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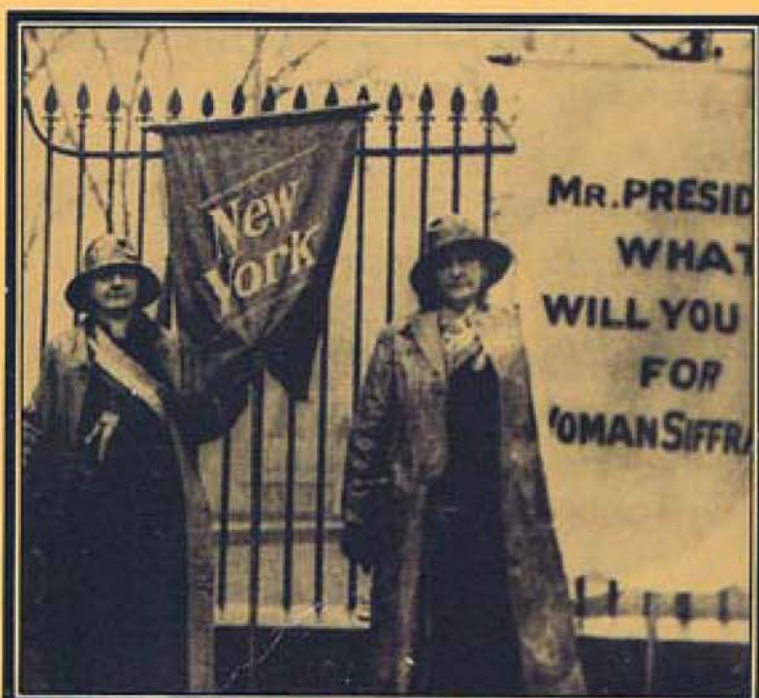
Interview of Laura Ellsworth Seiler: An American Suffragist

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FROM PARLOR TO PRISON

*FIVE AMERICAN SUFFRAGISTS
TALK ABOUT THEIR LIVES*

SHERNA BERGER GLUCK



N · E · W · F · E · M · I · N · I · S · T · L · I · B · R · A · R · Y



LAURA ELLSWORTH SEILER: IN THE STREETS

Laura Ellsworth Seiler, at the age of eighty-two, though not an active participant in the current women's movement, closely follows its literature. She is particularly interested in vocational guidance for women as a result of her own long professional career. She has written a manual, as yet unpublished, on career management for women.

Laura is an attractive, perfectly coiffed, gray-haired woman who appears twenty years younger than her actual age. Her manner is very proper and businesslike, and her speech seems to bear the mark of lessons in elocution. Despite this outward formality and a clear reluctance to discuss her private life in any detail, Laura was quite cordial and eager to share her suffrage experiences.

When we recorded the first of two interviews in October 1973, Laura had just moved into a retirement facility in Claremont, California. Her apartment was tastefully and simply decorated with the artifacts obtained during her extensive travels. Among her books were several on the suffrage movement, a few on today's women's movement and a scrapbook covering her career in advertising. Though she is on congenial terms with the other inhabitants of the retirement facility, it is obvious that her life has been very different from the lives of most of the

others and that her support of feminist goals is not shared by them.

Laura Seiler is an accomplished public speaker and a gifted storyteller; it is difficult to capture in print the marvelous vitality and perfect timing of her accounts. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that this well-groomed, dignified woman participated in that part of the suffrage struggle that today might well be called "guerrilla theater."

A PROPER BACKGROUND

All of my ancestors, on both sides, so far as I know, were in America before 1700. So it's a straight New England background until the generation in which I was born. My grandfather had a period of retirement because of a breakdown in health. When he decided to practice law again, he settled in Ithaca. It was a family joke that he moved to Ithaca because he had four daughters and a new college had just opened, that he moved to Ithaca to marry them off. Two of them did marry Cornell men. So even though they were in New York, I always thought of my family as New Englanders in exile. It seemed to me that they bore down more heavily on New England traditions than if they'd still been living there.

I was born in Buffalo in 1890, but when I was only six months old my mother and father separated and we moved to my maternal grandfather's household in Ithaca. My grandfather had been a judge, and though I don't think he was anything very important in the way of a judge, he was always called Judge Ellsworth. The household consisted of my grandmother and grandfather, a maiden aunt, my mother and the three of us children. I was the youngest. My sister was seven years older than I, and my brother five.

The house was very large. That was the day, of course, when you still had sleep-in servants. Down in the rather large, halfway basement was the dining room, a large pantry, a huge kitchen and what was called the maids' sitting room. It was called that because it was furnished so that they could have fun there. Beyond that, there was an enormous cellar. There was an outside entrance to the maids' sitting room so that their guests could come and go, and that's where the deliveries were made, too.

The first floor had a big central hall, a music room, a library, front and back parlors, and a very large bed/sitting room and bath for my grandfather and grandmother. On the other side

was another bedroom with a room off it which was used for storage.

Up on the second floor there were one, two, three bedrooms and a bath in the front of the house, and what was then called the sewing room. Then you went down a flight of steps to a door, and there were one or two rooms for servants, and a big storage room, out of which came the most peculiar things when we had to break up the house (among others, a straw frame for hoopskirts). I don't think anything had been taken out of the room for twenty-five or thirty years.

When we first came home to my grandfather's, my mother was very ill, and for a while they weren't quite sure she was going to recover. But then she grew stronger. Of course, in those days it was unusual for a woman to be divorced, and I think that my mother, when she returned to the bosom of an orthodox Episcopalian family, was definitely made to feel it was improper; this living away from the husband was not the thing to do.

I definitely suffered very much when I was a small child because my sister told me, very early, that I must not ask my mother any questions about it. So I really hadn't the remotest idea where my father was or what was the matter with him. It bothered me a great deal. Some of the children might have had fathers who worked in Buffalo or someplace like that but they came home on weekends. I was the only one who had no father.

Of course, I have since thought that, in spite of the enormous disadvantages of not having a father, it was probably also partly responsible for my somewhat more friendly and less critical attitude toward men. I really never, in my family, encountered the thing known as a dominating male. My grandfather then was too old and too mellow, and, of course, charming with us children. He never was the tyrannical sort. I just grew up liking men and never have seen any cause to change my mind.

Grandfather was really the most important person in my group. When we moved into his house he was seventy-four and still practicing law. Later, after he retired, I used to spend a great many hours with him. He mostly sat about in a chair on

the porch or in the house. My grandfather was what used to be called a “freethinker.” He got his Phi Beta Kappa key back in 1835, when he was in Union Law School. In those days Phi Beta Kappa was an organization of freethinkers; that’s what it means, its philosophy, the key of life. I can’t remember any big lectures on ethical subjects, but I do think his attitude must have somehow been bred into me. It seems to me that very early in my life I realized that you didn’t judge people by what they had, but by what they were. I have an idea that these things were offshoots of my grandfather’s conversation and of other things that went on in the house.

My grandfather was a Democrat, and a Democrat in upstate New York was an oddity. He didn’t think much of the local papers, so he always had the *Rochester Democrat* and *Chronicle* sent to him. It was a family custom to gather around the table in Grandfather’s bedroom while Grandfather read the things he considered important that day. My older sister and brother sat in on these. I was too little—I knew that and never participated.

All the rest of the family were very orthodox Episcopalians, I should say. I can still remember my grandmother asking him to go to church and he, retorting with a grin, “No. I’m glad to pay for the pew, but you go and sit in it.”

My grandmother was a rather protected Victorian woman. She was quite an attractive woman, rather small, and led a quite normal social life. My grandfather didn’t like very well having people asked to meals. I remember that it had to be arranged with him beforehand, and there were not very many people he liked to have invited. Usually, when people came to the house they were calling on my grandmother, aunt and mother, and we entertained them at the front of the house. Only occasionally were they taken back to my grandfather’s room.

I don’t remember my grandmother going out to anything like club meetings. They went out to receptions, as they were called in those days. And I also remember that in the winter they had perpetually going what was called duplicate whist.

There were boards just big enough to hold four hands of

cards under elastics. They had a series of them, I would guess probably twenty. As I recall, they had two tables always in the front parlor. And they played the boards all the way through, and kept track of their scores. The boards were shifted one to the right, so they went through again playing the hands their opponents had played, and then compared the scores at the end. That was called duplicate whist, and they did it all winter long.

One of my earliest and most charming recollections of my grandmother and grandfather was when I was quite small. Theoretically the door to my grandfather's bed/sitting room was always closed, and you knocked before you went in. But being small, I disregarded that and swung the door open and discovered my grandmother sitting on my grandfather's lap. I was so surprised. I'd never seen anything like that before in my life.

