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The purpose of this study was to explore the story of the National Woman's Party with regard to its images during the period from 1916 to 1919. The role of the Woman's Party was considered in the context of the larger women's suffrage movement; the image of the Woman's Party was compared and contrasted as it was presented in several media sources; and the reactions to the Woman's Party were analyzed in the context of contemporary social expectations.

Historical background for the Woman's Party's origins and development was assembled chiefly from secondary sources. The Party's images during the period of 1916-1919 were explored through examination of materials written or compiled by the National Woman's Party and its members (including a limited amount of research in the National Woman's Party Papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress), materials written or compiled by the rival suffrage group--the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, and articles written for and published in several contemporary newspapers and periodicals over the period of time discussed. The specifics considered were images of the Woman's Party's leadership, political strategy, and methods. A model of a turn-of-the-century "ideal woman" was then considered as a standard for comparison with the images of the Woman's Party.

It was found that the Woman's Party, a radical group of militant suffragists, aroused a variety of reactions. The images of the

Woman's Party as presented in Woman's Party sources were predictably sympathetic ones. The images presented by NAWSA materials and by contemporary periodicals were, on the whole, critical and even hostile. These negative reactions were shown to be largely the product of a disparity between the expectations of an "ideal woman" and the choices that the Woman's Party made in terms of rhetoric, tactics, and tools in their fight for a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage.

THE NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY (1916-1919):

ITS STORY AND ITS IMAGES

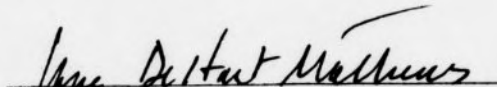
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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF IMAGES

In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment, granting American women the right to vote, was ratified and thus became a part of the United States Constitution. Women's active struggle for suffrage in America had lasted more than half a century, had extended over several generations, and had included sometimes unified, sometimes divergent political ideologies and tactics. Any movement of such longevity that focuses on such a controversial issue is likely to have within it disagreement and even conflict over goals and methods. The women's suffrage movement was no exception and, in fact, endured at least two significant splits within its ranks before the suffrage amendment was finally passed. The National Woman's Party was the product of the latter of these splits and, in the final decade of the suffrage fight, added a militant voice to the already heated debate over women's suffrage.

There were several aspects of the program of the National Woman's Party that made this group a unique one in the American women's suffrage struggle. The primary emphasis that most distinguished the National Woman's Party from the larger National American Woman's Suffrage Association was the commitment of the former to working solely for the passage of a federal amendment to the United States Constitution and ignoring the route of trying to win the vote in individual states through state referenda or state legislative

actions. The NAWSA, on the other hand, fought the battle on both fronts. A second strategy that was unique to the Woman's Party was the policy of holding the political party in power responsible for the status of women's suffrage legislation. This resulted in Woman's Party campaigns against Democrats as a group in the elections of 1916 and 1918, even though many individual Democrats had supported the women's suffrage amendment through votes and active campaigning. This tactic of holding the party in power responsible was especially aimed at the states where women already had the vote. In these states, the Woman's Party attempted to organize women voters to defeat all Democratic candidates. Carrie Chapman Catt of the NAWSA claimed that through this strategy the Woman's Party "defeated none," but rather "aroused the irritation of all."¹ Even this abrasive stance was not the most radical of the National Woman's Party's activities. A third factor that assured the notoriety of the Woman's Party as a unique sub-group within the women's suffrage movement was its use of militant tactics. It was members of the National Woman's Party who picketed the White House as a means to keep the suffrage issue before the eyes of the President and the public. It was Woman's Party members who burned President Woodrow Wilson in effigy and burned copies of his speeches on democracy when he failed to put the power of his administration behind the suffrage amendment. And it was Woman's Party members who, when arrested and jailed for their activities, went on hunger strikes that provoked public indignation and outrage toward prison and governmental officials.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the National Woman's Party and its leader, Alice Paul, received from the contemporary press and continues to receive from historians more attention for its militant tactics than for the issues to which the Woman's Party was so committed. Eleanor Flexner's assessment defines the dilemma:

In evaluating its contribution to the winning of woman suffrage, attention has too often been concentrated on the phase of . . . activity which began in 1917, when Alice Paul's organization went over to "militant" tactics. . . . But to do so is to overlook the long stretch of work, beginning in 1913, during part of which they were the only effective group working for a constitutional woman suffrage amendment. They took up that issue when it seemed dead and brought it very much to life.²

This analysis by Flexner is indicative of a "problem" faced by the National Woman's Party--the problem of the group's public image as wild and radical militants. The Woman's Party was, in fact, a militant group, but the negative connotations of militancy tend to be the dominant themes in much of what has been written about the group by those who were outside of the Woman's Party. Those who were members of the Woman's Party most often tell of their militant tactics in terms of brave and heroic deeds. The disparity between these two presentations creates a need for a definitive and unbiased account of the activities of the National Woman's Party.

This need for an objective and thorough account has not been met, for there has not been a major "history" specifically about the National Woman's Party written by a scholar who was not personally involved with the group during its years of activity. Thus, the material on the Woman's Party, with the exception of one doctoral dissertation, is rather quickly "sorted" into three categories: (1)

those materials written or compiled by the National Woman's Party and its members, (2) those materials written and compiled by other suffragists, especially those of the rival National American Woman's Suffrage Association, and (3) those articles written for and published in contemporary newspapers and periodicals. To try to gather "truth" from materials in any one of these categories is a perplexing process. Anne F. and Andrew M. Scott comment on this in a bibliographic essay:

For the twentieth-century movement there is a bias in all the firsthand accounts insofar as neither wing gives proper credit to the other. Thus Irwin and Stephens [Woman's Party activists] write as if the NAWSA did not exist, while Maud Wood Park [NAWSA historian] . . . has only harsh things to say about the influence of the Congressional Union and the Woman's Party. . . . Loretta Zimmermann's "Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party," dissertation, Tulane University, 1964 is the work of a careful scholar, but she, too, is a prisoner of her sources and underestimates the work of the NAWSA.³

To examine several important issues that are a part of the National Woman's Party's story as they were presented in the three sources referred to is a fascinating exercise that helps to achieve the "whole" picture that the historian seeks. Recognition of the bias in these materials and an interpretive reading of such materials is an enlightening--though prolonged--way of getting beyond the images to the reality of the historical issues. In an introduction to his own study of another subject, Martin Duberman reflects on the problem of presenting "reality" in the process of history-writing: "Every historian knows that he manipulates the evidence to some extent because of who he is (or is not), of what he selects (or omits), of how well (or badly) he empathizes and communicates."⁴ This study will strive to recognize, interpret, and, to some extent, explain this

bias that Duberman has identified. A unique bias exists for each of the categories referred to and each of these categories creates a unique kind of "publicity" for the National Woman's Party. The power of publicity and the biased images that it creates is suggested by an intriguing comment on suffrage from the December 2, 1916 issue of the New Republic: "Many of my friends have told me that they were first converted to women's suffrage by the anti-suffragist editorials of the New York Times."⁵ Thus, images created by the media can indeed be powerful and sometimes unpredictable.

To look at the variation in images of the National Woman's Party created by Woman's Party publications, by NAWSA publications, and by contemporary publications yields some unique insights that are preparatory to addressing a deeper question: Why did the Woman's Party provoke the reactions--sometimes vehement reactions--that it did? This question will require both an exploration of the Woman's Party and its images and an exploration of turn-of-the-century American society and the expectations that it imposed for "proper" females. Thus, it is necessary to look at the Woman's Party not only as a significant activist group but also to explore the reactions to the group in the context of contemporary social expectations.

To address these questions successfully, it is important first to recount the chain of events that make the story of the National Woman's Party. The contributions made by the Woman's Party can then emerge from interpretive reading of the sources that present and in fact shaped the images of the Woman's Party. The attention to the media coverage will focus primarily on the images not related to the

Party's picketing activities, for that aspect of the National Woman's Party has already received much attention. The time period focused on begins with the formal organization of the Woman's Party after its break with the NAWSA and ends with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment by the United States Congress. But just as its influence has extended beyond 1919, the National Woman's Party can claim roots of its beginning well before 1916.

NOTES

¹Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 264.

²Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 279.

³Anne F. and Andrew M. Scott, One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1975), p. 172.

⁴Martin Duberman, Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1973), pp. xii-xiv.

⁵George Soule, "Need for Conservatives," New Republic, December 2, 1916, pp. 122-124.

CHAPTER II
THE FOUNDATION IS LAID

The Early Movement

American women first formally called for the right to vote in the Declaration of Sentiments issued at the Seneca Falls (New York) Convention of 1848. This meeting that gave birth to the women's rights movement in America was made up of women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, who had been involved in the major reform movements of the time, the anti-slavery movement and the temperance movement.¹ It was primarily from women's active involvement in the abolition movement of the 1830's and the 1840's that this tentative women's rights movement drew its inspiration and its leadership. These women began to address the issues of the new movement for women's rights in the years before and during the Civil War, but they continued to work diligently for the abolition of slavery. Their work was rewarded at the conclusion of the Civil War by the abolition of slavery, but their own rights as women were ironically restricted by the process of securing civil rights for the black man. When the Fifteenth Amendment defined the right to vote for all men (including, of course, blacks), these activist women, who had formerly been disenfranchised by state and local voting laws, were now denied the right to vote by the United States Constitution! But even though the experience of these early feminists in working for the broadening of suffrage had only created a constitutional barrier to their own

suffrage, they had, in the process, taken steps toward activism within the abolition movement and thus gained some important and valuable experience in the realm of practical politics. Sara M. Evans elaborates on both the tactical and the theoretical relationships between the abolition movement and the beginnings of the women's rights movement:

Working for racial justice, they [women] gained experience in organizing and in collective action, an ideology which described and condemned oppression analogous to their own, and a belief in human "rights" which could justify them in claiming equality for themselves.²

In 1866, the first women's rights convention since the Civil War chartered the American Equal Rights Association, "organized to further the interests of both Negroes and women."³ Factions developed within this organization as soon as it was formed. The process of ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments then underway created disagreement among the suffrage ranks. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the radicals of the early movement, worked against ratification of these amendments because the rights that they granted were exclusively for men, while more moderate suffragists, such as Lucy Stone, acquiesced to the argument that "this was the 'Negro's hour' and that nothing must be allowed to interfere with it."⁴

This initial disagreement over priorities deepened over the next three years. Divisiveness was aggravated by such factors as the predominantly male leadership's emphasis on the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, a defeat in a Kansas referendum on women's suffrage, and Congress's pointed refusal to include women in the

voting rights provided by the Fifteenth Amendment. The debate within the Association on each of these factors consistently followed the radical-moderate split until 1869, when the American Equal Rights Association formally split into two groups: the National Woman's Suffrage Association and the American Woman's Suffrage Association.

