agitated for changes in the status of women, including property rights for married women, jury duty, non-discrimination in the granting of credit, and the legalization of birth control. Some groups wanted laws which benefited women: setting maximum hours, minimum wages, and better working conditions, the right to belong to unions and the right to strike, state-funded day care centers, county assistance to mothers unable to work, government-subsidized health care for mothers and their children, non-discrimination in employment, changes in rape legislation, the establishment of a state college for women, and prohibition as a means to safeguard wives from drunken husbands. Some women sought political office and focused attention on women's capabilities in the legislative arena. Some groups wanted to change society's image of women by attacking the media which objectified and stereotyped them. The ranks of women agitating for change swelled during periods of social ferment, and the greatest equalization of rights for women occurred during these social movements. It is a mistake, however, to thus conclude that women's rights were only of periodic interest to Texas women.

The promotion of women's issues in Texas has paralleled the development of such activities on the national level, although there was often a lag period ranging from several

years to several decades before some issues made an impact in the state. This lag produced some fortunate effects, however. In both the suffrage movement and the later equal rights movement, the momentum in Texas peaked at the same time the national movements did. As a result, the Texas Legislature not only granted women in the state voting rights and the Equal Legal Rights Amendment (ELRA), but also ratified both the national suffrage amendment and the national Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as well.

Within the state, how did the two major women's movements compare? Similarities are striking--both had strong leaders, whose actions initially were not taken seriously and whose support at first was marginal. Then, as their skills in the political arena increased, they formed an effective pressure group. They built grass-roots support by establishing local groups and gave them direction through a strong state organization. They used expedient arguments whenever necessary, for they believed in the justice of their cause. They each focused on one aspect of changing women's status--suffrage, and later the ELRA--then built on each measure's success. They used the momentum generated by the central issue to effect legislation which benefited women in other ways. Both movements had their radical members who wanted fundamental changes to occur at the private, rather than only at the public level. Changes in personal attitudes and sex role expectations are harder to

effect and even more difficult to measure, but the legal and institutional changes in women's status in Texas may change attitudes as well.

Another thread of continuity woven through the women's rights movements in Texas was the consistency in the type of opponents and their arguments against women's equality. While many men opposed women's rights, typically the organized opposition usually consisted of white middle-class women who claimed to favor the status quo--that is, they wanted women to have certain privileges and be excused from certain responsibilities, proclaiming that any other arrangement would lead to the breakdown of the family. By promoting the visibility of these women, women's rights opponents could validate their claim that not all women favored equality.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, anti-feminist arguments of men and women alike included Biblical and biological injunctions regarding male superiority and female subordination, the claim that feminism was a socialist or communist plot, the accusation that only women of dubious sexuality supported women's rights, the contention that women would lose more than they would gain by enlarging their political and legal rights. In addition to a desire to protect the traditional role of the sexes, opponents also argued that they were concerned for the larger questions of government--the suffrage

amendment would infringe upon states' rights, the ELRA would create endless litigation in the courts, property rights for married women would destroy the community property system. While none of these consequences have occurred since women began voting or exercising their other newly-won legal rights, the arguments are still advanced today as anti-feminists work to defeat the ERA.

The story of women's rights movements in Texas is an ongoing one, one that continues beyond these pages. If the past can be a predictor of the future, women will continue to press for those changes in the law and society that allow them equality of rights and responsibilities, that allow them to achieve selfhood. Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke of this before the House Judiciary Committee in 1892:

Nothing strengthens the judgment and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility. Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty; the right to an equal place, everywhere conceded; a place earned by personal merit, not an artificial attainment by inheritance, wealth, family, and position.¹

Eleanor Roosevelt, in a more personal way, spoke of this desire for autonomy when she wrote to a friend:

Somewhere along the line of development we discover what we really are and then we make our real decision for which we are responsible. Make that decision primarily for yourself because you can never really live anyone's life, not even your child's. The influence you exert is through your own life and what you become yourself.²

Because of the diligent efforts of feminists over the last

century, Texas women have gained the legal foundation on which to build such an autonomous life.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Speech, to the United States House Judiciary Committee, Washington, D. C., 1892, excerpted in Miriam Schneir, ed., Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 158-59.

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