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Belief in the notion suggested by the popular press that feminism is dead stems from a simplistic understanding of the Canadian women's movement and its goals, as well as a failure to recognize their depth and diversity. During the period from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, women of the "first wave" pursued and achieved a wide range of goals. The direction of goal change was generally from the private toward the public, but there was relatively little interest in the attainment of power *per se*. Even the demand for the vote was often a means to some other end. The first wave teaches us that goals once achieved have to be constantly defended. In this paper I look at the goals of women's groups under the following headings: Identity, God and Good Works, Temperance and the Home, Social Reform, King and Country, Anti-War, The Vote, The Vote in Québec, Identity Revisited.

La croyance que le mouvement féministe est dépassé est véhiculée par une presse populaire et est fondée sur une compréhension simpliste du mouvement des femmes canadiennes et de ses buts tout comme d'une absence de reconnaissance de sa profondeur et de sa diversité. De 1850 à 1950, les femmes de la `première vague` ont poursuivi et atteints un grand éventail de buts. On remarque un changement d'orientation: les objectifs visés se préoccupèrent d'abord du domaine puis du domaine public. Il y avait peu d'intérêt dans la poursuite du pouvoir *en soi*. Même la requête du droit de vote était un moyen pour atteindre d'autres fins. Les résulats atteints par la `première vague` montre que les buts, une fois atteints, doivent être constamment défendus. Cet article examine en détail certains buts de mouvements de femmes tels que l'identité, la tempérance et le foyer, la réforme sociale, la mouvement anti-guerre, le droit de vote, etc.

Late in 1991, American broadcaster provocateur William F. Buckley, Jr. brought his "Firing Line" to Canada. He crossed the border to make programs on five specific issues. Two of these were taped at McGill University: the currently topical "Great Whale Hydro Project" and "The Women's Movement." The other three dealt with the rise of the New Democratic Party, Canada-United States relations, and contemporary students. The series was made for broadcasting on the United States Public Broadcasting System in January, 1992.

That the Canadian women's movement rather than, say, the constitutional crisis, should have been the focus of such high profile international media attention took some observers by surprise. This topic seemed a strange choice for the well-known but conservative Buckley, because, for several years, journalists have been proclaiming the women's movement dead, announcing that we are now living in "the postfeminist era." The notion that feminism is dead has been widely promulgated, so much so that prominent women politicians have publicly dissociated themselves from a movement that seemed anti-male and power hungry. Even survivors of the December, 1990 massacre at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montréal distanced themselves from feminism (for example, "Hear Her Roar Again" (Toronto *Star*, 1989) and "I'm Not a Feminist" (Montréal *Gazette*, 1991)). Some systematic studies have also

shown that Canadian high school girls believe that feminist goals have been achieved, that "prince charming" is more important than power, and that the movement is passé (Barker, 1985). Such views would appear to be based on a simplistic misunderstanding of the women's movement and its goals as well as a failure to recognize the depths of its roots.

These roots reach back more than a century and have produced a movement that is complex and diverse. Over the years, it has struggled for many things including women's *rights* to be granted full citizenship, to own property, to choose whether or not to bear children, to vote; it has fought for women's *access* to higher education, to well-paying jobs, to the professions; it has demanded *protection* from physical violence, from psychological violence, from pornographic violence; it has defended basic *ideals* of justice, freedom, and decency. Some of the goals have now been reached but not all have been firmly secured. There is work still to be done and the "Firing Line" program reminds us that the movement that sought these goals is not dead.