The National Woman's Suffrage Association, centered in New York, was the more radical of the two groups and was led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who felt that the male leadership in the American Equal Rights Association had betrayed the cause of women's suffrage. The National focused its attention on the passage of a women's suffrage amendment to the Constitution while it addressed the broad--and sometimes controversial--spectrum of issues concerning women's rights. The NWSA centered its activities on Congress and succeeded in having the women's suffrage amendment introduced in Congress in 1878 (by Senator Aaron Sargent of California), in having women's suffrage committees created both in the House of Representatives (a temporary committee) and in the Senate (a standing committee) in 1882, and in getting a favorable report from the Senate Committee on the women's suffrage amendment in 1887. But in spite of these advances by the NWSA, when the women's suffrage bill reached the floor of the Senate, it was defeated by a vote of 34-16.

The American Woman's Suffrage Association, centered in Boston, was generally more conservative than the National. Led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe, it gave verbal support to the idea of a federal amendment but concentrated its actual work on efforts to secure women's suffrage through state referenda or legislation. The more

egalitarian western states were the first to grant suffrage to women, probably because in the relatively unstructured society of the frontier, women's equality was more readily accepted and even necessary than in the conservative, urban societies of the East. The AWSA met with success when the territory of Wyoming granted women the vote in 1869 and the territory of Utah followed in 1870 (although Congress revoked this action by Utah in 1887). Wyoming was admitted to the Union as the first women's suffrage state in 1890. But this one victory had to stand before a string of defeats. By 1890, eight states had rejected women's suffrage referenda.⁵

Both groups, the NWSA and the AWSA, were actively working for women's suffrage, but the radical-moderate dichotomy as to how the goal would best be reached created the need for the two separate organizations. Each group made some progress by its own definitions, and, according to the Scott's,

The two organizations, each following its own philosophy and working within its own capabilities, reached more women and men than either could have done alone. Stanton and Anthony could not have ranged so widely or experimented so freely had they been required to secure Lucy Stone's approval; nor could Stone, had she remained with them, have appealed successfully to the more timid or conservative women whom they frightened.⁶

But after more than twenty years of independent activity, neither the National nor the American had met with far-reaching success. This twenty years had clouded the issues that had separated the two groups and resulted in a duplication of efforts. Younger women who were new supporters of the suffrage movement were puzzled as to why there were

two national suffrage associations. Not surprisingly, the leadership of the two groups began to discuss re-unification in 1887.

In February 1890, the two organizations merged into the National American Women's Suffrage Association. Susan B. Anthony of the old NWSA became the president, but, in spite of her leadership role, her commitment to working for federal legislation was not endorsed. The NAWSA's emphasis, like that of its AWSA predecessor, was on activity in the states. This newly united organization directed the suffrage forces as women won the vote in Colorado in 1893 and in Idaho in 1896 and re-established voting rights for women in Utah in 1896. These victories were directed by a new leader in the suffrage ranks, Carrie Chapman Catt, whose efforts to build a well organized structure and strategy for the NAWSA and impressive performance made her the choice as President of NAWSA when Susan B. Anthony stepped down in 1900.

In spite of the promise of new and assertive leadership in the NAWSA, the period between 1896 and 1910 has been labeled the "doldrums" for women's suffrage. All six of the state referenda held during this period were lost and the fight for a federal amendment had virtually ceased.⁷ The old leaders, who had provided an imperative raison d'être for the movement through vigorous pursuit of their goals, were passing on: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone died in 1902; Susan B. Anthony, in 1906. The problem of leadership became acute when Carrie Chapman Catt resigned as president in 1904 and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw took over. Dr. Shaw was an impressive orator but a lack-luster leader and organizer. Anti-suffrage groups, on the other hand, grew in strength during this period.

But despite apparent decline, this "doldrums" period was actually a time of significant internal and attitudinal development for both the women's suffrage movement and for the American social and political structure. The decline of the birthrate, the growing number of college educated women, the growing number of women joining the work world, and the emergence of a group of impressive women reformers such as Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, coinciding with the emergence of the progressive movement served to bring the issue of women's suffrage back to the forefront in the early years of the twentieth century.⁸ The development of the progressive movement was particularly important because it had brought a new zeal for reform to national politics. The suffragists put new emphasis on their call for the vote for women as a way to "clean up" government and, according to William H. Chafe, they succeeded in putting women's suffrage back on the public agenda. The suffragists were willing to "trade off" their support for most reform legislation in return for support from the progressives for the suffrage struggle.⁹ Thus, the interaction of the political phenomenon of progressivism with the social forces that were creating a "new" American woman created undercurrents during this period of "doldrums" that made for a growing and vigorous women's suffrage movement as it entered the decade of the 1910's.

The event which marked the end of the "doldrums" period, the first women's suffrage parade, was held in New York in 1910 under the direction of Harriott Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Blatch had returned to this country in 1908 after spending

time with the English suffragettes under the highly organized and militant leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. She organized the Women's Political Union in New York, seeking support from a new group--the working women in urban areas--and using the activist and even aggressive tactics that she had learned in England.¹⁰ This new approach certainly brought publicity to the cause, and, after the initial shock, suffragists generally judged the parades to be a very successful form of agitation.¹¹

Some tangible advances for women's suffrage began to emerge. In 1910, the state of Washington gave women the vote, followed by California in 1911 and by Oregon, Arizona, and Kansas in 1912. In the early part of 1913, the territory of Alaska gave women the vote and Illinois gave women the right to vote in municipal and presidential elections. The movement had received some measure of political validation in 1912, when the Progressive Party included a call for women's suffrage in the party platform. With this sign of political legitimacy, morale within the movement rose and, in spite of Dr. Shaw's weakness as a leader, the NAWSA seemed to be making progress as it continued to focus its attention on activities in the individual states.

Meanwhile, the machinery to work on the Constitutional amendment was in existence, but it was weak. There was a Congressional Committee within the NAWSA that was to keep the issue of women's suffrage before Congress, but it was, for the most part, inactive. By 1910, neither the committee in the Senate nor the committee in the House of Representatives had reported favorably on the women's suffrage

amendment since 1893, and the amendment had never even reached the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote.¹² The woeful inadequacy of the activities of the NAWSA's Congressional Committee is illustrated by the fact that when, in 1912, Mrs. William Kent, chairman of the Congressional Committee, received ten dollars for expenses connected with congressional hearings on the amendment, she returned change to the NAWSA at the end of the year!¹³ This inactivity concerning the federal amendment would shortly be dispelled by the emergence of two new personalities. In 1912, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns offered their services to Dr. Anna Howard Shaw to work for the NAWSA in securing the passage of the federal amendment for women's suffrage. Their impact was to be an important one.

Prelude: The Congressional Union

Alice Paul and Lucy Burns had both been in England and participated in the British suffrage movement in the early years of the twentieth century. Alice Paul, who was to emerge as the leader of the militant American suffragists, had served a prison sentence for her suffrage activities in England before she returned to the United States in 1910 to complete her Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. Transferring her organizing activities to her native land, this intense Quaker woman renewed her acquaintance with Burns who was also interested in applying the tactics learned in England to achieve a federal women's suffrage amendment. In 1912, when the two offered their services to the NAWSA, Dr. Shaw and Jane Addams, vice-president of the NAWSA, were so impressed that they appointed

Alice Paul to chair the NAWSA's Congressional Committee with the understanding that she would be responsible for raising the necessary funds for the Committee's activities. Delighted by this opportunity, Paul arrived in Washington, D. C. in early 1913 where she appointed Lucy Burns, Crystal Eastman, Mary Ritter Beard, and Mrs. Lawrence Lewis as members of her committee.¹⁴

The first major activity that the new Congressional Committee organized was a suffragist parade held in Washington, D. C. on March 3, 1913--the day before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. The purpose of the parade was to draw the attention of the visitors from all over the country who would be in the city for the inauguration to the suffrage issue and to show them that the women's suffrage movement was a national movement that cut across class lines. The parade included "women farmers . . . in sunbonnets, university graduates in cap and gown, Mrs. Catt's Woman Suffrage Party in white with gay yellow sashes."¹⁵ Over 5,000 women marched, and the parade drew such a large crowd of spectators that it was reported that President-elect Wilson, upon arriving in the capital, asked, "Where are all the people?"¹⁶

The parade was an unqualified success primarily because the marchers met a disorderly mob of spectators. Although the women had a parade permit and began the parade in an orderly manner, the marchers did not receive the police protection that their parade permit should have insured. The scene turned into a near riot. Harriott Stanton Blatch reported that "some marchers were struck in the face by on-lookers, spat upon, and overwhelmed with ribald remarks, and the police officers did nothing to check the onslaught."¹⁷ The Secretary

of War had to call in troops to restore order, and sympathy that was aroused for the suffragist marchers was much greater than any reaction to an orderly march would have been. Public opinion was so sympathetic to the suffragists that an investigation was demanded that resulted in the District of Columbia chief of police losing his job. Indeed, it was a striking commentary on the injustices suffered by women that these women were thus abused in the city that was directly governed by the United States Congress.¹⁸

Alice Paul was so encouraged by the publicity that the suffragists gained from the Washington march and the praise that she, as its organizer, received that she decided to branch out from her activities within the NAWSA. While keeping her post as chairman of the NAWSA's Congressional Committee, Paul, in April 1913, set up, with Dr. Shaw's blessing, the new Congressional Union as an affiliate of the NAWSA. The sole purpose of the Congressional Union was to work for the passage of the federal women's suffrage amendment.