My mother's life was mostly concerned, of course, with us children. She wasn't too active outside the household, though since she had grown up in Ithaca she had plenty of friends. She didn't do anything special that I can recall in the way of church work, though we all went to church very regularly. One of my happiest recollections is that during Lent I always went with my mother, across the park where our church was, for the five o'clock Lenten services, which I enjoyed very much.

I didn't have any contact with my father or his family until I was eight when, for the first time, we were invited by my grandmother to spend the Christmas in Buffalo. That was the first time I ever saw my father. Then we also went back the year they had the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, in 1901. We spent almost the whole summer in Buffalo going to the fair every other day and staying with my grandmother and my father. That was about all, just very minimal contact.

My mother and father were originally just separated. My mother didn't get the divorce until 1900. My grandfather insisted she get it because he felt he wasn't going to live much longer, and wanted that all settled—for matters of the estate, I suspect.

My grandmother died of pneumonia very soon after she and my grandfather celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1899. That was a very exciting affair. My eldest aunt came back from St. Louis, where she lived. My grandfather retired about that time, when he was eighty-one or eighty-two. He died two years later, when he was eighty-four, in 1901. The last year or so, we had an old Civil War veteran who acted as companion to him, helping him around.

When we were growing up, it was always taken for granted that we would all go to college. My sister and I were really the first generation of women in my family to go to college. Mother had wanted to be a doctor, but they told her that she didn't have the physique for it. I think many girls were discouraged in that age by telling them that it was too strenuous and they could never do it. So she didn't go to college. She was always quite resentful, I think, that she hadn't. I don't think there was a finishing school in Ithaca in her days. I don't recall that she did anything in the way of a special school after she finished high school.

But we were all infected with the Cornell idea. My father had been a Cornell man, and also students frequently came to call on my sister. It was just taken for granted that we would all go to Cornell. We were always invited to parties at Sigma Phi fraternity, my grandfather's fraternity at Union. I think it was assumed that my sister, at least, would pursue a career. At that time she was utterly devoted to my grandfather, and she herself wanted to be a lawyer. I think she must have discussed it quite often with Grandfather. She abandoned the idea only after she took a year off between her junior and senior years in college and came down and worked for a year in New York. Then it was that she fell in love with Wall Street and decided that she preferred to go into the bond and stock business rather than be a lawyer.

While she was in school, she was determined to do well. She got the Phi Beta Kappa, too, and has always had my grandfather's key. I was so cross that there was only one large key, so

that when I got mine, I bought the smallest one there was—it's about an inch long. I was furious that I couldn't have my grandfather's.

When my sister was a student at Cornell, Nora Stanton Blatch, Harriet Stanton Blatch's daughter and the granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was also a student there. They were great friends. I can remember Nora coming to dinner and much discussion of suffrage and so forth. Nora was in and out of our house in 1903 or 1904 when I was still in high school. So it was no surprise when my sister graduated that she should take a very active part in working for suffrage in New York.

I don't think my mother and aunt were much involved in these discussions, though my mother, being very maternal, was sympathetic about suffrage. I would never say that she was a confirmed suffragist; I don't think it would ever have occurred to her if her daughters hadn't been so much interested.

I remember something I thought was quite funny that happened when I was in high school. The speech teacher thought it would be highly instructive to have a debate on woman's suffrage. She picked out two girls, of which I was one, to do the affirmative, and two boys to uphold the negative. And we had a spirited debate before the school assembly. The really funny thing was that in the heat of rebuttal, I announced in firm tones, "The more responsibility you give women, the more they'll have," and there was a burst of howls from the audience, and I couldn't imagine for the moment what I'd said that was so funny. I heard about that for years afterwards.

Well, we won the debate, but then I was not especially interested in suffrage. I don't remember being interested in it again until I was in college. One day the boy that I was engaged to—somebody had said something about the law about suffrage—I heard him saying, rather smugly, "Laura doesn't believe in suffrage or any of that nonsense," and all of a sudden, I knew I did! That must have been around my junior year, and I forthwith started the Suffrage Club at Cornell among the coeds.

I didn't go to Cornell until 1908, though I graduated from high school in 1907; Cornell didn't take girls until they were

seventeen, so I had to wait a year. I spent the winter of that year down in Panama, from about October till February. My father was an architect and he was the official estimator on buildings for the Canal Zone when they were building the canal. My grandmother had been down there with him, and he thought it would be very nice if I came down and spent the winter with my grandmother and him. So I did that, not doing anything special, just having a lot of fun.

I got back just in time to take the last semester in high school again and then I took some postgraduate work. The following autumn I went to the University. I took an arts course, as my sister had done. My brother was both an engineer and a naval architect. I took the number of courses in modern languages to get by for my major. I just took the courses that interested me: evolution, comparative religions, lots of philosophy, some psychology. Every year, when I took my list of courses to be okayed by my faculty adviser, he would heave a large sigh and say, "I suppose if you don't intend to teach, it doesn't matter, because this is a salad course."

I got Phi Beta Kappa, for reasons that were a great surprise to me, since I had not especially concentrated on high marks. Meeting one of my professors coming up the hill one day, I expressed my surprise. He said, "Well, it was kind of a relief to be able to vote for somebody who hadn't always had her nose in a book."

I expected to do something after I graduated. My sister would never have let me get to that point without a definite idea that I was going to have a career. I wouldn't say that I had any clear idea, though, because years afterwards, when I was invited back to Cornell to make a vocational speech to girls, the dean of women said to me laughing, "Laura, do you know what you put on your application when you came in? As a freshman, you were asked what you intended to do. You put down that you intended to be a teacher, and the next question was why, and you said, 'Because they have such long summer vacations.'"

I definitely was engaged when I left Cornell, and I also was definitely planning to do something. You see, when my grand-

father's estate was settled, it was divided evenly among his four daughters—except that he subtracted from my mother's part the very considerable sums of money that he had advanced to her during her most unsatisfactory marriage. So my mother with three children got very much less than the other three who had no children, which made it quite tough.

By the time we were ready to come down to New York, I don't think there was very much capital left. I always expected that I would be doing something in the way of earning a living, but I had no very definite ideas about it.

BECOMING AN ORGANIZER FOR SUFFRAGE

It was while I was at Cornell that I became involved in the suffrage movement. It was a very natural thing for me to be interested in suffrage because of my sister's association with Nora Blatch. My sister graduated in 1908 and went to New York and was the vice president of the Women's Political Union, which was, I think, the most militant of the national organizations. So by the time I went to Cornell, my sister was already working furiously for suffrage in New York.

I wasn't doing anything about it except reading some of the books. Of course, I took time off and went down and marched in the suffrage parade at my sister's behest. I think I probably marched with the Women's Political Union. That was, I think, the 1912 parade which Inez Milholland led, looking very beautiful, mounted on a white horse. There were also about a hundred men in the parade. Believe me, they had courage! Whoo! It took so much more courage for a man to come out for woman's suffrage than it did for a woman. They were quite remarkable.

EDITORIAL

THE HEROIC MEN

The facts are all in print now about the masculine adherents of the woman suffragists who will march in the parade to-morrow. There will be 800 of them surely. They will represent every trade and profession except the clergy. This is clearly an oversight which should be rectified. There is no lack of clergymen ready to support the cause of votes for women. For the rest the list includes bankers, manufacturers, students, librarians, dentists, musicians, booksellers, journalists, as well as dancing teachers, egg inspectors, capitalists, watchmen, ladies' waistmakers — and authors. A lawyer will carry the banner, and a drum and fife corps will head the division.

This is important news and not to be trifled with. The men who have professed to believe in woman suffrage have always been numerous. But these men are going to do more than profess, they are going to march before the eyes of the more or less unsympathetic multitude. It is one thing to sit on the platform and smile at a woman's meeting,

quite another to march behind a gaudy banner to the inspiration of the squeaking fife, in order to indicate one's belief in the right of women to the ballot. The men will be closely scanned, but they will not mind that. They will be called endearing names by small boys on the sidewalk. But doubtless they will study to preserve their gravity. They will not march as well as the women. Only trained soldiers can compete with the amazons in keeping step. There must be strong inducement to make men march in a woman's parade. Some may be looking for customers. We suspect both the waistmakers and the dentists, for instance. But the majority must firmly believe in the righteousness of the cause, and also in the value to it of their public appearance in line. They are courageous fellows. The march of the 800 may be renowned. We hope they will all hold out from Thirteenth Street to Carnegie Hall, and we extend to all the 800 our sympathy and admiration.

THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1912

SUFFRAGE ARMY OUT ON PARADE

*Perhaps 10,000 Women and Men Sympathizers
March for the Cause.*

STREETS PACKED FOR THEM

*Cheers for the Women and Some Good-Natured
Jesting at the Men.*

AGED LEADERS APPLAUDED

*They Rode in Flower-Bedecked Carriages—
Women on Horseback and "Joan of Arc"
Win Plaudits.*

*Part IX. of this morning's Times
consists of four pages of pictures
of yesterday's suffrage parade.*

Ten thousand strong, the army of those who believe in the cause of woman's suffrage marched up Fifth Avenue at sundown yesterday in a parade the like of which New York never knew before. Dusty and weary, the marchers went to their homes last night satisfied that their year of hard work in preparing for the demonstration had borne good fruit.

It was an immense crowd that came out to stand upon the sidewalks to cheer or jeer. It was a crowd far larger than that which greeted the homecoming of Theodore Roosevelt and the homecoming of Cardinal Farley. It was a crowd that stood through the two hours of the parade without a thought of weariness. Women, young and old, rich and poor, were all banded into a great sisterhood by the cause they hold dear.

THE NEW YORK TIMES SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1912

EDITORIAL

THE UPRISING OF THE WOMEN.

The parade on Fifth Avenue last evening of possibly 10,000 women of various ages, many of them young and personable, all surely representative of good

types of womanhood, for they were obviously healthy and presumably intelligent, will be discussed from various points of view. Most of the comment it

provokes will be humorous but amiable. Men generally view the woman suffrage movement calmly, seeming not to care much whether or not the women get the right to vote, and heeding little the consequences of the social revolution which would result from the triumph of the present agitation. A few men believe that the right of suffrage should be extended forthwith to the women. Our observation does not justify the inference that they are wise and thoughtful men, but they are certainly more admirable and entitled to more respect than the men who, believing the contrary, possessed of the knowledge that the vote will secure to woman no new privilege that she either deserves or requires, that the enfranchisement of women must inevitably result in the weakening of family ties, yet look upon the woman suffrage movement complacently and dismiss it with idle, trivial comment.

The situation is dangerous. We often hear the remark nowadays that women will get the vote if they try hard enough and persistently, and it is true that they will get, and play havoc with it for themselves and society, if the men are not firm and wise enough and, it may as well be said, masculine enough to prevent them. The agitation has been on foot for many years. One does not need to be a profound student of biology to know that some women, a very small minority, have a natural inclination to

usurp the social and civic functions of men. But that is not true of a majority of the women in yesterday's parade, or of their thousands of sympathetic sisters who lacked the physical vigor, the courage, or the opportunity to join in the march. Their adherence to the cause is largely factitious, born of much agitation and much false theorizing. There are, however, unhappy creatures to whom the state of being a woman is naturally burdensome. Their influence would not count for so much if their less unhappy sisters, who have no real grievance against Mother Nature or society, would not give them countenance. There are numberless explanations of the conduct of otherwise nice and womanly women in this matter. There are few that can fairly be called "reasons."

We are told by some sages that education has made women discontented. It has made men discontented, too, for that matter. The equality of opportunity all men possess in this country has not allayed the discontent. There is no reason to suppose that the right to vote would allay feminine discontent. Granted the suffrage, they would demand all that the right implies. It is not possible to think of women as soldiers and sailors, police patrolmen, or firemen, although voters ought to fight if need be, but they would serve on juries and elect themselves if they could to executive offices and Judgeships. Many of

them are looking forward to an apportionment of high offices between the sexes. This may seem preposterous to some of the men who chose to smile complacently at the aggressiveness of the women's rights adherents, but it is true. It is a state of things these men will have to cope with before they die if they do not arouse themselves and do their duty now.

We have said that the ballot will secure to woman no right that she needs and does not now possess. That is a true statement, and we hold that it is not debatable. Woman is thoroughly protected by the existing laws. Her rights as a taxpayer, a holder of property, are not in danger. Her dower rights are scrupulously upheld in the probate courts. In her pursuit of all the privileges and duties of men, however, she is deliberately endangering many rights she now enjoys without legal sanction. . . . It will be a sad day for society when woman loses the respect she now receives from all but the basest of men. Yet yesterday's parade demonstrates that she holds male courtesy in slight regard, or would, if we were willing to regard the parade as a demonstration of the feelings and opinions of all our women.

Millions of men labor all their years to keep up a home, of which a woman is mistress. Poor enough the home may be, and the measure of toil its upkeep demands of the man may age him

prematurely and deprive him of all the freedom which he instinctively desires. But most men throughout the civilized world have been doing their duty as husbands and fathers, as citizens, according to their lights. That the triumph of woman suffrage would tend quickly to change the point of view of these millions of plodding men is not to be doubted. If woman declares her independence, and forces the State to recognize it, the cry of the men will be "Let her uphold it and enjoy it as best she may." From the beginning "man that is born of woman" has been "of few days and full of trouble." Presumably he will continue to be born. Presumably he will continue to respect his mother, as ISHMAEL did. But with the opportunity afforded to him by the refusal of woman to recognize his manhood as a title of supremacy in the world's affairs, he will be at pains to avoid some of the troubles which he has hitherto regarded as part of his heritage.

This we hold to be inevitable. Let the women who are not yet avowed suffragists consider it. Above all, let the complacent multitudes of men who have accepted the full responsibility of citizenship consider it. There were, at most, 10,000 women in yesterday's parade. If their cause triumphs there will be 700,000 women voters in this municipality. Have the 10,000 thought much about the measure of influence they would exert if the

whole number voted under the environment and as their intelligence impelled them to?
control of their associations and

There were not very many people interested in suffrage at that time. But, I started the Suffrage Club in 1912. I don't know whether it was my idea or whether my sister asked me to do it. I just called, or put up a notice, or something. I didn't live at the dormitory; I lived at home. I called a meeting in our general auditorium and explained to them about the suffrage movement.

Cornell at that time had only about three hundred women and some four thousand men. I'd say we probably had a pretty big club before we got through. And, of course, it went on after I left. I should guess that we must have had at least seventy-five, something like that. It was fairly popular with the women.

Of course, we were not very aggressive suffragists. We met in the women's dormitory and mainly just had meetings by ourselves. But after the group had been going for a while, we staged a debate. One of the men students came over to see me one day to say that his mother, who was a prominent anti-suffragist, was coming to visit him. He asked if I would like to arrange a debate while she was there. I was entitled to ask that one of the big auditoriums be set aside, and so I said, "Yes, I would."

I didn't think it was suitable for a person my age to debate his mother. This was fairly early in the suffrage movement and there was no suffrage group in Ithaca. If there was, I would have asked the head of that. But the Women's Club was vaguely interested in suffrage, so I consulted the president, the wife of an instructor and she agreed to debate. She was a very earnest young woman but not a skilled debater.

The woman who came from New York was a true *grande dame* indeed, with all the polished manner to go with debating. Sitting up on the platform, as chairman, I became congealed with horror because what was developing was a hair-pulling performance, sending the audience into fits of laughter. The woman from New York would say, "Now my esteemed op-

ponent has said so-and-so,” and the other woman, who was by then furious at the customary misleading statements that anti-suffragists specialized in, would say, “What she says is not so!” or, “That’s a lie!”

I, of course, grew frantic realizing that the people in the audience, many of whom were townspeople as well as students, were going out to laugh their heads off. Certainly, it was going to do suffrage no good. I also knew chairmen were supposed to keep their mouths shut, but I was a suffragist and I wasn’t going to let this thing go down the river!

So I rose at the end and thanked both of them and then proceeded, rather crisply, I think, in about five minutes, to point out to them the difference between personality and causes. They could leave either confirmed in reaction with the anti-suffragists or planning to go ahead with the suffragists. And, as sometimes happens in those circumstances, I was so convinced that I was right that I felt about eight feet tall and I’ve never spoken better—with the result that I got an ovation at the end.

It did result in more women students joining our suffrage organization. All together it turned out well in the end, except that I received a letter of reprimand from my sister, who said, “Well, I hope you realize now all you did was to furnish an audience and a platform for an anti-suffragist.” But I continued to believe that people should hear both sides of the story. It may not have been good maneuvering, but I thought it was the honest way to do it.

Then, in 1913, when I graduated, the Women’s Political Union decided that it would be a very good thing for me to go and “organize,” as they then called it, the two counties of Chautauqua and Cattaraugus in New York State. My mother, who was not a confirmed suffragist, but a very charming Victorian, went along to chaperone me.

Nobody had been in those western counties before. More work had probably been done up in Westchester and places like that, but I think perhaps mine was the first attempt to organize those western counties. They were basically manufacturing

towns like Jamestown and Silver Creek and places like that. Of course, there was lots of farming in between. In those days, the population was much, much less than now, and they were small towns with one factory, let's say, or some kind of business in which people worked.