The movement is neither dead nor monolithic. It can, however, be divided into two distinct parts: The period from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th is generally considered to cover the "first wave," while the "second wave" starts with the early 1960s and continues to this day. Both phases are characterized by diversity of goals with a multitude of different organizations and a fluctuating degree of internal dissent. The number of women associated with organizations was knowledgeably estimated in 1916 (in the midst of the first wave) to be more than 250,000. This was more than 10% of the population of women 15-80 years of age, which was 2,186,000 according to the 1911 census (MacMurchy, 1916, pp. 9-33). Estimates of women involved in contemporary organizations is less precise since the number of organizations is not accurately known, even by bodies such as the Advisory Council on the Status of Women or the Department of the Secretary of State. A 1990 directory of women's groups in the Province of Québec alone lists approximately 1,200. This paper is concerned with the first wave and shows how the goals of 19th and early 20th century Canadian women and their organizations spread along a continuum that ranged from satisfying individual interests to ameliorating social injustices to propagating universal ideals.

It should be noted that relatively few first wave Canadian women's organizations were directly concerned with gaining access to power. Even those seeking the vote often pursued that goal in order to achieve some other end such as defending the home; hence historians have labelled their members "maternal feminists." It might also be remembered that the Canadian suffragists constituted a very small minority of women from the already small minority who had some degree of economic independence. These were most likely to be professional or self-employed women or wives of sympathetic men with comfortable incomes. In general, the tactics they employed were neither radical nor confrontational. They did not use the violent and dramatic methods of the English suffragettes to win the power of

the vote. It has been said that, "Democracy, as measured by the franchise, came to Canada almost by stealth, certainly not as an army with banners" (Morton, 1943, p. 73).

This may be valid enough as a comment on the peculiarly Canadian nature of the movement, but it does not do justice to the vision, courage, and energy of the thoroughly admirable first wave women, their very effective organizations, and their goals. It is possible to identify several major goal clusters for women's groups of the period. Like other organizations in other times and places, their goals developed in response to the social conditions and needs of the time. The trend of changes in focus was generally away from the private toward the public domain and spread from the local to the international.

However, before Canadian women could even begin to think about asserting themselves in the public arena, it was necessary for them to claim their own identities. The first goal, then, could be said to be legal identity.

Identity

In the 19th century, when most women married and found their place in the home, Canada was still governed by British common law that gave married women virtually no rights. No rights to own property, no rights to keep the earnings of their own labor, no rights over their own children. The beautifully sentimental idea that, upon marriage, "man and woman become one," had a horrible official reality. Man and woman did indeed become one and he was the one. Legally, she ceased to exist. She actually underwent "civil death." Sir William Blackstone's learned commentary indicated that: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of woman is suspended during the marriage" (1856, p. 441).

Even 150 years ago, not all women were willing to accept their untimely demise without a struggle. Thus, it is not surprising to find that some of the first women to organize in Canada took common cause against the gross, far-reaching legal injustice, which both told them that married women had no independent identity and ensured that they were powerless. Between 1852 and 1857 three groups of women in Canada West (Ontario) petitioned the legislature for a Married Women's Property Act. Their goal was to obtain personal relief from oppressive control by their husbands as well as to gain rights for a whole class of people, especially "women of the lower orders."

They won — or at least they did not fail. Thanks to their efforts, in 1859 a law without precedent in British jurisprudence was passed in their province (by then called Upper Canada). This new law permitted married women to own property. They still could not sell their own possessions without their husbands' consent, but neither could the husbands sell those possessions without their wives' permission. It is easy to see how this law could have been ignored or by-passed by any bullying husband who chose to do so, but it was

a start. By 1872 another law gave married women in Ontario control over their own earnings. They were still very vulnerable but, in the long struggle for personal integrity and economic independence, they had achieved some small victories.

These gains spread slowly and it was not until 1922 that Married Women's Property Acts were passed in all provinces except Québec (Altschul & Carron, 1975). Most married Canadian women then had legal control over their own property and earnings. They were thus on their way to reclaiming their denied identities — a necessary precondition for the establishment of broader powers.