The nature of the relationship between the Congressional Committee and the Congressional Union was vague from the beginning and, by the time of the NAWSA's annual convention in December 1913, the official minutes of the convention noted that:

The program of work and disbursements of the Committee of the National had been so interwoven with the work and disbursements of the new organization that the joint chairman of both [Alice Paul] declared that it was impossible to separate them.¹⁹

There were further problems, for the Congressional Union advocated strategies and tactics that were at odds with NAWSA policy. Alice Paul and the Congressional Union said that suffrage activity should

be limited to pressure on the President and the Congress for passage of the federal amendment and that the Democratic party should be held responsible for the fact that no action had been taken on women's suffrage. The NAWSA had extensive operations at work on the state level and adamantly rejected the "party in power" argument, holding the view that it would require support from both parties to reach a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress.²⁰

Against this backdrop of a developing rift with its mother organization, the Congressional Union in November of 1913 began publishing its own newspaper, The Suffragist, which was in direct competition with the NAWSA's Woman's Journal. This heightened the concern of the NAWSA board about the Congressional Union, and when the NAWSA gathered in Washington in December 1913 for its annual convention, the delegates heard the report of the Congressional Committee with what Carrie Chapman Catt called "mingled feelings of satisfaction at the lively campaign that had been steadily conducted and surprise over certain facts recorded."²¹ The "lively campaign" included hearings before the House Rules Committee, parades, deputations sent to the President, a favorable report on the federal amendment gained from the Women's Suffrage Committee of the Senate, and consideration gained of establishing a standing Women's Suffrage Committee in the House. The "surprise" refers to Catt's rather pointed questions on the floor of the convention as to the relationship between the Congressional Committee and the Congressional Union. Concern was sufficient to warrant instructions to the National Board of the NAWSA

to decide on appropriate action concerning the Congressional Committee and the Congressional Union. Accordingly, the NAWSA Board met and concluded that the Congressional Committee and the Congressional Union must be completely separate, that the leadership must be shared, and that the Congressional Union must report regularly to the National Board on its activities.²² Alice Paul refused these conditions and the National Board removed her as the head of the Congressional Committee. In February of 1914, the Congressional Union asked that its status within the NAWSA be changed from "affiliate" to "auxiliary" because the fee was smaller. The Board voted against this proposal and, from that point on, there were two committees, the Congressional Committee of the NAWSA and the Congressional Union, both working for essentially the same goals but with no sustained co-operation.²³

This break gave the Congressional Union freedom to develop its unique program in the same way that the NWSA-AWSA split had given Anthony and Stanton freedom to develop their more radical style and program in the nineteenth century. Autonomy also brought a heavy financial contributor to the Congressional Union, Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, who was attracted to the Congressional Union's radical style.²⁴ Consistent with Paul's earlier emphasis, the Congressional Union began its work by organizing suffrage groups in every state to work for the federal amendment while continuing to send lobbying groups to the President and to the Congress.

The Congressional Union then began its aggressive legislative tactics as it sought to press the issue of establishing a standing Women's Suffrage Committee in the House of Representatives and forced

the issue in early 1914 by calling for a Democratic caucus on the subject. The Democrats, as expected, voted against a standing committee and took the position that women's suffrage was a question for the states. The Congressional Committee, according to Carrie Chapman Catt, tried to convince the Congressional Union not to force the Democrats to take a stand against women's suffrage by calling for this vote, but she noted that the Union actually wanted to put the Democrats on record as a party in opposition. The Congressional Union was preparing to put its "party in power" plan to work. They announced plans to campaign against Democrats in the suffrage states in the fall elections.

The Congressional Committee's response to this action by the Congressional Union was to force a vote on women's suffrage in the Senate on March 19, 1914. The Committee did this, according to Catt, "in full realization that the Senate would not give a majority." The vote was 35 yeas and 34 nays, a majority but not the two-thirds vote needed. The Congressional Committee had thus given western Democrats a chance to publicly record their individual support or opposition to women's suffrage.²⁵ President Wilson took his cue from this action and told the Congressional Union that he could only follow his party's lead on this issue.

After the Senate vote, the Congressional Committee conducted a poll of Senators that showed that many of them who basically favored women's suffrage felt tied to the "states' rights" idea put forth by the Democratic caucus and reaffirmed by President Wilson. The

Congressional Committee's answer to this dilemma was to endorse another amendment, the Shafroth-Palmer amendment, which was introduced on March 12, 1914:²⁶

Whenever any number of legal voters of any State to a number exceeding eight percent of the number of legal voters voting at the last preceeding General Election held in such a State shall petition for the submission to the legal voters of said state the question whether women shall have equal rights with men in respect to voting at all elections to be held in such State, such question shall be so submitted; and if, upon such submission, a majority of the legal voters of the State voting on the question shall vote in favor of granting to women such equal rights, the same shall thereupon be established, anything in the Constitution or laws of such State to the contrary notwithstanding.

This lengthy and rather wordy amendment would simply return the issue of women's suffrage to the states and this was exactly the objection that the Congressional Union raised. As Harriott Stanton Blatch noted, "Had this Amendment been adopted, we should have been faced with thirty nine referenda in as many separate states. . . . the thought of the possibility seemed a nightmare."

The annual convention of the NAWSA in November of 1914 endorsed the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment after much debate and this action caused much turmoil for the organization because of a strong minority in the NAWSA that opposed the amendment. The conflict that developed was divisive to the NAWSA, as evidenced by the fact that Jane Addams refused to serve as vice-president of the NAWSA because of its support of the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment. She was not alone in her opposition, and at the December 1915 convention, the NAWSA withdrew its support of the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment and re-endorsed what was now called the Bristow-Mondell Amendment.²⁷ This proposed amendment stated that: "The right of citizens of the United States

to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."²⁸ When the issue was thus finally resolved, the NAWSA had lost some of the momentum that its leaders had worked so hard for. Moreover, the "state route" had become depressingly unsuccessful: 1914 had yielded victories only in Nevada and Montana and had brought defeats in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, and Ohio.²⁹

The Congressional Union, meanwhile, was pushing forward with its plan to work for the defeat of Democrats in the Congressional elections in states where women could vote. Determined to hold the "party in power" responsible, Congressional Union campaigners went to the western states where women could vote and worked against Democratic candidates. The success of this attempt is questionable. The Congressional Union claimed partial credit for the defeat of twenty-three of forty-three western Democrats,³⁰ but there were nineteen Democrats elected from suffrage states to the 1915-1916 Congress, where there had been eighteen in the 1913-1914 session.³¹

The year 1915 brought disappointment to suffragists. While the Congressional Union continued its activism through visits to the President, a cross-country automobile pilgrimage, a huge suffrage petition, and rallies and marches in Washington, the suffrage amendment reached the floor of the House of Representatives for the first time and was defeated by a vote of 204 to 174. On the state level, hard fought campaigns were lost in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.³²

As a response to these losses and to the challenge posed by the Congressional Union, the NAWSA reorganized its national office in 1915 and called on Carrie Chapman Catt to take over as president. Catt assumed the presidency at the December 1915 convention and "immediately formulated a 'Winning Plan' based on the concept that state and federal efforts should reinforce each other."³³ Catt's "Winning Plan" was outlined in terms of very specific actions in each of the states and the concrete nature of her plan brought renewed vigor to the NAWSA's program. She also gave new direction through leadership, and Flexner's comments on this are illuminating as to both Carrie Chapman Catt's and Alice Paul's methods:

She picked . . . a working board. Its members were women with independent means who had the ability as well as the willingness to devote themselves singlemindedly to their new jobs. . . . This of course had been true of Miss Paul's methods . . . and a good deal of the startling progress made by the Congressional Union was due to it. It did not make for a socially representative leadership in either group; but it provided two brilliant leaders with trained and experienced staffs who measured up to any demands that were made upon them. . . . The day for the amateur reformer had given way to the professional organizer.

While the NAWSA, under Catt, organized its "Winning Plan," Alice Paul had another concern. With the approach of elections in 1916, the Congressional Union prepared again to fight the "party in power" by working against Democratic candidates. This election year would provide a presidential contest and the Congressional Union called a convention in June to plan strategy. At that convention, held in Chicago, the Congressional Union organized the National Woman's Party in the twelve suffrage states.³⁴ Maud Younger, the keynote speaker, explained the rationale of this new party:

These states with their four million women constitute nearly one-fourth of the electoral college and more than one-third of the voters necessary to elect a President. With enough women organized in each state to hold the balance of power, the women's votes may determine the presidency of the United States.³⁵

Here, then, was a new political party, based on the startling notion that women could organize to determine the outcome of a presidential election. Alice Paul had now taken her vision of party accountability to its logical conclusion. The National Woman's Party claimed that it could pose a threat to political candidates. Whether or not that threat could become reality remained to be seen.

NOTES

¹Scott and Scott, p. 12.

²Sara M. Evans, "Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1976), p. 48. Evans' analysis here is basically concerned with the parallels of the relationship between the abolition movement of the 1830's and 1840's and early feminism and that between the civil rights movement of the 1960's and the contemporary feminist movement.

³Flexner, p. 148.

⁴Ibid., p. 146.

⁵Ibid., p. 178. The states rejecting women's suffrage referenda were Kansas in 1867, Michigan in 1874, Colorado in 1877, Nebraska in 1882, Oregon in 1884, Rhode Island in 1887, Washington in 1889, and South Dakota in 1890.

⁶Scott and Scott, p. 22.

⁷Flexner, p. 256.