I had a little list given me of people thought to be sympathizers, and I was supposed to go in and organize them and leave a chapter of the Women's Political Union behind to go on working. Ahead of time, I had to send the newspapers a little publicity, telling them what it was going to be about. When I got there, I had to contact these women. In most of the small towns I had the names of three or four women who were thought to be sympathetic. Usually they were definitely upper-class or upper-middle-class, married and in their later thirties or middle forties. They were people who had traveled and for some reason or another had expressed some interest in suffrage. I don't recall any laboring-class women who were ever on that list.

That was very fortunate for us. We were trying to reach the local leaders in small towns and let them conduct the local organization work. It was called an organization trip, and that's just what it was. These contact women would arrange a house meeting for the purpose of forming a local group, and I would talk to the women there and provide them with the materials and tell them how to organize. Then it was up to them to do the local work on all classes.

Then, I had to make a street speech. That was in the days when you could still rent cars where the back went down. So we would rent a car and put an enormous white, green and purple banner across the back. The white was for purity, of course; the green was for courage; and the purple was for justice. That's supposed to be the explanation that we gave. The banner was a big one, and it covered practically the entire back. It made a very effective device for public speaking. I would stand up on the back seat to make the speech. Of course the most difficult moment for a street speaker is getting a crowd. As in all small

towns, the most popular corner of the street was the one that held the bar. I always directed the chauffeur to stop just outside the bar.

My mother, who was small and charming and utterly Victorian and convinced that all good things started with the favor of the male, would go through the swinging doors, and say, "Gentlemen, my daughter is going to talk about suffrage outside, and I think you would be interested. I hope you'll come out." And just like the Pied Piper, they would all dump their drinks on the bar and come out and make the nucleus of the crowd.

I was always embarrassed to have to take up a collection. I was convinced they thought we put it in our own pockets. But Mother had no such qualms. She would circulate about giving out the pamphlets and holding out a basket and saying, "I'm sure you want to help the cause," and the folding money would come in. She was invaluable!

My speeches varied according to the type of town. In general, it was on the injustice against women and the fact, also, that the injustice affected men indirectly; it held down the wages of all of them if women were underpaid.

Once, in a small town, I had a very amusing experience. We'd been the guests in the house of a man who owned a factory, a very charming young man and his wife. I made a speech and, in the course of it, I reminded the crowd that the only way men had been able really to affect their wages and conditions was getting together into unions and bringing pressure to bear. A ripple of laughter swept the crowd and I couldn't imagine why until I got back to my host's home. He told me that he had spent all the last year fighting their efforts to form a union. So here I was, under his auspices, advising them to do it.

Well, thinks like that happened. And we also, of course, were aware that there were still dreadful conditions in factories in those days. We bore down on things of that sort. Child labor was by no means unheard of—any more than it is today. We

focused on the importance of the vote to change these kinds of social conditions.

I did these street speeches in the evening, after dinner, in order to catch the men off work. The crowd would be mostly working-class men, the people you're likely to pick up in a street crowd, except for a few others that might just happen to be roaming around. In general—how much was due to my good mother, I don't know—I remember considerable enthusiasm for the speech and, also, a great deal of good-natured tolerance on the part of the men. And, as I say, rather good collections. I'm quite sure that that kind of campaigning did a lot of good because we reached people, I'm sure, who were not in the least interested in suffrage up to that moment.

On the whole, I think it was a successful tour. It bore fruit, definitely. We left behind a good nucleus of women who would then start in to plan and to work actively and to do things themselves. And, of course, it gave the central organization a chapter with which to work directly; the chapter could ask questions and get material to us, just the way a political organization would work.

Some of these women that I organized went on into quite extensive suffragist experiences. One of them, I remember, somewhat to my dismay, later joined Alice Paul's group and was hunger-striking in Washington.

I think we spent about six weeks in each of the counties, which made it about the first of September when we got back to New York. There was no question of where we were going. My sister was there, working on Wall Street. My brother was there, too, but I don't remember what he was doing. He had degrees in marine architecture and mechanical engineering. Though he wanted very much to do marine architecture, there was absolutely nothing like that going on when he left college.

I had been engaged and in October we married. At first we lived in the same apartment as my mother and sister. I was already working for the Women's Political Union and continued with that. My husband was not against my doing it. He was a

charming man, a very gentle one, and a very open-minded one—a very good-natured person. I don't think, left to himself, that it would ever have occurred to him to advocate suffrage.

SUFFRAGE TACTICS IN NEW YORK CITY

After we settled in New York, I went to work full time for the Women's Political Union. The president of the organization was Mrs. Blatch and my sister was the vice president. Mrs. Blatch, of course, was always in the office, which was just off Fifth Avenue on Forty-second Street, almost opposite the library. I think she was the only one of the officers who was at headquarters all the time. The others all had jobs of their own, of one kind or another, and were just serving on the board.

It was a fairly good-sized organization and, of course, we had many, many volunteers. As you know, most of the suffrage work was done by volunteers. Most were probably in their late thirties or early forties, though some were older. We had a large roster of very famous older women who came in and stuffed envelopes and did things like that.

My job was being head of the Speakers Bureau. I had had training in Cornell in public speaking. I was training speakers, giving them their assignments, as well as doing a lot of speaking myself. They were on a voluntary basis and some did much more speaking than others. We did have, especially at campaign times, a certain number of women who were just taken on and paid small sums, probably just enough to cover their expenses. You were supposed to be giving your time and yourself as much as you could afford. The secretaries, of course, were paid, and I might have been paid a small sum, too, but I don't remember.

THE NEW YORK TIMES NOVEMBER 5, 1911

CIRCULAR INCENSES WOMEN AT A RALLY

*Handed Out at the Doors, It Calls Suffragists
Destroyers of Homes.*

NO NAME IS SIGNED TO IT

*But Women's Political Union Speakers
Charge it to Cuvillier, on Whom the
Suffragists Are Making War.*

There was an unexpected development at the women's big political rally in Alys Dancing Hall last evening, which marked the close of a campaign the Women's Political Union made to defeat Louis A. Cuvillier, candidate for Assemblyman in the Thirtieth Assembly District.

The development came through an anonymous leaflet handed to the people going into the rally. In large letters it announced that the women suffragists were "Destroyers of Home and Country," and "The Greatest Peril to Civilization and this Government."

The Women's Political Union was the most militant of the suffrage groups. Mrs. Blatch had been married to an Englishman and had lived in England for a time. We, as a society, were much closer to the English groups than were the other American suffrage organizations like Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont's Woman's Suffrage Organization or something like that, or Mrs. Catt's National American Woman Suffrage Association. These groups felt that what the women were doing in England was rather outrageous and they wanted no part of it. Mrs. Blatch, on the other hand, felt that the only way they were ever really going to get anywhere was to exert political pressure.

Consequently, the name of the organization was patterned after the English, which was called the Women's Social and Political Union, and there were friendly relations with the Pankhursts and with many other English people. Mrs. Pankhurst came over and addressed a large dinner meeting. Sylvia Pank-

hurst and Beatrice Forbes-Robertson also spoke and, I think, we raised money for them at one time or another.

The Englishwomen were very fond of talking about free unions and how their children were going to have hyphenated names. Like Havelock Ellis and his wife, they were going to have houses on opposite sides of the park. They felt that conventional marriage was not right, wasn't fair to women.

I was a little more conservative about things at the time and I felt the family had a place in society and I didn't go along with that. I thought it was kind of funny. But they took it all very, very seriously, you know. There was a whole cult of that sort of thing, especially in England. I think not to any great extent here.

I did meet a few women living in Greenwich Village at the time whom my sister knew, who were living with men without being married to them. You know, there was a certain amount of talk about it but they were still very valuable suffragists. They weren't making as much propaganda about it as the Englishwomen were. The attitudes of the Englishwomen reflected, of course, the much more difficult position of women in England than in America; American women have always had more freedom.

You may or may not recall that famous little curtain raiser of Ethel Barrymore's called *The Twelve-Pound Look*. That was marvelous. It played in England. The twelve-pound look was the cost of the typewriter with which the woman made herself economically independent from her husband—left him as soon as she learned to type. The twelve-pound look.

The Englishwomen generally were much more radically oriented than the Americans ever were. We did no chaining of ourselves to lamp posts, though the nearest approach came later with Alice Paul and her hunger strikers, in 1917. Mrs. Blatch was working on these things long before Alice Paul came into the picture at all. I think Alice Paul carried them to the extreme, and my impression is that she went far beyond anything Mrs. Blatch would have suggested herself.