God and Good Works

Meanwhile, women's groups that looked farther afield were being formed. In an era noted for its evangelical foreign missionary work, women discovered that they were permitted to serve as members of "Ladies Auxiliaries" of Protestant Churches that had outposts in China, India, the West Indies, and Japan but they themselves were not allowed to do God's work overseas. In the 1870s Protestant women who were fired by the contemporary religious and social zeal began to form separate female missionary societies. The goals of the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church (1881), for example, were :

> to engage the efforts of Christian women in the evangelization of heathen women and children; to aid in sustaining female missionaries and teachers, or other special labourers in connection with Mission work in foreign fields; and to raise funds for the Society. (National Council of Women, 1900, p. 303)

By the turn of the century, women's missionary organizations were firmly established in all the major denominations in all parts of Canada (National Council of Women, 1900). In these exclusively female organizations women controlled their own affairs, raised their own funds, and sent their own kind into the field as preachers, teachers, nurses, and medical doctors. At the overt level their purposes were religious and altruistic — bringing word of God's grace, goodness, and succor to the "unfortunate, needy heathen" as well as caring for their physical welfare.

It may be debatable as to whether the work of missionaries was, in the last analysis, beneficial to the people of India, Africa, and other countries, or whether it served to extend economic and political colonialism. However, there is little doubt that the missionary societies played a role in the emancipation of Canadian women. They had underlying, if unacknowledged, goals of asserting women's independence from men, of demonstrating their competence to manage matters beyond the domestic sphere, and of providing suitable jobs for some of the earliest women university graduates, especially those in medicine. A significant proportion of Cănadian "lady doctors" began their medical careers in India, Africa, or China (Strong-Boag, 1979, pp. 119-123; Hacker, 1974).

These important secondary goals would probably have been more contentious in other contexts, but the then-unchallenged religious idealism of the missionary societies was an impeccable cover for such "unwomanly" aspirations as administrative or medical careers. Furthermore, there was not as much prejudice against women's practicing medicine among the natives in far-flung places as there was when the "medical ladies" attempted working at home. Thus, the women's missionary societies were permitted to flourish and, even though their members may not have thought of themselves as leaders of a woman's movement, they were in fact exemplars of assertive, effective, idealistic women in action, women working outside the home for some good greater than their own welfare.

Temperance and the Home

The power of the missionary societies lay in the exercise of perceived moral superiority — a spirit that infused many other women's organizations of the period. Notable among these was the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The primary goal of the WCTU was to defend the family against the evils of alcohol. It borrowed some of its aims and some of its tactics from women in the United States. There, the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTM) began with the zeal of Frances Willard and was carried on through the fearless dramatics of people like the axe-wielding Carrie Nation. The more restrained Canadian WCTU was founded in 1874 through the inspiration and efforts of Letitia Youmans, a devout Methodist from Ontario. She began her temperance work teaching Sunday school children about the evils of strong drink and she went on from there to become the president of the Ontario WCTU (1877). Later, she headed the national organization, whose 505 local branches could claim more than 10,000 members (National Council of Women, 1900, pp. 258-259).

These 10,000 Canadian women, like their American counterparts, were appalled by the countless family tragedies caused by liquor — the women abused and battered, the children hungry and ill-clothed because the men of the family drank away their pay, and the men themselves wretchedly degraded, violent, and heedless of their paternal responsibilities. In their efforts to curb the drinking that caused such misery in the home, the Canadians were not as outrageous as their American sisters, but they certainly cast aside "lady-like" reticence. At the high risk of violating Victorian decorum, they held public meetings, canvassed door-to-door, collected signatures for petitions, and persuaded families to sign the pledge: "Believing it to be better for all, the undersigned solemnly promise by the help of God to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage" (National Council of Women, 1900, pp. 258-259; Prentice, 1988, p. 173). A petition against alcohol that included 67,000 Canadian signatures was presented to the Dominion Government on May 3, 1898.