⁸Scott and Scott, pp. 27-28.

⁹William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Role, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 18.

¹⁰Scott and Scott, pp. 29-30.

¹¹Flexner, p. 261.

¹²Catt and Shuler, pp. 495-496.

¹³Flexner, pp. 271-272.

¹⁴Harriott Stanton Blatch and Alma Lutz, Challenging Years: The Memoirs of Harriott Stanton Blatch (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 195.

¹⁵Mildred Adams, The Right to be People (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 127.

¹⁶Catt and Shuler, p. 242.

¹⁷Blatch and Lutz, p. 196.

¹⁸Catt and Shuler, pp. 243-244.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Scott and Scott, p. 31.

²¹Catt and Shuler, p. 243.

²²Ida Husted Harper, ed., The History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 5 (New York: NAWSA, 1922), pp. 378-381.

²³Flexner, p. 275.

²⁴Adams, p. 132.

²⁵Catt and Shuler, pp. 245-246.

²⁶Flexner, p. 276.

²⁷Blatch and Lutz, pp. 246-247. The Congressional Union had labeled the women's suffrage amendment the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. Harriott Stanton Blatch provides a fascinating monologue on the name of the women's suffrage amendment: "To call the Federal Women's Suffrage Amendment the Susan B. Anthony Amendment belied history. It should have been called the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Amendment to honor my mother who made the first public demand for women's suffrage in 1848; or the Stanton-Anthony Amendment to honor two noble women who worked so devotedly side by side . . . the historical sense of the Congressional Union was wishful rather than accurate . . ."

²⁸Ibid., p. 244.

²⁹Flexner, p. 277.

³⁰Ibid., p. 278.

³¹Catt and Shuler, p. 248.

³²Flexner, pp. 278-279.

³³Chafe, p. 19.

³⁴Flexner, p. 286-288.

³⁵The Suffragist, June 10, 1916, p. 7.

CHAPTER III

THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMAGES (1916-1919)

The National Woman's Party that was created by the Congressional Union has gained a special place in suffrage history primarily because of its militant tactics that attracted so much publicity. But the Woman's Party filled an important need beyond that of drawing attention to the cause of women's suffrage. By tenaciously keeping the issue of a constitutional amendment before the political hierarchy and the public, the Woman's Party kept alive the issue that eventually brought success to the suffragists. The tactics and the purpose, considered together, make a story that sounds much like an account of an ongoing "battle."

The first actions of the National Woman's Party were in fact very unmilitant, but force soon gathered for aggressive action. The Congressional Union's 1916 convention which created the Woman's Party ended on June 7, the day that the Republican and Progressive conventions began in Chicago. The Democratic convention met later in Saint Louis. The platform committees of the parties were approached about women's suffrage by representatives from both the NAWSA and the National Woman's Party, but there was a variation in the requests from the two groups. NAWSA asked for endorsement of the principle of votes for women but did not specify the means by which this should be accomplished. The National Woman's Party called for support of the federal amendment for women's suffrage as a part of the platforms of the parties.

The renegade Progressive party alone responded favorably to the Woman's Party's request and did endorse the federal amendment. The Republican party and the Democratic party both endorsed the extension of the vote to women by the states through state legislative action or referenda.¹

The Woman's Party's response to this lack of endorsement of the federal amendment by either major political party was to once again threaten a campaign against Democratic candidates as members of the "party on power." The Woman's Party again claimed that, by virtue of controlling the Presidency and having a majority in both houses of Congress, the Democrats had power that they did not effectively mobilize to pass the federal women's suffrage amendment. In spite of the threat by the Woman's Party to work against him, Wilson continued to refuse to actively support women's suffrage by federal amendment, telling a Woman's Party delegation in July 1916 that "to be a leader a man must always be abreast of his party, not ahead of it . . . nothing more could have been gotten from the Resolution Committee in Saint Louis."² The status of the suffrage issue in the election of 1916 was further defined when the Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes, endorsed the federal suffrage amendment on August 1.

The newly formed National Woman's Party held a conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado from August 10 through August 12 to plan strategy for the campaign. The Woman's Party did not, as is often erroneously reported, endorse Republican nominee Charles Evans Hughes at this conference, although they did congratulate Hughes "on the

unequivocal stand which he has taken for human liberty." However, they did declare political war on the Democratic party in the upcoming elections in a resolution that read:

Whereas, The present administration under President Wilson and the Democratic party have persistently opposed the passage of a national suffrage amendment;

Resolved, That the National Woman's Party, so long as the opposition of the Democratic party continues, pledges itself to use its best efforts in the twelve states where women vote for President to defeat the Democratic candidate for President, and in the eleven states where women vote for members of Congress to defeat the candidates of the Democratic party for Congress.³

A Woman's Party historian noted that the Party did not care which candidates received the women's protest votes, "they cared only that women should not vote for the Democrats. They knew if this protest vote was large enough, whoever was elected would realize that opposition to suffrage was inexpedient."⁴

At this point, the National American Woman's Suffrage Association issued invitations to both Wilson and Hughes to address their national convention in early September. Hughes declined the invitation, apparently feeling secure in his position as an ally of women's suffrage. Hughes' endorsement of the federal amendment coupled with the Woman's Party's attack on the Democrats was probably a major factor in Wilson's acceptance of the invitation and in the tone of his speech. Wilson's speech to the NAWSA convention was conciliatory in nature and carefully avoided any opposition to women's suffrage by any method. "I have come to fight not for you but with you," declared the President, "and in the end I think we shall not quarrel over the method." The response of the NAWSA convention was stirring

and enthusiastic, and NAWSA leaders dated Wilson's complete transformation from a sympathizer into a true believer in women's suffrage from his appearance at this Atlantic City convention.⁵ The New Republic, however, was a bit more skeptical of the meaning of Wilson's words and actions as it pointed out that all Wilson did was to express "impatience" with debate over the method. The New Republic was direct in its criticism that the President had only "not opposed" a federal amendment during a political campaign in which his rival had openly endorsed it.

The Woman's Party was no more swayed by Wilson's eloquent rhetoric than was the New Republic and answered the Democratic slogan of "Vote for Wilson. He kept us out of war" with "Vote against Wilson. He kept us out of suffrage." The Woman's Party tried to make it clear that their opposition to Wilson was based solely on the desire to show the power of the women's vote and how that vote could be brought to bear against those who would not support the federal amendment, but that part of their argument was often overlooked and Woman's Party members rarely took great pains to explain themselves. As a result, the Woman's Party's anti-Democratic campaign aroused much antagonism.

There is a case to be made for the assertion that antagonism was the chief product of the Woman's Party's efforts to defeat the Democrats. In spite of intense campaigns by the Woman's Party against President Wilson and other Democrats, the President carried ten of the twelve suffrage states and Democratic Congressional candidates were even more successful in the suffrage states.⁷ But in spite of these statistics, the Woman's Party saw in the results of the 1916 election

"tremendous strides towards victory" in that women's suffrage had been made an issue of national importance, the Democrats had been put on the defensive, and, the Woman's Party claimed, Democratic majorities had been significantly reduced.⁸

After less than spectacular results at the polls, the National Woman's Party returned its attention to Washington. When President Wilson appeared to open the second session of the Sixty-Fourth Congress his speech included no reference to women's suffrage. Having received advance word of this omission and not content that the issue should go unmentioned, several members of the Woman's Party stationed themselves in the Senate gallery and unfurled a banner asking, "Mr. President, What Will You Do For Woman's Suffrage?" at a strategic point in Wilson's speech. The President--and everyone else in the chamber--saw the banner, and the President's speech had to share headlines with women's suffrage in the next day's papers.⁹

The Woman's Party continued its activities on Christmas Day 1916, when an audience gathered at the United States Capitol to pay tribute to Inez Milholland Boissevain, an active member of the Woman's Party who had died from a stroke as she campaigned against the Democrats in the fall campaign. (Woman's Party lore tells that her last words were: "How long must women wait for liberty?")¹⁰ The Woman's Party received permission to present their memorial resolutions to President Wilson, and on January 9, 1917 the President received them. Unwilling to let an opportunity slip by, the Woman's Party representatives used the chance to call on the President for support for women's suffrage, pleading that "our women are

exhausting their lives in waiting and appeal."¹¹ The President answered by scolding the women for presenting themselves under false pretenses and said that he was prepared only to receive the memorial resolutions. Wilson went on to state that "I am bound as leader of a Party . . . my commands come from that Party and not from private personal convictions."¹² The women of that delegation were as indignant over their reception by the President as the President was over their abuse of the privilege of securing an appointment with him. At a meeting that night to discuss how to voice their dissatisfaction, the women decided to picket the White House gates the next morning.

The picketing that began on January 10, 1917 and lasted for over a year and a half brought the Woman's Party notoriety as well as publicity for women's suffrage. The pickets, stationing themselves at the White House gates so that both Wilson and visitors could not enter or leave without being reminded of the women's suffrage issue, stood silently holding banners asking, "Mr. President, What Will You Do For Woman's Suffrage?" and "How Long Must Women Wait For Liberty?"¹³ "Silent sentinels," they appeared at the White House every day, rain or shine, except for Sundays. Days on which special groups made up the picket line--Teacher Days, State Days, etc.--were organized to show the widespread support for women's suffrage among a wide range of professions, classes, and geographical regions. President Wilson took to tipping his hat to the pickets as he entered and left the White House gates. Both the pickets and the police were passive in these early stages of the picketing.

Up until this point, two organizations, the National Woman's Party and the Congressional Union, had continued to operate under Alice Paul's leadership. On March 2, 1917, at a meeting to plan a joint Congressional Union-National Woman's Party demonstration for Wilson's inauguration, Paul recommended the merger of the two organizations into one organization under the name of the National Woman's Party. Since Paul's tactics were shifting from concentration on lobbying work to highly visible and more militant demonstrations, it seemed that greater unity of purpose could be served by one organization; and since the Presidential election was over, Paul felt that the need for an organization composed only of voting women was past. Accordingly, the two organizations were merged and the first show of strength of the "new" National Women's Party was a moving picket line that surrounded the White House four times on Wilson's inauguration day, March 4, 1917--in the pouring rain!