What I have in mind when I speak of the Women's Political

Union as being the most militant is that earlier, before Alice Paul's activities in Washington, we believed much more in demonstrations, in street speaking and in things of that kind, which I don't remember as being characteristic of the other organizations. For instance, we spoke on street corners every night of the week, using soapboxes with handles on them which every suffragette carried and plunked down on the curbstone. We had to have permits for speaking, but we got them from the police department. Now the other groups may have done street speaking, but if so, I wasn't conscious of it. They mostly spoke in halls. But we believed that you had to get to the people who weren't in the least interested in suffrage. That was the whole theory.

I would say that we had at least ten or twelve women out of our office speaking on street corners every night. As I recall it, there were always two women; one would be the speaker and the other would give out pamphlets and things of that kind. You carried the soapbox until you got to the corner. Of course, it was considered outrageous by many people for women to be speaking out on the street corners. Sometimes, depending on the neighborhood, those soapboxes on which we stood were rather dangerous little things. Things would be thrown down from the roofs. Sometimes stones would be thrown into the crowd. I don't remember anybody actually being seriously injured, but they weren't fun!

But there were lots of funny little things that went on, too. It wasn't all difficult. Once, a tiny little man in very shabby clothes, a clergyman from a parish somewhere out in the wilds of Long Island, came in and asked for a speaker for an evening meeting. Mrs. Blatch brought him out to me.

I had already assigned all my speakers for that evening, so I said I'd have to do it myself. My family was not exactly charmed by my taking these evening meetings, but I did when I had to. He said he would prefer a little older and more experienced woman. Mrs. Blatch came down hard on him and said, "Laura is one of our most experienced speakers," and went back into her office. He was a little crushed, but he began to explain to me

how I had to get there. I had to change buses twice and so forth, and also that his wife was in a wheelchair; she'd been in an accident. She was very anxious to have me come out for supper.

After dinner we went over to the church and there was a small group of women. His wife was a very ardent suffragist and she had started this little group. The first thing he did was to ask me to play the Doxology [on the organ]. I had never opened a suffrage meeting with a Doxology before, but I was lucky enough to be able to play it and so I did. The women clustered around afterward and told me all about this wife and I said, "How come the Doxology?" They said, "Well, Mrs. whatever-her-name-was puts more faith in God than in politicians."

The organization was, of course, always trying to think of ideas which would get us publicity. Mrs. Blatch's whole idea was that you must keep suffrage every minute before the public so that it gets used to the idea and talk about it, whether they agree or disagree. It must be something that everybody was conscious of. I think she was quite right.

There were some women reporters who were very helpful to us, and they tried to get us all the publicity they legitimately could. But, of course, they didn't mind how ridiculous the thing was. One of the stunts was to make speeches from horseback.

One morning I was sitting in my office and they came bursting in from Mrs. Blatch's office and said to me, "You ride, don't you?" I said, "I haven't ridden since I left school." "But you do ride and you have a riding outfit? Well, so-and-so is ill. The horses are already ordered and we're going to ride down to City Hall park and make a speech, and you'll have to take her place."

You didn't argue in suffrage. You took orders! I went home and put on my riding habit and came back. By the time I got back, the horses were dancing out on Forty-second Street, very annoyed. I climbed on and they put big boards on the side of each horse announcing a meeting. Of course, the boards didn't please the horses; it hit them every time they moved.

All the sidewalks were lined with people and the buses were

going by. There was much shouting at us. The policemen were furious with us for gumming up traffic. We got down to City Hall park just at noontime; it had been calculated that way.

Everybody came out from their offices, and Nora made a pretty powerful speech from her horse. Mine was behaving very badly by then. I began to say, "Ladies and gentlemen," bouncing up and down. (They were English saddles and I'd never ridden in anything but an army or a Mexican saddle before.) Then, just as I was launching into my speech, I glanced across the square and there stood my astonished and astounded new husband.

At that very moment, a horrible little office boy jabbed a pin into my horse and she *reared!* I hung onto the front of this terrible English saddle and sawed on the curb bit and finally got the mare calmed down. But that was the end of my speech. We then took off back toward the office.

Between all the excitement and the saddle sores from not having ridden in a long time, I was in bed for a day. It was a little difficult to explain to my husband why suffragists had to make fools of themselves. That was the only time I remember specifically upsetting him.

Then we presently did another thing. They decided it would be nice to hire a motorboat and run up and down the shoreline yelling through a megaphone, "Suffrage votes for women," at all the men who were loading cargoes. I was assigned along with Nora for this job. We always took reporters with us when we did things. This time, women reporters evidently had rebelled and we got two men, both of whom were definitely anti-suffrage and *furious* at the assignment.

The man who was hired with the motorboat, which, by the way, was only ten or fifteen feet long, evidently had not been told what we were going to do. When we explained, he said, "Oh, what the men are going to say to you!" Of course, that was perfectly true. As soon as the men began understanding that we were yelling about votes for women, they made replies that you might expect. I acquired a good many four-letter words on that boat trip.

Meantime, as ferry boats went by everybody rushed to the side of the boat and the waves bounced us up and down. Then, a group of men going on a fishing trip thought that it was funny to annoy us. They went around us in circles, leaving each time, tremendous waves behind them until they almost swamped us. Both reporters, I remember, had to bail us out with their hats—just furious every minute. The whole excursion lasted about two or three hours. We were all exhausted and thought we were going to be submerged.

When we finally got back, Nora said, “Now see that you give us a good write-up.” I looked all through the papers the next day. There was a *tiny* little paragraph in a column. A few days later I met one of the reporters who said he’d always hated suffragists. I said to him, “You certainly didn’t do very well by us in the way of publicity.” And he said, “Well, next time just get yourself drowned and I promise you the first page.” So there were lots of funny things as well.

I don’t remember the Women’s Political Union actually endorsing anything outside its own interests. I don’t think they could have; the women in it were much too diverse. There were all kinds of women who believed in all kinds of things. The only thing, you might say, that they all believed in was that women ought to have the vote. So, for example, though many of them were very interested and admired Mrs. Sanger very much, that would be an entirely individual affair. She was quite a good friend of my sister’s.

But there were many issues we *did* talk about. They were all interested in child labor—which still existed. You may recall, that was the period of the horrible Triangle Shirtwaist Fire * and all that sort of thing. We had a very marvelous woman, Florence Kelley, who was on our board, who was especially interested in the trade union movement for women.

* In 1911, 146 young women perished in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. Locked in the shop, on the eighth floor of the building, and unable to escape the fire, they either leaped to their death or were consumed in the flames. This tragic episode did help to publicize the miserable working conditions in the sweatshops.

There were plenty of other abuses of women, too. I remember when I visited my sister for a summer vacation before I was through college. She got me a press card to the old *Morning Telegraph*. The editor sent me on assignments, one of which was the Hobo Convention at which [Eugene] Debs was supposed to appear; he didn't, because I think at that time he was in jail. Bill Haywood came to the convention and spoke in place of Debs. There were lots of reporters there.

We all held a little spoofy meeting when we discovered we were not going to have Mr. Debs. Reporters made speeches and they asked "Sis Hopkins"—which was me—to make one; we all wrote that up for the papers. I remember that the *Morning Telegraph* published two versions of this, one by the man and one by the woman—me—side by side.

What really reminded me of that was that, among other things, the editor told me, for my own education, to visit the women's night court, which I did. I was quite horrified at what seemed to me the disregard of women's feelings and rights. I remember one case, especially. It was the trial of a prostitute, and, no doubt, she was a prostitute. Her lawyer said something about it was her word against the word of the policeman. There were no witnesses. The judge said pontifically, "The word of an officer needs no corroboration." I was enraged! That's the one thing I remember clearly out of that assignment.

That attitude was, of course, general: women were viewed as second-class citizens. There's no two ways about it. Their advice was not taken seriously and their opinions were not given the same weight as those of men. I don't think anybody argues about that anymore. It's still true, of course.

I don't know what all the individual women did in their street speeches. I don't remember the moral superiority of women being borne down on much. I do remember a great argument, following that same workers' meeting I was supposed to write up. I went home with a woman who had been a friend of my sister's, who was much more radical than I, and we fell into a discussion of the single standard. I remember it very well because I was a little shocked at the time. She said, "If we ever

do get to have a single standard, it'll be the men's standard and not ours." She spoke from experience, and she was a newspaper-woman.

I don't remember women's moral superiority being especially emphasized. In the first place, we had this little ultra-radical group within the movement. I think it would have been a rather difficult argument to sustain. I certainly never used it in my speeches.