Members of the WCTU recognized that the problem was massive, that it not only ruined the individual home, it corroded and corrupted society as a whole. For this formidable task, they developed bolder, broader strategies. They tried to persuade influential citizens to promote their cause, to convince physicians that they should not prescribe liquor as medication or tonics, and to win the support of local or municipal councils. Opposition to the WCTU women was stiff. Predictably, antagonism came from brewing and distilling interests, but it also came from traditionalists who resolutely believed women's groups should confine themselves to the private sphere. These opponents were powerful. Even more difficult to rout, perhaps, were those high-minded "gentlemen," in high places and low, who professed to sympathize with the temperance cause and to believe in the home. They said it was better for men "to fight the beast themselves," that chivalry dictated that "home protection" should be *their* motto and theirs only (Warren, 1890, p. 408). In other words, they attempted to deprive women even of the power to defend the realm to which tradition had assigned them.

First wave leaders like Nellie McClung could easily dismiss chivalry as "Something like icing on cake, sweet but not nourishing" (1972, p. 39) and members of the WCTU came to realize that they would get much farther if they expanded the scope of their efforts. Inevitably, this led them to the provincial and national governments, but these were bodies in which they had neither voice nor vote. Their leaders then saw that, if women were to achieve their goal of prohibition, it was imperative for them to have the franchise.

At that point, the goals of the WCTU began to coincide with those of other nascent women's groups whose interests were primarily political. In spite of this overlap, historians of the Canadian women's movement generally make a clear distinction between the various groups, a distinction based on two broad sets of objectives: the doing of good and the uplifting of society on the one hand and the gaining of women's rights on the other (Prentice, 1988; Kealy, 1979; Bacchi, 1983). Members of the first group, which includes the missionary societies and the WCTU, are labelled "maternal" or "social feminists." Their roots can be found in the "Lady Bountiful" tradition of *noblesse oblige*, the concept of Christian charity, and the belief in the sanctity of the home. The second group, which includes those seeking property and voting rights, are labelled "equity" or "equal rights feminists." Their roots are in emerging democracy, egalitarian social theory, and liberalism.

Time may now seem to have passed the maternal feminists by, but it must be remembered that their experience and example in the public arena proved to be invaluable models for other organizations with more secular or political goals. And, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that a distinctive feature of a significant number of the equity feminists of the first wave was also their devotion to the home.

Social Reform

The acceleration of industrialization in the late 19th century brought with it a host of social ills as well as opportunities. In their wake came a plethora of women's organizations which attempted to: ameliorate the loneliness and alienation of immigrant women; improve health care, housing, and the treatment of women prisoners; fight prostitution, gambling, and the "white slave trade;" stamp out "pernicious literature" and offensive art; end the exploitation and harassment of "factory girls;" improve salaries and working conditions; expand educational and cultural opportunities; provide charity and mutual aid for any needy women; protect mothers and children against abuse; and generally work toward "social purity" and moral uplift. In country areas especially, groups such as the Women's Institutes and the Home Makers' Clubs focussed on educational goals to make homemaking and child raising more "scientific," improve hygiene, develop pure milk programs, and deal with the isolation of rural life (Reid, 1900, pp. 240-271, 393-407).

In 1893, a nonsectarian, nonpartisan umbrella organization, the National Council of Women (NCWC), was formed. Its overall goal, or "Confession of Faith," was:

> We, women of Canada, sincerely believing that the best good of our homes and nation will be advanced by our own greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, and that an organized movement of women will best serve the good of the Family and the State, do hereby band ourselves together to further the Golden Rule to society, custom and law. (National Council of Women, 1900, p. 241)

The founding mother of the National Council was Lady Isabel Aberdeen, wife of the Governor General. She also helped establish other organizations such as the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) whose goal was to provide visiting nurses wherever medical services were limited. The National Council worked with local branches and affiliated groups. The names of some of the affiliates give a fair indication of the range of interests this network embraced: the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association, the Women's Art Association of Canada, the National Home Reading Association, and the Lady Aberdeen Association for Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the West.

Despite this diversity of interests, one of the primary goals of the National Council eventually (1910) became the obtaining of the vote. The vote was not so much an end in itself, or even a means toward political power, but the means by which social reform could be achieved. A great many of the social reformers — even outspoken public figures like Nellie McClung — still devoutly believed that women's place was in the home. As they saw it, the intrusion of industrialization with its attendant ills had turned the home into a beleaguered fortress. A vote for women, especially married women, would be a step toward strengthening the home.