A unity of purpose was evident even as Paul's followers adjusted to this major structural reorganization. At the March 1917 meeting that brought the merger of the Congressional Union and the National Woman's Party, the "new" Woman's Party pledged itself to continue to work solely for suffrage and not to be diverted by war work if the United States did enter the European war.¹⁴ When the country did enter World War I on April 6, 1917, all suffragists were faced with the dilemma of priorities. The NAWSA decided to continue suffrage work and to offer its services to the government for war work.¹⁵ The National Woman's Party, with a large number of Quakers

in leadership roles, did not offer the services of the organization for war work. This in itself provoked little adverse reaction, for individual members were free to and did engage in war work. But reaction to the Woman's Party grew hostile when the banners of the picket began to exploit wartime events.¹⁶ The President's words that justified the United States' entrance into the war were transformed into a banner with a suffrage message: "We shall fight for the things which we have always held nearest our hearts--for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments."¹⁷ Bolder banners later referred to "Kaiser Wilson." Some called this brand of picketing traitorous. Mob violence against the picketers erupted for the first time when the banners told visiting representatives of the Russian government that the United States was a "democracy in name only." The police warned the women that the picketing would have to stop, but the pickets continued. The first group of women was arrested on June 22, 1917 and was charged with "obstructing sidewalk traffic."

At first the pickets were dismissed without court sentences but with stern warnings to end the picketing. However, as one group of women was arrested, another group would take its place. Soon, the courts began to sentence the women to short prison terms and eventually began handing down six months sentences to be served in the Occoquan workhouse. In reality, the pickets had broken no law but were some of the first twentieth century Americans to suffer suspension of their civil liberties during wartime.¹⁸ These women, who

were arrested illegally in order to remove a glaring example of protest from the capital of a nation that was almost hysterically committed to the super-patriotism that only a war can bring, met sub-standard conditions and hostile treatment in Occoquan. Whenever a group was released from jail, a reception was held for them at the Woman's Party headquarters where they would tell stories of sickening and humiliating experiences. When Lucy Burns and Alice Paul were imprisoned, they organized and led hunger strikes which brought more bad publicity to the authorities when jail officials began forced feeding. Reality combined with publicity turned the jailed women into bona fide martyrs, an image that the Woman's Party did nothing to disclaim.

The picketing--and especially the publicity connected with the jail experiences of the pickets--created several kinds of pressure. Dudley Field Malone, appointed by Wilson to the prestigious position of Collector of the Port of New York, resigned his post in September of 1917 as a protest against the treatment of the suffragists. This action was a public repudiation of the administration's stand by a man whom Wilson admired and trusted.¹⁹ In addition to this pressure on Wilson, the Woman's Party sent speakers all over the country telling of the plight of the suffragist prisoners.²⁰ Malone's resignation and the continued publicity that the ever present pickets and the suffering prisoners received finally led the administration to act. In late November 1917, all the pickets were released from

prison and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals subsequently invalidated both the arrests and the sentences.

The publicity gained by the picketing and the women's protests from jail had obviously made some impact: the day after the chairman of the Senate Women's Suffrage Committee visited the Occoquan workhouse, the Committee sent a favorable report on the women's suffrage amendment to the Senate, and in mid-September a House Committee on Women's Suffrage was created. The impact of the news stories created by the picketing and the jail experiences of Woman's Party members can be further inferred from the facts that the pickets were released from jail a week before Congress reconvened and that the House set a date to vote on the amendment only one week after the session was opened.²¹ But perhaps the most telling impact of Woman's Party activities came in October of 1917 when Woodrow Wilson endorsed the federal amendment for women's suffrage. Wilson called for the amendment as a "war measure," a means to include women fully in the efforts of democracy to triumph over evil.²²

It would be a mistake to attribute Wilson's endorsement of the women's suffrage amendment solely to the actions of the Woman's Party. Women's status in the United States had been advanced by significant and visible contributions to the war effort by women. In addition, the NAWSA's increasing effectiveness was attested to by the fact that five states--North Dakota, Nebraska, Rhode Island, New York, and Arkansas--granted women the right to vote in 1917.²³ In any case, following Wilson's endorsement, the federal women's suffrage amendment

was passed by the House of Representatives on January 10, 1918 by a vote of 274 to 136, exactly the two-thirds majority needed.

With this preliminary victory accomplished, the Woman's Party intensified its lobbying efforts in the Senate, using an elaborate card file that included information on each Senator. The picket lines were transferred to the doors of the Senate chambers. But a group of Senators threatened a filibuster and action seemed stalled as the year wore on. The President appealed to the Senate on September 30, 1918 to pass the women's suffrage amendment as a war measure in order "to make our country a democracy in deed as well as in name."²⁴ The next day the Senate voted 62 to 34 in favor of the amendment--two votes short of the required two-thirds majority. As a result, the Congressional elections of 1918 found not only the Woman's Party opposing Democrats but the NAWSA opposing key anti-suffragist Senators. This latter development can be seen as at least a partial validation of the political weapons that the Woman's Party had been using all along.²⁵

In December of 1918, Woodrow Wilson opened the "lame-duck" session of the Sixty-Fifth Congress by again asking for the passage of the women's suffrage amendment. After these words in support of women's suffrage, Wilson sailed for the Versailles Peace Conference. The National Woman's Party did not accept what they considered to be the President's late and safe endorsement as his ticket to respectability in suffrage circles. While the NAWSA was praising Wilson for his generous support, the National Woman's Party convention in

mid-December 1918 held a march and demonstration where they burned copies of the President's speeches on democracy. Mrs. John Rogers explained:

Our ceremony today is planned to call attention to the fact that the President has gone abroad to establish democracy in foreign lands when he has failed to establish democracy at home. We burn his words on liberty today, not in malice or anger, but in a spirit of reverence for truth.

On January 1, 1919, the Woman's Party began an ambitious project: to keep a "watchfire" burning at the White House at all times and to burn copies of the President's speeches on democracy in that watchfire until the federal women's suffrage amendment was passed. Though the watchfire was guarded by Woman's Party pickets, it did not burn continuously, for the police soon arrived to extinguish the fire and later began arrests. But the suffrage issue was kept before the public by virtue of the publicity attracted by this flurry of activity as well as the Woman's Party's "Prison Special," a train which carried Woman's Party members across the nation telling the story of their prison terms.²⁶

On February 10, 1919, the amendment came before the Senate for its last chance in the Sixty-Fifth Congress: it was defeated by one vote. The Sixty-sixth Congress, which contained the new members elected in the fall of 1918, convened on May 20, 1919. When the President telegraphed his speech to Congress from Versailles, he again recommended passage of the amendment. On May 21, the House, in its first order of business, passed the amendment by a vote of 304 to 89. The Woman's Party then intensified lobbying efforts in

the Senate, and, on June 4, the Senate finally passed the woman's suffrage amendment and sent it to the states for ratification.²⁷

The story of the National Woman's Party, however, continues far beyond the Congressional passage of the women's suffrage amendment. Paul, in fact, was not even present in Washington on the day that the Senate passed the amendment, having left several days earlier to begin work for ratification in the states where legislatures were in session.²⁸ Urging governors to call special sessions of their legislatures to ratify the amendment so that women could vote in the 1920 elections, the efforts of Paul and her Woman's Party cohorts helped to bring about the speedy ratification process that culminated on August 26, 1920 when the women's suffrage amendment became the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.²⁹ It was the Congressional fight, however, that brought the publicity that established several strikingly different images of the National Woman's Party. Accordingly, it is the period of this fight, June 1916 to June 1919, that will provide the background against which several of these images will now be explored.

NOTES

- ¹Blatch and Lutz, pp. 264-265.
- ²Ibid., p. 268.
- ³Helen R. Robinson, "What About the Woman's Party?" The Independent, September 11, 1916, p. 382.
- ⁴Inez Hayes Irwin, The Story of the Woman's Party (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1921), p. 174.
- ⁵Catt and Shuler, p. 260.
- ⁶New Republic, September 16, 1916, p. 150.
- ⁷Flexner, p. 287.
- ⁸Blatch and Lutz, p. 272.
- ⁹Irwin, pp. 180-182.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 185.
- ¹¹Blatch and Lutz, p. 275.
- ¹²Irwin, p. 189.
- ¹³Flexner, p. 293.
- ¹⁴Blatch and Lutz, pp. 277-278.
- ¹⁵Adams, p. 139.
- ¹⁶Flexner, p. 294.
- ¹⁷Blatch and Lutz, p. 279.
- ¹⁸Flexner, pp. 294-295.
- ¹⁹Irwin, p. 239.

²⁰Ibid., p. 292.

²¹Flexner, p. 297.

²²Blatch and Lutz, p. 282.

²³NAWSA, Victory: How Women Won It (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1940), p. 162.

²⁴Blatch and Lutz, p. 283.

²⁵Flexner, p. 323.

²⁶Blatch and Lutz, pp. 292-293.

²⁷Flexner, p. 327.

²⁸Irwin, p. 417.

²⁹Blatch and Lutz, p. 292.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGE: ALICE PAUL AS A LEADER

There can be no doubt that Alice Paul was a woman whose leadership qualities were indeed impressive. She evoked feelings of intense devotion in some quarters, distrust and even hatred in others. But no one seemed to have feelings of indifference towards her. It is hard to grasp what peculiar charisma made Alice Paul such a forceful figure, for though her name surfaces throughout the suffrage story, thoughtful analysis of her personality and the forces that drove her is non-existent. There are, though, clues scattered throughout the story.