I used often to bear down on what I still believe: that there were certain things affected by politics about which men were relatively unfit to judge, such as things that concerned children, schools, similar things. I felt women should have a much larger voice in controlling these things, and that there were just naturally a whole lot of facets to be considered.

I remember once going to make a speech somewhere, and on the way up there on the train an idea occurred to me and I used it. I picked up a copy of the evening paper and held it up in front of them and took one headline after another and showed how the things talked about in that headline applied to women. I went all the way across the front page and there wasn't a single thing in the news in which women didn't have a stake. That was the thing we tried to get over.

I doubt very much that there was anything you could call a uniform position in our speeches. There was too much diversity among the women involved. I don't think you could have a uniform policy. We had all faiths and all types of people working for suffrage—most diverse. In fact, for me it was a liberal education, meeting the kind of people I'd never come into contact with before. Some of them were most admirable. Every once in awhile, they'd provoke some funny things.

The daughter of Robert Ingersoll had a house in Gramercy Park and they used to have little committee meetings there. Among others, one of the best workers in certain districts was a young Jewish girl from Russia, as I recall it. She attended a meeting one evening and took off her coat and gave it to the butler. Then she said, "Where is my check?" The butler said

haughtily, "It won't be necessary, madam." Of course, that little story went all around with great entertainment.

But it's a very good example of the complete cross-section that we had in the suffrage movement, and I must truthfully say that I never saw any hint of snobbishness. There may have been some here and there, but it seemed to me that we all worked together for this one thing, without regard for anything else.

I was, for instance, assigned to make campaign speeches in the section that was run by this same girl. I went and I did exactly what she asked me, and she said very approvingly, "Well, it's nice to know you really take orders!" I said, "Of course. I came over, as my assignment, to do what you wanted done in this area." Evidently she had encountered others who hadn't been quite so cooperative.

But I do think that all kinds of women were working together for suffrage, with great unanimity on the whole. There was a great feeling of cooperation and admiration among the women who worked together.

I think many of the suffrage leaders, though, were very difficult to work with. It's quite understandable; you certainly have met plenty of what are colloquially called bossy women. They are apt to be women with a great deal of drive, women who get things done. They are very apt to be so sure that they're right that they don't want to waste time hearing arguments against their point of view.

Certainly Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont had a reputation of being difficult. I never worked for her. Certainly I think Mrs. Blatch was. From my point of view, she was very autocratic both in how she made decisions and the way she related to the workers. I violently disapproved of some of her policies. Considering that we were a women's organization, I felt that we should be especially fair in our treatment of employees.

I don't think that Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt ever had that kind of reputation. I never heard that she did. I think she had very firm opinions, but I always gathered she was a person rather easy to get on with. And Anna Howard Shaw, of course,

was a wonderful person. She spoke for us very, very often. I think of her as a national suffragist figure. She stands in my mind with a little group of very fine and prominent women who lent their support to suffrage, but I don't associate her with any special group.

Florence Kelley, too, was quite a marvelous person. I remember doing a brochure in which I had carefully dug out of the library all of the instances where women were discriminated against. When the pamphlet came out, Florence Kelley sent for me and she said, "I wonder if you have any idea how really unfair this pamphlet is?" "It's all there in black and white," I responded. "Yes," she said, "but so often there are the balancing laws against these." I remember her saying to me, "In addition to the dower rights,* there are the things called curtesy rights† which help to offset these. And that's true of all statements. It's true of all the statements you've made." I was crushed. What I had said was true, but it was not true in the sense of the whole truth. I think she impressed that on me forever more.

Actually, I left my job with the Women's Political Union because of my feelings towards Mrs. Blatch. I felt her very arbitrary and I didn't like her too well. So I didn't do the Speakers Bureau job for more than six months. But even after I left the organization, I spoke for them every so often—rather often, as a matter of fact.

FAMILY, WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE, AND A CAREER IN ADVERTISING

I left the Women's Political Union in 1914. Then I had to figure out what I could do. A friend of my sister's came over and they were consulting about what kind of business I could

* Dower rights refer to the legal right to a life estate in a husband's real property which a wife acquires by marriage for her use and the use of her children after his death.

† Curtesy rights refer to the husband's life estate in his deceased wife's property.

enter. Among other things my sister long before had told me, “Don’t ever, ever, ever study stenography. What man studied stenography to get started in his job? You’ll just get sidetracked, so be sure to say you just don’t know it.” So I didn’t have that to offer to anybody.

I remember very well, this friend of my sister’s said, “But you’ve been doing an awful lot of writing this summer.” You see, I had sent advance releases, and then when I got through in the town, I gave them another big interview and a release. So I had been doing a whole lot of publicity writing. The friend said, “Why don’t you try the advertising business? You can write copy quite well.”

I didn’t even know what advertising copy was; they had to explain to me that it was the text of the ad. She gave me a list of agencies and I called on some of them. I presume I looked exactly like Sis Hopkins, fresh down from the country. None of them was at all impressed. The agencies said they preferred people who had retail experience—women, that is.

Then I tried some of the department stores; no, they didn’t have any time to try to train anybody like that. By then I got quite annoyed. The only store I hadn’t called on was Macy’s. I went in and demanded to see the advertising manager and told him about my experience trying to get a job in agencies and stores. And I said, “Now, I will come to work for you for ten dollars a week for two weeks. At the end of that time, both you and I ought to know whether I can write advertising copy.” He was so flabbergasted that he hired me. At the end of two weeks, they were running the copy the way it was written. So then it became a real job.

I was there about six months and then I got pregnant. I hadn’t really thought about a family, one way or the other; I certainly hadn’t planned to have one at that time. My daughter was born in January of 1915, so I must have gotten pregnant quite soon, though I didn’t quit work right away.

I was out of business until my daughter was about two and a half. I didn’t do much outside the home; I was involved basically with the baby. We had moved out of my mother and

sister's apartment, and we went to East Orange. Things were very tight. I've forgotten what my husband's salary was, but it was tiny. Of course, everything cost less in those days. My house allowance was five dollars, I remember, for food, and I wasn't a very good provider—knowing nothing whatever about it. When it got to be Friday, I remember nearly always we had to have cabbage because it was only five cents a head.

We had always had servants of some kind or another and I just never did have anything to do with running a house. I was very lucky because I had a marvelous black woman from Virginia, Emma, who came to work for me. Mother, as I recall it, paid for me to have Emma once a week. Emma told me later that I was the only woman for whom she ever washed in the morning and cleaned all the afternoon. I knew nothing whatsoever about domestic things.

I remember very well the day my sister said to me, fixing upon me a beady eye, "When are you getting back to business?" I, of course, felt mildly surprised, to say the least, and said, "How can I?" She said, "You *should* manage."

Presently, an apartment became vacant right across the hall in the place she was living with my mother. She immediately said, "This is the opportunity to move back here; then Mother can help and it will be much easier for you to get a maid." So that's what we did—moved across the hall from my mother and sister, and Emma came and stayed with us the whole time my baby was growing up. She was marvelous.

So, you see, my sister really shamed me into going back to work. I didn't think it was possible to both work and have a young child, but I discovered, of course, that it was. It was difficult, I have to say. Our apartment had these deep window seats, and I had to walk every morning past that front window on my way to the subway to work. My small daughter used to stand up in the window with the tears running down her cheeks. I used to feel like a dirty dog. It was very difficult. And, yet, I did think it was the right thing to do. My husband didn't make any fuss about my going back to work. I think he was

probably rather pleased. He wasn't getting a very big salary in those days, and it was quite helpful to have a second salary.

I had decided I didn't want to go back to the department store field. I did try Macy's first, and I told them I wouldn't work after three o'clock in the afternoon (because that's when the baby came home from the park). Well, they wouldn't hear of that. "You can have hours off in the middle of the day," said one of them, who would like to have had me, "but you've got to be here to sign out with the rest of the employees, and sign in." I said, "Well, I'm going."

Then I began on the agencies again. Now, of course, I had a lot of good copy samples and I didn't any longer look like Sis Hopkins. But most of them would hear nothing about leaving at three o'clock in the afternoon—that was out. I got to one agency called the Federal Advertising Agency. It had nothing to do with the federal government; it had been named that because of the building they happened to be in. They had started out basically as a trade agency and were developing in the consumer field and they'd never had women except as file clerks or typists.

When I said this about three o'clock in the afternoon, the head of the copy department considered it awhile and then said, "Well, we've never had a woman on the staff. Might as well try it. I like your copy." So I was taken on to work with the arrangement that I would go home at three o'clock every day.

After a relatively short time at copy writing, I was made what they called an account executive and did some copy still, but mainly edited other people's copy. I continued my suffrage activities, too, actually until we finally got the amendment through. I spoke occasionally, when they needed a speaker, especially in the evening. Also, when we were trying to get the state measure passed in New York, I took time off and had my daughter looked after and spoke continuously for the last two weeks.