When the federal government refused to legislate temperance legislation, the vote also became a goal of the other major national organization, the WCTU. Perhaps greater progress toward women's franchise might have been possible if the shared goal had led to closer cooperation. However, the WCTU did not affiliate with the National Council until 1921 — by which time the vote had been granted in many jurisdictions.

King and Country

A driving force behind the goals of many individual women and of first wave organizations was a sense of duty that derived from Christianity and other Western cultural values. Paradoxically, this strong sense of duty felt by many women in voluntary organizations did not make them independent feminists, but bound them firmly to patriarchal institutions like the Church, the nation, or war. This sense of duty can be seen clearly in groups such as the Soldiers' Wives League, the Dominion Order of the King's Daughters and Sons, and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) (National Council of Women, 1900, pp. 263-264; 392-394).

The IODE was founded in 1900 by Margaret Polson Murray, a Montréal woman of Scottish origin, who dreamed of "a body of women banded together for the fundamental purpose of service to the Empire and the strengthening and preservation of Canada's connection with the Motherland" (*Imperial Order...*, 1932). Such an organization was to engage in "constructive educational and humanitarian effort," including "special Canadianization work among the foreign-born, the care of soldiers and their dependents, tending the graves of those who fell on the field of battle, and perpetuating the memory of heroic deeds" (*Imperial Order...*, 1932). The motto of the IODE says it all: One Flag, One Throne, One Empire."

Begun in the days of the Boer War (1899-1902), the IODE gathered strength during World War I when it raised more than $1.5 million, founded branches of the Red Cross, organized the Canadian Women's Hospital Ship Fund, tried to embarrass men who did not enlist, and provided comforts for those who did. Though other women's groups, notably the Canadian Patriotic Fund presided over by Helen R. Y. Reid, had similar patriotic aims, the IODE became one of the largest of the Canadian voluntary organizations (with a membership of at least 30,000) and even spread to other parts of the British Empire (*Imperial Order...*, 1932). It continued to flourish until after World War II. In the postwar period, because its goals had fallen out of harmony with an ideological climate that was characterized by the emergence of new nations and the break-up of empires, the strength of the IODE began to fade. This was especially so in the Province of Québec where it had had its origins.

Anti-War

However, even in its palmy days, certain planks of the IODE's platform and those of other "maternal" organizations were out of line with those of some

other women's groups. "Equity" feminists tended to see war as a woman's issue, to condemn it as a gross form of male violence, and to campaign for peace through international negotiation. Many prominent feminists associated with the National or Local Councils of Women and the Canadian Suffrage Association were avowed pacifists. One of these, Nellie McClung, wrote:

> although men like to fight, war is not inevitable. War is not of God's making. War is a crime committed by men and, therefore, when enough people say it shall not be, it cannot be. This will not happen until women are allowed to say what they think of war. (1972, p. 15)

Strong though these views were, only a very few individual pacifists and virtually no national women's organizations were stalwart enough to hold onto their anti-war positions until the peace of 1918. Ironically, war brought great opportunities for women and their organizations to serve outside the home. It also brought with it clashes between women and within their groups, highlighting the need for a reassessment of goals. As Nellie McClung said, "The old crowd began to break up and our good times were over" (Savage, 1979, p. 110).

The Vote

The Dominion Elections Act of 1874, the first comprehensive bill of its kind after Confederation, made the position of Canadian women perfectly clear. It said: "No idiot, lunatic, criminal or woman shall vote." Here, as elsewhere, it was argued that women were too weak to stand the excitement of voting, not sufficiently intelligent, could not afford the time out of the home, were not intended by God to vote, would be "unsexed" by the vote; the vote would lead to an increase in divorce and a lower birthrate . . . and so on.