National Woman's Party Materials

The esteem with which Alice Paul was held by the members of the National Woman's Party is best shown by the exalted place that she was given in a Woman's Party account of the suffrage struggle:

When the unbiased story of the struggle of American women is finally written, three women will stand out--all Quakers and all militants, in that they defied the prejudices of their time: Lucretia Mott, who first declared for Woman's Rights at a public meeting; Susan B. Anthony, the first suffragist to defy prison for suffrage; and Alice Paul, the young modern leader of the National Woman's Party, who went with her little army of women from the east, the west, and the south to the suffrage picket line and to prison.¹

To place Alice Paul on the same level as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton implied "super-star" status among suffragists. This "super-star" of the Woman's Party also seemed to be an individual so impressive that she was almost too remote to relate to in any

kind of a personal way. National Woman's Party historian, Inez Irwin, reinforces this impression in her Story of the Woman's Party:

There is no difference of opinion in regard to Alice Paul in the Woman's Party. With one accord, they say, "She is the Party." They regard her with an admiration which verges on awe. Mentally she walks apart, not because she has any conscious sense of superiority, but because of the swiftness, amplitude, and completeness with which her mind marches.²

There is evidence, however, in some personal correspondence between Woman's Party members that Alice Paul, for all her effectiveness, was sometimes abrasive. Mary Beard expressed some concern to Lucy Burns about Paul's treatment of financial contributors and of legislators:

Mrs. Belmont is justified in not wanting to be considered merely a money bag; but she says she does not intend to interfere with you--only wants to be asked for her opinion now and then. . . .

You will not let Alice Paul interview congressmen any more, if you can help it, will you? Someone else can do it better if there is anything in rumors.³

But later, Beard showed a change of heart as she wrote, "I wish I had never written you that Alice Paul must not be allowed to see congressmen. . . . I so understand now that the person who does see them must know how to answer them. That she does."⁴ One must speculate that this "back-and-forth" attitude on the part of some of Paul's closest colleagues might indicate abruptness that occasionally bordered on unpleasantness on Paul's part.

But for publication, Irwin records the very flattering impression of Paul's associates, even though few of them speak of her outside of the context of Party work:

Winifred Mallon speaks of her "burning sincerity" . . . Nina Allender sums her up as "a Napoleon without self-indulgence. . . ." Maud Younger's tribute: "she has . . . a devotion to the cause which is absolutely self-sacrificing. She has an indomitable will. She recognizes no obstacles. . . ." Lucy Burns says: "Her great assets, I should say, are her powers, with a single leap of the imagination, to make plans on a national scale; and a supplementary power to see that done down to the last postage stamp. But because she can do all this, people let her do it--Her abruptness lost some workers, but not the finer spirits."⁵

Although such adulation was not characteristic of the National Woman's Party magazine, The Suffragist, over which Alice Paul had considerable editorial impact, the image conveyed by the Woman's Party materials is of an incredibly resourceful organizer who was, indeed, the guiding force of the Woman's Party. It seems then that Woman's Party members, though sometimes bothered by Paul's abruptness, were almost unanimous in their admiration for her organizational skills and her commitment to their cause.

NAWSA Materials

On the other hand, the National American Woman's Suffrage Association largely ignored Alice Paul in its materials. She was rarely mentioned in the NAWSA's magazine, Woman's Journal (later, Woman Citizen), and when she was mentioned, she was portrayed as a misfit or a "rabble-rouser." She received greatest attention in NAWSA materials in connection with her early involvement with the National and the conditions surrounding her separation from it. The History of Woman Suffrage reports that, in 1912, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns "came back to the United States filled with zeal to inaugurate a campaign of 'militancy' here. The idea was coldly received by the

suffrage leaders. . . ."6 NAWSA president, Carrie Chapman Catt, implied that Alice Paul misrepresented her motives by her abuse of what Catt saw as a large grant of power within the NAWSA: "The Board," Catt stated, "gave her the prestige of the chairmanship of its Congressional Committee and provided her with the stationery of the Association and the list of its usual contributors."⁷ The History of Woman Suffrage does report admiration for Alice Paul's "astonishing executive ability"⁸ but goes on to give an account of the insubordination that Catt had implied:

The Congressional Union, instead of being merely a local society to assist the committee in its efforts with Congress, as Miss Paul has said, was a national organization to work for the Federal Amendment. . . . The Association's letterheads had been used for this purpose. . . . Miss Paul had been obtaining names for membership in the Union during all the sessions of the convention.

This report concluded with the notation that "she [Paul] was at once relieved from the chairmanship of the Congressional Committee."⁹

From this point on, the NAWSA's history mentions Alice Paul only as a spokesman for the rival National Woman's Party. Subsequent reference to Paul's leadership quality consists of one sentence that is included in the History of Woman Suffrage's summary of "Woman Suffrage Associations in the United States": "It [NWP] was a small but very active organization and Miss Paul was the supreme head with no restrictions."¹⁰ This judgment of Alice Paul as a near dictator is consistent with the image that the NAWSA generally conveyed about her. This image includes both dictator-like qualities and a manipulative exploitation of her executive abilities. It is to the NAWSA's credit that this image was not explicit or stressed--it was only implied.

And, for the most part, the National--perhaps out of fear, perhaps out of a desire to avoid more division within the suffrage ranks--largely ignored Paul and her organization.

Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals

That Alice Paul could be "ignored" at any stage of her political activism seems unthinkable, but the NAWSA was not alone in this practice. In the early stages of her career as a suffrage leader, contemporary newspapers and periodicals gave no special attention to Paul as a leader. Mentioned in news articles and her comments sometimes quoted, she began to make headlines only as her actions became more militant. As early as July 1916, the New York Times led a news story with the title: "Paul Gives Demands to Hughes."¹¹ In 1917, when the arrests of the pickets had been occurring for some time, it was worthy of note that Alice Paul was arrested; the headlines read: "Arrest Four More Pickets--Miss Alice Paul Among Quartet in White House Demonstration."¹² Refraining from editorializing against her militant tactics in the early stages, the New York Times apparently found her increasingly newsworthy as her militance became more visible. On November 7, 1917, for example, a long article, "Miss Alice Paul on Hunger Strike" appeared.¹³ This was followed by a more spectacular three column story on November 9, under the banner: "Hunger Striker is Forcibly Fed--Miss Alice Paul, a Suffragist Picket, is Greatly Exhausted after the Ordeal--Had Fasted for 78 Hours--Washington Officials Said She Would Die Unless Strenuous Measures Were Taken."¹⁴ This somewhat gruesome story was told in much detail but there was

little attention to Paul herself. The image conveyed at this stage was of a curious militant who was characterized as having no depth of personality.

Not until relatively late in Paul's suffrage career did the New York Times provide any in-depth analysis on this new personality that they had reported on for several years. On May 25, 1919, when passage of the women's suffrage amendment was eminent, the Times, on the front page of its Sunday Magazine section, printed an interview with Alice Paul entitled: "Pressure for Suffrage." On the whole, the article did a reasonable job of presenting impressions without making judgments:

She is a Quaker. At first sight she looks that part more than the militant suffragist who, for picketing the President, received a sentence of seven months imprisonment. Her manners are quiet, her voice low. . . . It is only on close scrutiny that one perceives her underlying firmness and ability to fight to a finish. . . . She had made a study of representative government behind the scenes, and she took the tools of the boss politician in bringing political pressure to bear. It is now conceded, by the best of the men politicians, that she played their game with extraordinary success.¹⁵

Curiosity of the New York Times as to Paul's leadership qualities thus finally led to a reasonable inquiry and a begrudging admiration for her strengths. Prior to the approaching passage of the women's suffrage amendment, however, the Times seemed generally indifferent to Paul as anything other than a one-dimensional militant who provided an occasional news story with her bizarre antics.

Articles on Alice Paul herself in other contemporary periodicals are rare and, for the most part, are too biased either toward or against her to be taken seriously as historical evidence. In October, 1919,

Everybody's Magazine published an exceedingly complimentary article on Alice Paul. With the light tone characteristic of this "conversational" magazine, the article presented Paul as a small-town girl who, though she had made an impact on the world, still provoked only admiration in her hometown:

"What do you think of all these goings-on?" I asked her mother. She sighed.

"Well, Mr. Paul always used to say, when there was anything hard and disagreeable to be done, 'I bank on Alice!'" 16

The level of analysis in this "in-depth" interview obviously makes this article of little use.

Under the guidance of Freda Kirchwey, the Nation provided a sharp contrast to the Everybody's article in a piece titled "Alice Paul Pulls the Strings." As the title implies, Kirchwey conveyed an image of Alice Paul as a dictatorial leader and accused her of unwisely keeping the Woman's Party's programs limited to a single issue.

Someday the story of the National Woman's Party will be told. It will be an interesting story, full of strange contradictions. . . . It will be full of idealism and steadfast purpose and yet of a readiness to use any trick or pretense that might bring that purpose nearer to fulfilment. . . . But that story can not be written until the people who know it get out from under the spell of the Alice Paul legend. 17

Other periodical coverage of Alice Paul is sketchy and often negative. Typical is a 1923 Century Magazine article, "Women in the Washington Scene," which mentioned Paul as one who had emerged from the fight for the women's suffrage amendment only to tackle the fight for an equal rights amendment: "She is a revolutionist in tactics, and has the revolutionists' singlemindedness and destructive insistence and disregard of persons."18 This image, like Kirchwey's, is negative,

but a new dimension is added to the description of Alice Paul: an unfeeling revolutionary for whom the end justifies the means. This is an extreme example of the generally negative treatment that Paul received from major press sources.