I well remember the attitude of men—both in my office, the

subway and on the street—the morning after that state measure was defeated. They openly jeered! There had never been any discussion about it before, in the office, but there were two or three men who took the occasion to make disparaging remarks the morning afterwards. “Well, I guess we know what we did to you yesterday!” and that kind of thing. But it was a passing phase.

Of course, many women I knew didn’t believe in suffrage, either. An awful lot violently disapproved. They thought it a lot of nonsense. I didn’t happen to number among my friends any ardent anti-suffragists who did anything about it. Most of them were just plain indifferent and thought it was a great waste of time, that it would just all be the same. And, you know, oddly enough, they anticipated what really happened. Most of my friends said, “This isn’t going to make any difference; they’re all going to vote the way their fathers and their husbands do anyway.” You see, that was the burden of their song. As it happened, that’s just about the way it turned out, unhappily.

But I remained interested and involved to the end. I remember when Alice Paul and her group started their demonstrations in 1917. I understood quite well the reasons she did it, and I wasn’t ever disapproving. I remember being very horrified at what was done to the women, especially to this very delightful woman from Chautauqua County whom I had enlisted in suffrage and who was one of the hunger strikers. I think everybody was just sort of nauseated over the whole thing; it was so horrible, such a dreadful thing for the women to go through. But I also felt that it was a very admirable and probably a very valuable demonstration. There’s no doubt about it, her effort is what precipitated the President’s decision to bring the matter before Congress. I think we should give her due credit. I’m very sure that if Alice Paul hadn’t carried on those demonstrations, it would have gone on years more before it ever got to the Congress.

I worked again during that final drive, and I do remember that there was a vast celebration when we finally had the fed-

eral amendment approved. Tennessee, I think, was the last one. But that spread over a long period of time. My daughter would have been five when that happened.

I don't have any recollection if the Women's Political Union survived after that. After I fussed with Mrs. Blatch and departed from them and when I went into business, I no longer was as close to them, organizationally speaking. I can't imagine, though, why they would have stayed on as an organization because there wouldn't have been anything for them to do, if you want to put it that way.

At that time, I think it hadn't occurred to a great many women that once they got the vote, the rest wouldn't be easy. I think most men felt that. I remember once, when watching at the polls, I was talking to a Tammany boss who was also watching. He said, "Of course I'm opposed to woman's suffrage. Once women get the vote, they can get practically everything they want."

That was more or less the attitude. It didn't occur to them that women's groups were going to break up as soon as the vote was won. They let their organizations go and most of them paid no further attention. A very few of them, of course, began to work in politics, but I think they were few and far between. From what I know, at least.

I didn't stay involved at all after we got the amendment, though I did belong to a couple of clubs and a certain number of business organizations, like the American Marketing Association. I joined the Women's Fashion Group fairly early; that was necessary. The clubs I belonged to were the Women's City Club and the Town Hall Club. They were made up of women who definitely were the suffrage type.

There used to be a very interesting club of unusual women to which my sister belonged. One of these women had a big fuss with the head of that club—you can imagine they were all women with minds of their own—and she broke off and formed another organization. Later on, after it had been going for some years, my friend, Blair Niles, insisted on my joining that. It was called the Query Club, and was extremely interesting

because of the women who belonged to it. Most of them were writers, and one woman was an explorer. They were all quite well-known women, as a matter of fact.

For a while I belonged to the Phi Beta Kappa Chapter in New York, but I got bored with that very quickly. I didn't do that very long. I never have been much of a joiner.

I did continue to do quite a lot of speaking during those years, too. I had to talk very often to boards of directors and things of that kind which you may or may not consider public speaking, but it falls into the same category. Once I went up to Cornell to speak to the coeds. And once I remember going to Philadelphia to address an advertising group. Things like that, but nothing else special.

Eventually I was made a vice president of the Federal Advertising Agency and the head of a department, mostly handling women's things, but not entirely. By then, we had plenty of other women, too. Many were in the copy department. I had several executive assistants. Also, women in other departments, like research, were assigned to me from time to time.

You know, up until World War II, I never did work past three o'clock in the afternoon! I enjoyed it. I could, by condensing my lunch hour, always go to matinées and do all kinds of things. It was very pleasant. Then, when personnel problems grew so difficult in the war, of course I was working till all hours myself.

After I'd been there some thirty years and they were giving me a testimonial dinner, one of the vice presidents stood up and said, "Well, I discovered in the records of the accounting department the other day that you were hired on a temporary basis. I would like to suggest that you be put on the permanent payroll."

I was extraordinarily fortunate. I sometimes think I worked for the only advertising agency I ever could have worked for. I had complete authority. The president discovered, after about five years, that if he'd just let me alone, I would make money for him. So he did exactly that. I was responsible to no one but

my clients, really. I sent him memos about what we had decided to do but rarely consulted him in advance.

As I discovered in the course of my life, there were practically no other women in the advertising business who had any such degree of authority. In the big agencies, for instance, one or two of which flirted with me later on, I discovered that everything was *à la* committee; the plan went up here and had to be approved, and went up again and had to be approved. Of course, I couldn't possibly have worked that way. I discussed things with my clients, and came back and dictated the work reports, and got their okays on the estimates, and that was it! I wasn't discussing it with anybody, except occasionally with the research department.

This was very unusual, I must say. I began to appreciate how unusual it was, because sometimes my clients were the bosses of the women who were supposed to have authority. I knew, of course, from my work with their bosses that they didn't. That was particularly true of the women in the fashion group who were always supposed to be sort of heads in their own particular departments. But I discovered in working with them that all the things they did had to be okayed, and I grew gradually to realize how unusual my opportunity was. I became a stockholder, eventually, and I was never really tempted to go to another agency.

I retired in June of 1948. I was worn out with the whole advertising business and I just stayed home for six years. I might have done a little writing here and there, but I didn't do much. I was utterly worn out. I had no idea of going back when I retired.

One day, one of my old clients, one of my smaller clients, as a matter of fact, called me up and was bitterly unhappy with his agencies, and had been ever since I retired. He asked if I would meet him at the Union League Club; he wanted to talk to me about something. I went, and he had his general manager there. He said, "I'm about to go to Europe on a buying trip and you can think about it while I'm gone, but I wish you'd

go to some small agency, any one you pick, and make an arrangement with them to work only when you want to and as much as you want to, and take my account to them.”

I thought about it. I had been fairly bored in the meantime, I may say. And so I did just that. I didn't go in at all in the months of July and August—we had a place in the country. I worked about three days a week the other months, perhaps four or five hours a day, whatever was necessary to handle his accounts, basically. I did some other things for them, too. That was for four years.

Then my husband was ready to retire. So I went too. We began to travel a great deal, mostly in Europe. My husband is a European and we had most of our friends over there. (I had, by the way, been divorced in 1928 and married my second husband in 1929.) We'd always been going back and forth. Right after he retired we spent the winter studying at the Instituto de Allende in Mexico, and then the summer at our place in Bucks County. The next year we went to California to try to make up our minds whether we wanted to live out here, and we drove all over. We ordered a cottage at Mount San Antonio Garden, and in 1960 we went abroad for a year until it was ready. We've lived in California since, though traveling a lot, until recently.

FEMINISM, SUFFRAGE AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Looking back, I realize how great an influence my sister had on me. For instance, I don't think I ever would have taken public speaking in college if it hadn't been for my sister. She won the prize for the Woodford Oration for an original speech she titled “Men, Women and Human Beings.” I came along and survived the competition and was, what they called, “on the stage”; I was one of the eight speakers on both the Eighty-

sixth Memorial and the Woodford Oration. I didn't win either one of them, much to my sister's chagrin. The title for my original oration was "Crimes against Criminals."

Then, too, I think the emphasis on a career must have probably come from my sister. After all, she had gone ahead and done it and was getting to be quite well known. I certainly don't think I would have gotten those ideas growing up in Grandfather's house. In fact, I would think that the whole attitude of the family at that point would have been that you married and stayed home and had children. And if you were a maiden aunt, you would stay always in the home. I think it was assumed that my Aunt Lil would always live in my grandfather's house. I would say that that was the pattern of a perfectly orthodox Episcopal family.

Economics might have been a part of it, but unquestionably my sister would never have allowed me to think of living without doing some work. My daughter thinks that I would have climbed the walls if I had tried to stay home, but I think it would have been very easy for me to give up after I had the baby. I remember how taken aback I was when my sister suggested that I return to work. To her, of course, the arguments were absolutely unanswerable. She just is, and always was, a feminist. She did all kinds of things, including starting the Women's Bond Club on Wall Street.

