



HIS 477 – WOMEN IN AMERICA

World War I and After 1914-1919 Lecture 7

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WORLD WAR I

- World War I and after seemed to offer women unparalleled opportunities. The war drew women out of their homes in unprecedented numbers.
- Progressivism continued but women added war related issues as well.
- Because they believed it their moral responsibility to bring order to a chaotic world, women supported peace by organizing groups such as the Women's Peace Party (WPP).
- Women leaders of the peace movement helped found groups such as
 - The National Civil Liberties Bureau
 - Non-conscription League
 - League for the Amnesty of Political Prisoners
 - American Liberty Defense Union

WORLD WAR I

- Founded in 1915 and led by Jane Addams and other well-known reformers, the WPP dedicated itself to promoting pacifism and feminism.
- The WPP leaders maintained that woman suffrage and women's participation in government would help stop war.



WORLD WAR I

- In 1915, civil libertarians Jessie Wallace Hughan established the Anti-Enlistment League and then the War Resistance League to support men and women opposed to the war.



WORLD WAR I



- Lugenia Burns Hope, wife of John Hope principal of Morehouse College, worked for civil rights in Atlanta and the nation. Hope's Neighborhood Union founded in 1908 became a model for urban reform and later part of the community chest.



WORLD WAR I

- When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the WPP decreased its criticism of male leaders but continued to support pacifism and instituted educational programs to inform the American public about the “causes and cures” of war.
- At the same time, woman-suffrage leaders encouraged women to support the war.
- In June 1917, *World's Work* predicted that women would not have to do industrial work as a part of the war effort.
- Throughout the summer of 1917, the Department of Labor repeatedly announced that no additional female laborers would be needed, that plenty of male workers existed to fill the jobs created by war industries.

WORLD WAR I

- The Department of Labor advised women to help the war effort in other ways; particularly as homemakers by conserving food and other resources needed for the war effort.
- In response to this call, women created meatless, wheatless, and butterless meals and knitted their own socks and sweaters and cut their skirts short to save material.
- As in previous wars, women maintained their homes, farms, and families alone.
- They also volunteered their services for war relief, joining war-bond drives, and selling bonds in club meetings, in shops, and on the streets.
- Other women enlisted.

WORLD WAR I

- Women's Motor Corps drove trucks and ambulances
- The United States Army Nurse Corps, founded in 190, was reorganized in 1917 with increased pay but no benefits. It fielded 8,538 nurses to assist the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe
- The Navy Nurse Corps founded in 1908, supplied another 11,275 nurses
- Most of these organizations excluded black women; therefore, black women organized their own organizations.
 - The Atlanta Colored Women's War Council established Patriotic Leagues for young black women

WORLD WAR I

- In the South, the Committee on Women's Defense Work of the Council of National Defense exerted pressure on local groups and governments to integrate black women into the war efforts.
- Field representative, Anna Dunbar Nelson traveled the South organizing black women and despite problems the Women's Committee opened new opportunities for black women.
- The first draft held on July 20, 1917 called 1,347,000 men.
- During fall 1917, the United States Employment Service attacked the problem by launching a governmental campaign to recruit women workers for war-industry jobs.
- As they always had during national emergencies, women came out of their homes to do jobs and provide the services that the country needed.

WORLD WAR I

- A survey of more than 500 factories revealed the 14,402 women employed before the first draft became a total of 19,783 after the first draft and 23,190 after the second draft.
- Over the course of World War I, four hundred thousand women joined the labor force for the first time, while eight million already employed women switched to better paying industrial jobs.
- Mothers with small children also entered the labor force in growing numbers but could choose to stay home and receive a mother's pension.
- In 1911, Kansas City, Missouri, enacted the first mother's pension law, and by 1919 thirty-nine states had followed. This forerunner of Aid to Dependent Children program offered assistance to widowed mothers, and occasionally to divorced and deserted women as well.

WORLD WAR I

- Women's expectations for employment opportunities and wages rose during the war years.
- White women working in industry and agriculture confronted gender prejudice early. The traditional idea of women as wives and mothers persisted; many men believed that women who had to work should be limited to certain "female" occupations and that women who did not have to work should stay home.
- Men frequently staged protests and strikes to resist the hiring of women. They also used protective legislation to block women from a variety of jobs.
- Discriminatory attitudes and practices permeated nearly every industry and business; even the federal government.
 - One official explained that "certain positions in the public service cannot be filled by women" who could not tolerate the "strain" involved.

WORLD WAR I

- For women of color, the situation proved more complicated. They experienced the double-jeopardy of gender and race prejudice and wartime labor demands opened only a limited number of industrial jobs.
- The federal government organized the National War Labor Board (NWLB) in 1918 to deal with issues concerning female laborers.
- In 1918 women workers received only one-half to two-thirds the wages earned by men.
- The NWLB adopted the principle of equal pay for equal work.
- By the end of the war, the NWLB had gained shorter workdays and established women's right to join unions but failed to devise any consistent policy on working women or to establish the basic equality of women in industry and business.

WORLD WAR I

- It also failed to prepare for demobilization and the difficulties of replacing women in the labor force.
- Employers, government officials, and policymakers involved gender expectations and social constructs regarding women to soften the blow of kicking them out of their jobs.
- They assured women that they were needed far more in their homes than in their jobs; and that they had to repopulate the United States to help democracy remain strong in the world.
- Despite this rhetoric, working women opposed giving up their high-paying jobs. More than half of working women voiced their preference to continue working and that they expected equal wages.