This arrogant, misogynous nonsense was challenged in 1876 when a small group of women founded the Toronto Women's Literary Club. The name they chose prudently camouflaged their real intentions and goals. Under the leadership of Dr. Emily Stowe, the first Canadian woman to earn a medical degree (1867), this organization sought to improve women's educational and professional rights, to ameliorate their economic exploitation, to gain further property rights for married women, and to get the franchise. The latter was the most significant for once it was secured, so the members believed, the rest would follow. In 1883 the Literary Club abandoned its disguise, to proclaim forthrightly:

> That in view of the end for which the Toronto Women's Literary Club was formed, having been attained, viz., to foster a general and living public sentiment in favour of women suffrage, this Club hereby disband, to form a Canadian Woman Suffrage Association. (Luke, 1959, p. 330)

A public meeting in Toronto attended by more than a hundred women and men brought the Canadian Woman Suffrage Association (CWSA) into being immediately. Its primary goal was to win the vote for women. Curiously however, its initial momentum waned within a couple of years. This was not

because the goal had either been achieved or disavowed. It might have been partly because of a temporary flagging of energies and possibly because of the presence of men. Emily Stowe herself acknowledged: "We admitted the opposite sex as members and the effect was demoralizing. The old idea of female dependence crept in and the ladies began to rely on the gentlemen rather than upon their own efforts" (Thompson, 1962, p. 259).

New life was breathed into the Canadian movement in 1889 as a result of a dynamic address by an American, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. Renewed enthusiasm produced a new organization, the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association (DWEFA). Emily Stowe was again the founding president (National Council of Women, 1900, pp. 270-271). In its first two years, the DWEFA endorsed an unsuccessful bill that was designed to give women the vote in Ontario; it organized a series of public lectures with guest speakers that included noted Americans Anna Shaw and Susan B. Anthony; it hired an American organizer; and it held a national convention. It also successfully supported the efforts of Clara Brett Martin to study law at the University of Toronto and to become the first Canadian woman lawyer (1897).

Despite all these activities, the Dominion Women's Franchise Association somehow failed to generate countrywide support. Yet its basic cause was not lost, for all across Canada other women's groups, including the national and local chapters of the WCTU, were pressuring for the vote. Tactics varied though the most favored were petitions, letters to editors, public meetings, and private influence. The membership of most of these organizations was basically similar — urban, white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon Protestants ("wasps"). However, in the west (especially Manitoba and Alberta) there were some refreshing exceptions in both approaches to the argument and the ethnic composition of the groups. For example, tactics of humor and sarcasm were used self-confidently in 1893 in Manitoba when Letitia Youmans organized a mock parliament to hold up to ridicule the contradictory reasons men used to exclude women from power. Again in 1914, the ebullient Nellie McClung was the prime mover in publicly staging a brilliant role-reversal performance in which women members of parliament received a delegation of men seeking the vote. McClung's mischievous condescension toward the male supplicants was a miracle of biting wit (McClung, 1945, pp. 121-122; Harmon, 1967, pp. 167-168).

While the Manitoba Equal Franchise Club, formed in 1894, had a typical "wasp" membership, another association was composed of immigrants. These were Icelandic women who wanted to recreate in Canada the vote and other rights they had traditionally held in their homeland. From the end of the 1890s through the next decade, their leader, the outspoken Margret Benedictsson in her magazine, *Freyja*, actively advocated political rights for women (Kinnear, 1986, pp. 25-28). In 1907, when the DWEFA changed its name to the Canadian Suffrage Association, the Icelandic Suffrage Association was one of the first groups to affiliate.

Numerous other associations sprang up across the country to advocate votes for women — in British Columbia, the relatively conservative Political Equality League (1911) and the more radical Woman's Suffrage League; in New Brunswick, the Equal Franchise League (1912) and the Women's Franchise Association; in Québec, the Montréal Suffrage Association (1913). Some of these were short-lived but they indicated that the women's suffrage movement was gathering momentum.