I don't think it ever occurred to me to call *myself* a feminist. I was a suffragist. "Suffragist" is how we spoke of ourselves. It was mostly the newspapers, I think, that called us suffragette and that was an attempt to put us down. When you said "feminist," I thought of people like Olive Schreiner, Mrs. Pankhurst, Charlotte Perkins Gilman. They were so interested in the one thing that they hardly had time for other things. I think that always, all my life, I have always wanted to be interested in a great many things—just like my courses in college. Of course, that's the reason those women got things done, because they did channel all of their interests in one direction.

No, I never thought of myself as a feminist. In fact, all my

life, until I was retired, I had more men friends than women. This was partly because of my choice of business. And I always got on extremely well with men. I have ascribed that, truly or not, to the fact that I grew up with absolutely no feelings of having been put down, as it were, by a male and I never have felt that way. Consequently, I don't have any of the bitterness that many women, I'm sorry to say, in women's lib have.

In spite of the fact that my sister was also very popular with boys, I think that, in some way, I associated "feminist" with a bitter anti-male position. I never thought of it, really, in college. I discovered very early that if you danced well and skated well—and I was a fancy skater—and did such things, that boys were also very pleased to discover that you could *think*. I was never brought up to feel that you had to pretend to be an imbecile to be attractive. I always got the kind of response I expected. The same thing was true in business. I can only remember twice when there was an attempt made to what you would call "put me down."

One of them, oddly enough, came about in a very curious way. I had become a little distressed at how rapidly the things we learned in college became obsolete. I wrote up to the president of Cornell and suggested that perhaps when twenty-five-year reunions came around it might be a very good idea to set aside at least one day and arrange workshops with the heads of departments, particularly the scientific departments, in which the changes had been the greatest, so that the alumni could be brought up to date. And they could say, "This is what you were taught in physics when you were in college; this is what we think now."

He thought it was a good idea, and he wrote down to the man who was the chairman of the twenty-five-year reunion of men that year. He came to call on me. He listened in a rather supercilious way to this idea, and when I was all through he said, "Where did you get the idea?" I said, "The same place where most of my ideas come from—out of my own head! Good evening." I was enraged. That is one of the few times I

can remember. Otherwise, I have always found men very open and willing to meet you on your own grounds.

It's very hard to compare the modern women's movement to the original suffrage movement because today's movement is so much wider and deeper than suffrage. That was really a political job, and it was handled like a political job, more or less. This movement now, I think, springs from much, much deeper grounds. It involves really women's estimate of themselves and what they feel they could contribute to the world.

I think that whereas women felt it definitely unfair that they couldn't vote, I think women now conceive of the inequality as something a great deal more serious than a personal affront. They realize that it has a lot to do with the kind of world we have and the mess we're in, and that the only valid hope for the future lies in *true* equality.

I think women have a lot of changing to do, too. I listen with *horror* at the chitchat that goes on in a normal group of women, and I'm not surprised that men make snide remarks about "girl talk." But that isn't true of the present movement. I'm talking mostly about women in my own age group. They're not going to change, and most of them are quite horrified, I think, at the changes the younger women want. Of course, it just so happens that I go along with the younger women, so I mostly have to keep my mouth shut.

Yes, I think this movement that's going on now goes back to the roots, to those early feminists. And they wrote well. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example. Olive Schreiner, of course, I always think of with special feeling because I felt that she, of perhaps all of them, had the least bitterness; she thought of it in terms of what it could become. I also felt that she was very much fairer to men.

I can't help reminding women that up to the time the suffrage amendment was ratified, *every single thing* that American women legally had, in terms of consideration, was *given* them by men. They had no way to get it. I think they were very un-

appreciative of how much they had actually been given because of men's own sense of justice.

That's one reason I get very impatient with women when they are too bitter. Perhaps if I'd had a different kind of life and different association with men, I too, would feel bitter. But I don't, and I think it's a great drawback because, as I have written my daughter, I look on bitterness as a kind of cancer of the heart. I think you get nowhere with it, and it's one of the most deadly things that one can give way to.

I think this is a major failing today. I'm astonished by some of the things I read. Now, how much they've been blown up by the media, of course, one doesn't know. And I'm far from saying that I'm silly enough not to know that a great many women have ample reason for the bitterness they feel. But I think it's a defect when you're working for equality. Many women felt very bitter in suffrage days, too—many of them, and with good reason. But it's never a help, that's my feeling.

I'm not particularly eager to make unkind comments about the women's movement today. I have every sympathy with their goals. It's just that when I hear them speak, I find so many of them strident and disagreeable. It's the old, old story; people don't really get outside themselves enough. I get very impatient with their bringing up individual grievances about things. I don't understand why they don't work more through groups of women.

I have very definite ideas about what they could be doing with groups of women that, as I see it, they are not doing. Women's groups seem to feel that they have to operate in a vacuum. If they belong to one little group that's dedicated to doing this particular thing, they're not at all concerned with what's going on out there and around. I think that's all wrong for this movement of women. I think that *every* woman's group has a stake in this movement, even though they are not organized to fight for *it*.

I don't care what the individual's special interest is in that group—she should have an overall interest in women. And every organization speaks with a louder voice than its individual

members. If a group especially interested in a movement could only learn how important it is to approach other groups. If you say to them, "Look, we know that you give ninety-nine percent of your time to your project, but how about, just this once, writing a letter as an organization regarding this women's movement." I think they'd be rather surprised at the network of influence they could bring up.

That is what happened in suffrage, basically. We had a great deal of that. I'm amazed that modern women don't do more of it. They don't, from my point of view, make very good use of women as a whole. I mean, just think what a small number of women are ever going to get involved with NOW, for instance, compared to the number that sympathize with the overall aims and would be glad to lend their hands, perhaps to advocate the passage of a specific bill or something of that kind. Not to expect that they're going to spend much time with it, but that they are a group of women. They can take a vote and will probably be sympathetic to doing this little bit for equality. It would add up to a great deal.

It was quite interesting when we were doing the organizing, of course, to see which women in these very small towns could be interested. In general, it was the women with better educations. Once in a while, you got a woman from the blue-collar group, but not very often. And in some cases, you got women whose husbands definitely were not crazy about suffrage at all; they just said, "Well, if you want to, go ahead," even though they didn't really go along with it. In other words, they were mostly very substantial women—those who were willing to come right out for suffrage and form a suffrage group.

I think this movement today, though, involves all women, and I think that in a curious way women recognize that—even though they get awfully mad about the thing. Even the older ones who want to hang on to everything they have and not let anything go, even they, I think, have a certain sympathy with it. I have always felt that's why they are so nit-picking about the smaller things. In a way, I nit-pick myself, but I just feel that sometimes the women in today's movement are antag-

onizing a lot of people by some of the things they do. They shouldn't—just out of pure wisdom.

It's perfectly true that marriage has been one of our most stable institutions, but that's no reason that it can't be reexamined in the light of our present-day situation, and especially now that there is so much clamor for a decrease in population. I think it's awfully silly the way many women talk about these things.

However, to the young people belongs the future, and whether the older generation likes it or not, these things are all going to be reexamined and rearranged. At the moment, of course, I don't see very much possibility of creating a permissive institution which can offer the stability that marriage has offered us. I think it's going to be a very unhappy environment for children if we marry and divorce at such a rate as we're doing now. It is tough for children. They have enough things to learn about the world without having to adapt themselves overnight to a completely changed environment.

I would hope that a good many people would try it out; they have a nice name for the marriage that isn't legal, a colloquial name for it, which I've forgotten. At any rate, the Swedes have done this for years, tried out the thing first. Fine. But after they've tried it out, I would hope that people who had lived together for three or four years and found it companionable would go and get married before they have children. It seems awfully tough on the children to have their homes changed by divorce. These are things the younger generation are going to work out for themselves.

I heartily endorse the efforts of the modern women's movement. I think it's ridiculous that women shouldn't participate in government, and I'm very happy that we succeeded in electing that nice Mrs. Cohen to our City Council here in Claremont. We are now getting more women in such positions, all around. Of course, just getting them in where their faces show isn't the answer until they get some real authority and knowledge.

There is something to be said for the statements made by

big organizations about minorities—that one of their troubles is not so much unwillingness to hire as the difficulty in finding qualified applicants. The same is true of women. That’s changing, of course. I just hope that there is going to be a considerable change in the vocational advice that’s handed out—beginning much earlier than college, way back in junior high. There isn’t any reason on earth why girls shouldn’t plan all kinds of careers. For example, if they find they’re especially good at mathematics, for goodness sake, then let them do it! Let them take part in the new technology.