As would be expected, the images of Alice Paul as a leader are dramatically influenced by the source and the timing of the media coverage she received. While National Woman's Party materials are glowing in their praise of her as a superior organizer and leader, the NAWSA downplayed her role in the suffrage movement--belittling and even ignoring her. The popular press found in her an interesting case, whose flair for the dramatic brought her early headlines and who only earned legitimacy for her leadership when her cause was almost won. But even the most vehement anti-suffragist writer for the New York Times and the Woman's Party's Inez Irwin would have to agree that Alice Paul was a capable leader who inspired strong feelings among those around her. It seems that she was an individual who single-mindedly approached her task and was willing to take risks and to offend people if that was what was necessary to reach her goal. Her organizational abilities can not be ignored, for they are referred to in every source. Yet neither can Paul's tendency to be domineering be neglected: while the NAWSA pictured her as manipulative and the NWP members admit only to her "abruptness," the difference is largely rhetorical. Alice Paul was a skillful leader--with her own strengths and weaknesses. An apt summation of Paul's image as a leader is found in the title of an article in a 1934 Literary Digest that included a discussion of Alice Paul's activities: "They Stand Out From the Crowd."¹⁹

NOTES

¹"Press Release--National Woman's Party--Exclusive to Washington Times," March 20, 1920, National Woman's Party Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²Irwin, p. 15.

³Mary Beard to Lucy Burns, January 9, 1917, NWP Papers.

⁴Ibid., January 21, 1917.

⁵Irwin, p. 16.

⁶Harper, HWS, vol. 5, p. 378.

⁷Catt and Shuler, p. 241.

⁸Harper, HWS, vol. 5, p. 378.

⁹Ibid., p. 381.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 675.

¹¹New York Times, July 9, 1916, p. 6.

¹²Ibid., October 21, 1917, p. 10.

¹³Ibid., November 7, 1917, p. 13.

¹⁴Ibid., November 9, 1917, p. 13.

¹⁵Ibid., May 25, 1919, VII, p. 1.

¹⁶Anne Herendeen, "What the Hometown Thinks of Alice Paul," Everybody's Magazine, October 1919, p. 45.

¹⁷Freda Kirchwey, "Alice Paul Pulls the Strings," Nation, March 2, 1921, pp. 332-333.

¹⁸Ernestine Evans, "Women in the Washington Scene," Century Magazine, August 1923, pp. 507-517.

19 "They Stand Out From the Crowd," Literary Digest, February 10, 1934, p. 9.

CHAPTER V

IMAGE: POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE WOMAN'S PARTY

Analysis in the media of the political strategy of the Woman's Party, particularly as it related to a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage and to working to unseat Democratic politicians as representatives of the "party in power," brought forth a great deal of criticism from non-Woman's Party sources and much defensive justification from the Woman's Party. The images that each group cultivated are striking in their differences.

National Woman's Party Materials

The Woman's Party never deviated from its conviction that a constitutional amendment was the only effective way to insure the vote for women. Inez Irwin, Woman's Party historian, described the Shafroth-Palmer amendment that would return the question of women's suffrage to the states as offering "a path to the enfranchisement of women incredibly cluttered and cumbered."¹ Harriott Stanton Blatch asked, "Why should we pass a Federal Amendment which promised us nothing but a referendum in the end?" and guessed that the Shafroth-Palmer was:

Suggested by Congressmen who wished to give women some political crocheting to occupy their hands and relieve Congress of their disconcerting attentions. It [the Shafroth-Palmer Amendment] might well have had for its short title, "A bill to encourage tatting for women."²

Blatch's indignant attitude was expressive of the Woman's Party's view of fighting for suffrage through the states, the strategy adopted by the NAWSA. Further insight into the feeling behind this Woman's Party rhetoric about strategy is evident in Woman's Party correspondence. When the National Association began agitation for court action to establish women's suffrage under the Fourteenth Amendment, Mary Beard fired off the following letter to Alice Paul:

Since the absurd action of the delegates to the National I no longer feel we can pay the slightest attention to any idea held by such women. We certainly have had a fine demonstration of the unfitness of women to vote. . . . The whole question of the relation of the suffrage to the Fourteenth Amendment was thoroughly settled by the Supreme Court in *Minor vs Halperssett*, 21 Wall (62(1874) [sic]. . . .

Why in God's name didn't these women consult someone who knows something if they know nothing themselves? It makes all suffragists look so ridiculous. . . . All of us become a laughing stock through this action.³

It is clear that there was no patience in the Woman's Party with methods of obtaining the vote other than through a federal amendment.

An even more controversial strategic issue was the "party in power" doctrine. The Suffragist closely followed the development of the platforms of the three parties in 1916 and gave elaborate justification for the Woman's Party's stand against the Democrats. A July headline read: "President Wilson Determined Opponent of Federal Suffrage Amendment."⁴ The editorial page of the Suffragist on August 5 took the form of a two column comment. One column was headed: "Democratic Opposition to National Suffrage." The other was titled: "Mr. Hughes for the Anthony Amendment."⁵

A lengthy and involved discussion of Woman's Party strategy was printed in the August 26, 1916 edition of the Suffragist in an article

by Columbia professor Charles Beard entitled "Tactics and Explosives." He began the article by announcing that the text was a "letter to a suffragist of the old school." The fact was that Beard was answering Catt's criticism of an article of his that had appeared in the New Republic,⁶ crediting the Woman's Party with the new interest in women's suffrage among the political parties. He provided the most solid defense of the Women's Party's anti-Democratic stance that appeared in the Suffragist, stating that "all that was got at Chicago and Saint Louis was got only because of the threats of the Woman's Party." He pointed out that the National Association had no impact on the political conventions over the years "simply because it wielded no instrument except women's silent influence." He then challenged the NAWSA: "You say that you represent 97% of the women suffragists. That may be true, but it would have required only thirty-five votes in the 1912 Nevada congressional election to turn the scale. It is not mere numbers that count in war or politics; it is tactics and explosives."⁷

From the time that Beard's rationale appeared, the Suffragist became increasingly aggressive in its anti-Democratic stance. The September 9, 1916 issue was full of indignation. An article entitled "Congress Adjourned--No Action on Suffrage Amendment" commented that Congress had adjourned after four years in which the Democrats had controlled Congress and the White House. In answer to the question, "What has the Democratic Party done for women's enfranchisement?" the editors summarized:

The President: -refused to support the federal suffrage amendment

Senate: -35-34 vote; FOR 27% Democrats
47% Republicans
100% Progressives

House: -174-204 vote; FOR 31% Democrats
64% Republicans
100% Progressive Republicans
93% Progressives
100% Independents 8

By articles and statistical compilations like these, the Suffragist was persistent in its justification of the Woman's Party's anti-Democratic stand as a politically astute and necessary move.

In reflecting on President Wilson's motives for his appearance at the NAWSA convention in September of 1916, the Suffragist claimed that the "party in power" doctrine of the Woman's Party was having an impact. Wilson, it was claimed, recognized "how necessary . . . it is at this critical period of his election campaign to counteract, by some conciliatory public statement, the effect of his prolonged hostility to the suffrage amendment in Congress."⁹ It was, of course, the Woman's Party that had forced this realization! A few weeks nearer to the election, the Suffragist answered criticism that the Woman's Party was receiving for its anti-Wilson attitude. The editor claimed that the members of the Woman's Party were

. . . very indifferent indeed about Mr. Wilson. . . . They would view with composure the re-election of Mr. Wilson--but not in the equal suffrage states and not by the help of women's votes. . . . If that [women's opposition] is made clear, it is a matter of total indifference to the Woman's Party--so far as suffrage is concerned--who is the next President of the United States.¹⁰

The Woman's Party did not have the dramatic impact on the November elections that was hoped for. But the Suffragist was enthusiastic in its assessment of the results. The editors claimed little concern that the Woman's Party had not turned the election around and said that "it made no difference who was elected. . . . What we did try to do was organize a protest vote by women against Mr. Wilson's attitude toward suffrage. This we did."¹¹

In April of 1918, when the Senate was running out of time to vote on the suffrage amendment, the Suffragist reminded its readers that "Power to pass the resolution through the Senate is with the Democratic administration."¹² The following October, when the Suffragist reported on the defeat of the women's suffrage amendment in the Senate, there was no doubt left as to who should be blamed. The editor declared that it "was defeated because of lack of Democratic support. . . . 73% of the Republicans voted for it against 57% of the Democrats."¹³

The Suffragist continued to publish criticism of the party in power and encouraging rhetoric for its workers until the suffrage amendment was passed. A large number of articles, both pro and con, were reprinted from major newspapers around the country, including the New York Times' belated interview with Alice Paul, "Her Pressure on Congress."¹⁴ When the amendment was finally passed by Congress, the Suffragist announced "a New Task," that of ratification by thirty-six states.¹⁵ Plans for strategy were not to stop for the Woman's Party when the congressional fight was over.

NAWSA Materials

The NAWSA materials available show a surprising lack of hostile comment on the political strategy of the National Woman's Party. But this is primarily a lack of any comment at all. The Woman's Party is most often simply mentioned as a group whose approach differed from that of the National Association's. As regards the Shafroth-Palmer amendment, the NAWSA leaders did not attack the Woman's Party for its non-support but only tried to explain their view of it. According to Catt, its object was to simply add states to the suffrage list. She saw it as a "support to the pending Federal Suffrage Amendment," and, full of justification, she pointed out that "the arguments for and against had served to bring the question of suffrage by federal amendment still more prominently to the front."¹⁶ This "defense," of course, benefitted from the advantages of hindsight! As to the "party in power" doctrine, the History of Woman Suffrage provides an unimpassioned critique of this notion:

. . . the Union announced its program of fighting the candidates of the Democratic Party without any reference to their position on the Federal Amendment or their record on woman suffrage. . . . The policy of the Congressional Union, put into action throughout the presidential campaign of 1916, made any cooperation [between the Union and NAWSA] impossible.¹⁷

With this comment, the NAWSA closed its discussion of the National Woman's Party's political strategy in the "official" history of the woman's suffrage movement.