WORLD WAR I

- In spite of the protests and strikes by women, beginning in late 1918 heavy industries phased out women workers.
 - Several trends developed as women left their wartime jobs:
 - Rapidly lost jobs in areas such as steel, chemicals, electrical goods, airplanes and automobiles
 - Female employment remained high in tobacco, leather, and food processing, clerical work, and sales
 - Women in the clerical sector, telephone and telegraph operators, clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers, secretaries, and sales personnel, experienced significant gains
- This meant the labor force looked more like its prewar profile than its wartime one.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE TRIUMPHANT

- Unlike previous wars, during World War I most women reformers refused to abandon women's rights.
- Women now believed that their admission to the public sphere would allow them to reform the workplace, schools and colleges and the family structure.
- They intensified their argument that it was necessary to give women the vote so they could clean up society more effectively.
- At the same time, the National American Women Suffrage Association underwent an organizational fervor that resulted in the proliferation of state and local suffrage associations.
- In Missouri, for example, Emily Newell Blair began to edit a suffrage magazine called the *Missouri Woman*. Blair used the paper to establish links between the Missouri Equal Suffrage Association and other women's groups.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE TRIUMPHANT

- NAWSA also experimented with tactics such as open-air meetings, silent pickets, leaflet campaigns, and suffrage parades.
- It acquired aggressive new leaders such as Inez Milholland an attorney and Socialist who paraded and picketed on behalf of woman suffrage and women workers.
- In 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt, resumed the presidency of NAWSA.
- Catt combined her years of experience working with the Woman Suffrage Party of New York City, a two million dollar anonymous bequest and her own political savvy to devise her “winning plan” which entailed concentrated lobbying on the federal level with state campaigns.
- Catt’s goal was to gain suffrage amendment to the U.S. constitution by December 1920.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE TRIUMPHANT

- The campaign intensified when President Wilson declared the war one “to save democracy.”
- NAWSA soon hired women organizers such as Maud Wood Park to travel, state to state forming suffrage associations.
- When Park joined the NAWSA Congressional Committee, she found out about the files that held “531 portfolios, 96 for the Senate and 435 for the House.”
- The portfolios provided “all the known data about a senator or representative.”
- By 1919, the NAWSA has spurned the efforts of black women to join them, further alienating black Americans from the suffrage cause. A large number of black women refused to desert the suffrage cause and organized their own suffrage clubs.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE TRIUMPHANT

- The NAWSA faced opposition from white women as well. First organized as the Congressional Union in 1913, Alice Paul's Woman's Party had years of experience with suffrage campaigning.
- Paul believed in high pressure techniques such as the ones she had seen in England.
- Beginning in 1917, the Woman's Party initiated twenty-four hour pickets of the White House.
- When troops arrested, jailed, and force-fed these women to avert hunger strikes, newspapers reported the stories widely.
- Female picketers persisted in carrying banners reading "Democracy Should Begin at Home," "How Long Must Women Wait for Liberty!" and "Kaiser Wilson."

WOMAN SUFFRAGE TRIUMPHANT

- The resulting riots, arrests and hunger strikes by imprisoned women attracted even more publicity and placed greater pressure on President Wilson.
- Rose Winslow a member of the Woman's Party was arrested during the White House demonstrations and suffered force-feedings.
- She smuggled information out of jail to her husband and other suffragists regarding the conditions she suffered and indicated that Alice Paul had been confined to the psychopathic ward.
- These hunger strikes and other actions of Woman's Party members embarrassed NAWSA, who often branded them irrational and unproductive.
- The Woman's Party maintained that it was its militant tactics that finally forced the hands of the President and Congress.
- On January 8, 1918 President Wilson advised a group of Democrats to vote for the suffrage amendment.

JEANETTE RANKIN AND THE “ANTHONY” AMENDMENT

- The day after Wilson’s announcement, women packed the house galleries to see Representative Jeanette Rankin introduce the Anthony amendment which stated “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”



ANTHONY AMENDMENT

- To support the amendment one very ill representative was carried in on a stretcher to cast his vote; while another left the deathbed of his suffragist wife.
- The vote stood at 274 for and 136 against; one more than necessary for the two-thirds majority.
- The amendment moved to the Senate where it remained for a year and a half; finally on June 4, 1919 the Senate approved the woman suffrage by a vote of 63 to 30.
- The amendment needed 36 states for ratification. By August 1920, 35 states had voted ratification. Only one was needed and only one possibility existed – Tennessee.

THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

- On August 26, 1920 the Secretary of State proclaimed the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Seventy-two years had passed since the convention at Seneca Falls.
- Because they had devoted so much emotional energy and hope for the future in the vote, activist women were crushed when they learned it was not “the” answer after all.
- Within a few years, it became evident that women did not vote in blocs or react uniformly to women’s issues.
- Like men, women voted in terms of such factors as their social class, educational level, race, religious affiliation, geographical location, and similar influences.

THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT



- After the passage of the Nineteenth amendment, NAWSA, the Women's Party and other women's groups drastically disagreed on how further reforms for women might be activated or whether they were necessary.
- Women's efforts after 1920 were fragmented.
- Anna Howard Shaw foresaw this development when she stated that "I am sorry for you young women who have to carry on the work for the next ten years, for suffrage was a symbol, and now you have lost your symbol."
- The suffrage movement broke into factions including social feminists, feminists, pacifists, etc.