With the outbreak of the first World War, women's energies tended to be channelled in other directions, yet their contribution to the national emergency helped their cause. Nor did it go unnoticed — in 1916 Prime Minister Borden publicly estimated that Canadian women in two years had raised more than $40 million for the war effort, while in 1918 the Cabinet War Committee requested the convening of a Woman's War Conference which gave women's groups a national opportunity to review both their achievements and their unfulfilled goals. By then, they were winning the struggle for the vote at the municipal and provincial levels. In 1916, women were enfranchised in Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan; those in British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island soon followed. By 1922, only in Québec and Newfoundland (still a colony, not yet part of Canada) were women denied the vote (Cleverdon, 1974; Altschul & Carron, 1975; Prentice, 1988; Kealy, 1979; Bacchi, 1983).

The great goal of securing the vote at the national level was attained in the waning months of the Great War. However, the immediate reason for the government's capitulation was neither gratitude nor equity. It was pure politics. The granting of the female franchise was more a testimony to male expediency than an acknowledgement of the justice of the women's cause (Bacchi, 1983, p. 143). Two half-hearted bills were passed in 1917 — the Military Voters Act which gave the vote to army nurses and the Wartime Elections Act which extended it to wives, widows, mothers, sisters, and daughters of military men. The latter act was a calculated move to induce women to help re-elect the Borden government because it believed they would support the government's bitterly contested conscription proposal. (The thinking was that women with loved ones at the battle front would vote for the conscription of other men to replace them.)

The limited voting rights produced outrage as much as gratitude. For example, Grace Ritchie of the Montréal Local Council called the federal government "moribund, discredited and unrepresentative" and considered the franchise bill "unsurpassed effrontery which sets at defiance every fundamental of British justice" (Gillett, 1986, p. 202). As if finally bowing to the inevitable, in 1918 the government passed the Women's Franchise Act which gave the vote to every Canadian woman over the age of 21 who was a British subject.

The Vote in Québec

Little by little, the need for suffrage associations was eliminated as objectives were attained and women were free to pursue new goals — except in Québec. In La Belle Province with its majority Catholic francophone population, suffrage efforts had been persistently stifled by the Church. However, in 1922, the year by which all other provinces had enacted female franchise bills, strong new initiatives for securing the vote were launched by Québec's "Federation Nationale Saint-Jean Baptiste." Under the leadership of Marie Gerin-Lajoie, a Provincial Franchise Committee was formed. It had a French section (headed by Gerin-Lajoie herself) and an English section (led by Anna Scrimger Lyman). The two sections worked earnestly and cooperatively for the rights of all the women of Québec. They launched letter-writing and educational campaigns, sent delegations to the provincial government (then dominated by the ultra-conservative Premier Maurice Duplessis), and used new techniques like dropping pamphlets out of airplanes, radio broadcasts, and appeals to foreign organizations such as the International Leagues of Catholic Women.

But the Catholic Church swiftly counter attacked. Archbishop Eugene Roy denounced female suffrage in a pastoral letter. He was, of course, supported by his colleagues from the pulpit and in private counselling. Cardinal Bégin, for one, thundered: "The entry of women into politics, even by merely voting, would be a misfortune for our province. Nothing justifies it, neither the natural law nor the good of society" (Casgrain, 1972, p. 54).

Long after the event (in 1990), the Catholic Bishops were to apologize officially for delaying the vote, but all through the 1920s and 1930s the Church's position was both hostile and frightening. Under its formidable onslaught, Marie Gerin- Lajoie withdrew and the campaign faltered. But it did not fold. In 1927, Idola Saint-Jean, a French instructor at McGill, founded "l'Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes du Québec." This group attracted working-class women and employed relatively militant tactics while Idola Saint-Jean herself edited a feminist journal, *La Sphere Féminine* (1933-1946) and attracted a lot of attention by having the temerity to stand for parliament in the 1930 federal election. In 1929 Thérése Casgrain, a patrician woman whose husband served in the Mackenzie King government, revitalized the Provincial Franchise Committee, renaming it the League for Women's Rights. She lectured, wrote for newspapers, gave radio broadcasts, lobbied doggedly, and led 13 delegations to Québec City. Largely through her leadership, a team of tireless women won the endorsement of the opposition Liberal Party so that, when the government finally fell, the Liberals came to power and honored their promise. At last, in 1940, Québec women, too, had achieved the right to vote.

Identity Revisited

Just 50 years ago, the goal of suffrage for all women in Canada had finally been won. But it did not translate into power. It had been largely sought for other reasons and granted for political convenience. It would take great social upheavals and new ideas to modify the basic moral, altruistic, home-defending approach of the first wave feminists. But before the second wave began, indeed in the very period when the provincial and federal vote was being won, another fundamental battle for identity had to be fought. Well into the 20th century, this "modern" era, Canadian women discovered to their surprise that they were not persons.

In 1916, when Judge Emily Murphy, the first woman magistrate in Canada (and the British Empire), handed down an unfavorable decision against a bootlegger, the defending lawyer challenged her ruling on the grounds that she was not a "person" and was therefore unfit for her office. He was invoking a ruling under British Common Law that said: "Women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but not persons in matters of rights and privileges" (Chorlton vs. Ling, 1867).

Though Judge Murphy's authority was upheld by the Supreme Court of Alberta, she became aware that the federal government would not appoint women to the Senate because, under the British North America Act (BNA Act), women were not persons. For the next decade, a number of women's groups including the Federated Women's Institutes, the National Council of Women, and the Montréal Women's Club, tried to persuade the federal government to change the BNA Act. Promises were made, but nothing happened.

In 1927 Emily Murphy, realizing that any five persons could initiate an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada for clarification of any part of the BNA Act, formed a very special group with a very specific purpose. Together with Nellie McClung, Henrietta Edwards, Irene Parlby, and Louise McKinney, she brought the matter to the highest court in the land. These five women from Alberta asked the question: "Does the word 'person' in Section 24 of the British North America Act include female persons?" The Supreme Court of Canada answered "No" on the grounds that since persons required for public office must be "fit and qualified," only men would be eligible for appointment to the Senate. At the time, there was one further legal recourse — appeal to the Privy Council in London. So to London the five took their case.

To their (and our) very great joy, on October 18, 1929, the Lord Chancellor of the Privy Council announced the decision that "women are eligible to be summoned and may become members of the Senate of Canada." Canadian women were thus deemed officially to be persons.

As a footnote to this saga it might be added that two women (Carine Wilson of Ottawa and Iva F. Fallis of Peterborough, Ontario) were soon appointed to Senate — but none of the famous Alberta five ever received the honor.

Summary

The incredible "Persons Case" bears important messages for us all. It so clearly illustrates male fear of women's power in the public arena and it highlights women's need for "eternal vigilance." Note how, when the bootlegger's lawyer could not win his case on other grounds, he furiously attacked the magistrate on the basis of gender, attempting to undermine her authority. Note that when women had property rights as well as the vote in most municipalities, provinces, and at the federal level, they thought they had full legal existence. They found they were mistaken. They had to learn again that, no matter how secure any of us may think we are, atavistic attitudes and antiquated statutes can still be invoked to deny us power and even to question our identity.

Even today, it is important to recognize that no one should ignore the lessons of history nor forget the experiences of the first wave feminists. These women, with their broad, diverse, and deeply rooted goals, were not anti-men, not out for power, not against the family. Quite the contrary, they were seeking legal rights to their own identity, trying to improve society for other women and their children, fighting against alcohol abuse, attempting to spread, at home and abroad, values they held dear. They learned a lesson we should all remember, namely that social goals once achieved have to be constantly defended. This is a message that can be brought home to millions of people when programs like "Firing Line" choose to focus on the Canadian women's movement. "Firing Line" discussions help remind us that the issues have not all disappeared, that it would be a grave mistake to bury the movement yet, for it is still very much alive.

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