The Woman's Journal, the official publication of the NAWSA, provided only brief and irregular coverage of the National Woman's Party-- but the coverage was fairly objective. In July of 1916, the Woman's

Journal announced the coming Conference of the Woman's Party at Colorado Springs "to decide on measures to be adopted by the Woman's Party in the coming election."¹⁸ The August 19, 1916 Woman's Journal contained a surprisingly supportive editorial, "The Woman's Party." It noted that the New York Times had denounced the decision of the Woman's Party to oppose Woodrow Wilson and went on to defend the right of the Woman's Party to do this! According to the Woman's Journal, the women's suffrage amendment was, for women, "the most important measure now before Congress" and the vehemence of the Woman's Party was understandable. The editors pointed out what they saw as "the fundamental weakness of the Woman's Party" in that "it represents only a very small fraction of the voters in the enfranchised states" but went on to conclude that "the Woman's Party has a perfect right to try to defeat President Wilson."¹⁹ The NAWSA did not say that it endorsed the Woman's Party's activities, but it is noteworthy that the National defended the Woman's Party's right to use the strategy that it chose.

The biggest criticism of the strategy of the Woman's Party that the NAWSA voiced was that it caused a glaring split in the suffrage ranks. Eleanor Flexner reports that the NAWSA was concerned that in 1916 the Congressional Union was drawing those committed to a federal amendment away from the National. A Report of the Survey Committee to the NAWSA Board of Officers in March of 1916 noted that the "combination (of NAWSA-CU) has produced a great muddle from which the National can be freed only by careful action."²⁰ Carrie Chapman Catt went further in her assessment that the Congressional Union had created a discontent that "brought a complexity of troublesome

problems which tremendously increased the strain of suffrage leaders and workers."²¹ This, in the views of the NAWSA leaders, seemed to be the greatest transgression of the National Woman's Party. In reality, it seems that the strategy of the Woman's Party attracted women who would have been impatient with the non-flamboyant tactics of the NAWSA. The existence of the two groups and their varying strategies seemed to broaden the base of the suffrage movement, rather than to restrict it.

Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals

In terms of the contemporary press, the New York Times was the most consistent critic of the political strategy used by the Woman's Party. The extent of this criticism is reflected in the exasperated comment by activist Inez Milholland Boissevain in a 1916 Suffragist: "Now there are people who believe that women are not human beings. There are Turks, infidels, the House of Lords in England . . . [and] the New York Times!"²² The question of why the New York Times had such anti-suffragist tendencies and held such a consistent anti-Woman's Party stance is attributable to what editorial writer Elmer Davis readily admitted in the 1921 "company biography":

On the major issues of these eight years [of the Wilson administration] the paper supported the President. . . . The Times in recent years has consistently supported the Democratic Party. . . . The publisher of The Times [Adolph S. Ochs] is a Democrat . . . by conviction, and so is its editor-in-chief, Mr. [Charles R.] Miller.²³

In the early stages of the suffrage fight, the President was unwilling to formally endorse the idea of women's suffrage; thus, the stance of

the New York Times. The Woman's Party did not pledge support to the war effort; thus, the stance of the New York Times. The paper's pro-Democratic bias was probably further offended by the tactics of the Woman's Party against the Democrats, resulting in vengeance as a further impetus to anti-Woman's Party news reports and editorials in the New York Times.

The Times often used a contrast with the more conservative NAWSA in their news stories to imply criticism of the Woman's Party. In April of 1917, the NAWSA received a full page special article in the Times Magazine Section after the National had pledged its aid to the war effort. Entitled: "Suffragists's Machine Perfected in All States Under Mrs. Catt's Rule," the article made no mention of the Woman's Party.²⁴ Division within the suffrage ranks was underscored with such headlines as "Rival Organizations,"²⁵ "State Suffragists Condemn Picketing,"²⁶ and "Dr. Shaw Severe in Blaming Pickets--Endangered the President and Carried Treasonable Banners, Says Suffrage Leader."²⁷ To show criticism of the Woman's Party from fellow suffragists was a strong means of attack that the New York Times used often.

When Wilson won the election of 1916 in spite of Woman's Party opposition, the New York Times made much of this failure. The headlines on November 12 read: "Votes of Women and Bull Moose Elected Wilson--Woman's Party Failed Utterly." Proclaiming that the "Woman's Party terrorized the two conventions and frightened them with the prospect of four million votes, which it held over them as a club," the Times noted that "dispatches are unanimous in recording the

antagonisms excited by the activities of the Woman's Party." The paper applauded the fact that "deaf to all appeals to them as suffragists, they [women voters] voted on the issue of the day alone."²⁸

The nature of the news coverage of the political strategy of the Woman's Party by the New York Times was significant, but even more telling was the editorial comment that appeared regularly. Typical is an early anti-Woman's Party editorial. "Suffrage By Threat." This June 1916 editorial scolded the Woman's Party for demanding support from politicians out of fear of political reprisal. The Times called the Woman's Party foolish but reminded the readers that it was

. . . unjust to the majority of the suffragists to regard them as responsible for the antics and dithyrambics of the suffrage Extreme Left. . . . The efforts . . . would have about as much effect on the election as the evolutions of one Jersey mosquito on the movements of the satellites of Jupiter.²⁹

(An entertaining postscript to this editorial is a letter to the editor from Woman's Party member Elizabeth S. Rogers that was printed the next week. She reminded the Times that "powerful and unexpected things sometimes result from mosquito bites--especially the bite of the female, you know."³⁰) A subsequent editorial entitled "Millions of Goblin Votes" claimed that it was facetious to say that women of diverse backgrounds and with diverse influences (such as husbands!) would vote as a unit.³¹ This line of argument was continued in an editorial later that week, "The Woman." The editor pointed out that "'the women' and women suffragist politicians are not one and the

same" and went on to say that in order to discuss "what the women voters will do this year, it might be well to keep in mind the fact that women are human"!³²

While the New York Times was undoubtedly the most persistent critic of the political strategy of the National Woman's Party during the years of the suffrage fight, the Washington Post during this same period also revealed in its reporting some animosity towards the National Woman's Party; however, there was less inclination on the part of the Post to levy editorial attacks. One can speculate that this "tempered hostility" towards the Woman's Party on the part of the Post was the result of hard times for the newspaper itself. Washington was one of the few major cities to add to its number of newspapers during the early twentieth century.³³ The challenge of increased competition along with the responsibility of reporting on government to a city whose business was government might well have made the Washington Post hesitant to openly offend anyone. Thus, the apparently dominant attitude of distaste for the militants was adopted, but open editorial hostility was avoided for the time being.

After the elections of 1916, the Post was less derisive than the Times had been, but the editorial on November 11 did point out weakness in the very notion of a woman's party. The editorial opinion was presented in terms of common sense rather than in terms of opposition to women's suffrage: "The election returns show the futility of any proposal for a woman's party. It is to the credit of the women that they did not vote as a sex, but as intelligent human beings."³⁴ The following day, the Post printed an "opposing view" in the form of

an interview with Alice Paul. The headlines were: "Women Voters Unite: Suffrage Leaders See Great Gains For Their Cause." Given a forum to state her case, Paul pointed to the fact that "in the few months of its existence," the Woman's Party was able to deny "nearly half of the votes from going to President Wilson." This triumph, she believed, would cause the Woman's Party to become so strong that "no party will desire to incur its hostility."³⁵

Periodicals as well as newspapers provided contemporary coverage of the suffrage fight and of the Woman's Party in particular. One of the most important such articles was written by Helen Ring Robinson, United States Senator from Colorado for the Independent in 1916. Senator Robinson reflected that the pleas of the NAWSA and the Woman's Party (or Congressional Union) to the platform committees of the political parties would be of no immediate political consequence but that the strategy was sound. She went on to say: "Yet of the two organizations, there is little doubt that the Union was the more instrumental in securing the two planks with their high strategic value." Though obviously sympathetic to the cause, Robinson predicted that the Woman's Party would not take many votes away from the Democrats. She went on to point out the obvious fallacy in the "party in power" scenario: a two-thirds majority in Congress was needed to pass the suffrage amendment. "It is unjust to hold a majority party responsible for the failure of such an amendment--unless it is a two-thirds majority part."³⁶ She was speaking less about "justice," however, than about political reality!

Not all that was written about the Woman's Party was critical. A friendly and perceptive observer of the political strategy of the Woman's Party was the New Republic, whose editorial viewpoint had been cultivated by Mary and Charles Beard in the early days of suffrage agitation in an effort to change the critical stance the magazine had taken in 1914.³⁷ In a letter to Alice Paul, Mary Beard wrote: "The New Republic has been so hostile that Charles went down to see the editors whom we know rather well and he explained and argued until they admitted that they had been blind and foolish. Charles will have a reply in this next number."³⁸ The resulting article, "Woman Suffrage and Strategy," appeared in the December 12, 1914 issue.³⁹ Thereafter, the New Republic provided a counterpoint view to the constant criticism of the New York Times through its editorials and articles. Charles A. Beard wrote another major article on the Woman's Party in the July 29, 1916 New Republic. He endorsed the strategy of the Woman's Party and said that the "Congressional Union believes in nothing but Realpolitick." He defined the major achievements of the Party as: bringing both houses of Congress to a vote on women's suffrage in 1914, calling the first national convention of women voters in September of 1915, and the securing of endorsements of the principle of women's suffrage from the major political parties in 1916. He concluded that "fortified by the logic of the events, by political facts, by the justice of the cause, the Congressional Union will continue to mobilize and fight until victory is won."⁴⁰

The editorial staff of the New Republic gave a strong endorsement to the "party in power" principle on the week after the 1916

elections--a striking contrast to the editorial comments of the New York Times and the Washington Post of that week. The New Republic called on the NAWSA to adopt the strategy of the Woman's Party for the 1918 elections and suggested that "if the National Association does not see its way to harvest in this field, it should leave the field clear for the Congressional Union, and concentrate itself on state campaigns. . . . Its traditional policy no longer meets the advantages of the present situation."⁴¹

This endorsement of Woman's Party strategy was challenged the next week in a letter to the editor which combined perceptive observations with probing questions about the reality of the Party's tactics in view of the results of the election. "Instead of inflicting humiliating defeat upon the President," the writer pointed out, "the women of the West voted in unprecedented numbers and calmly re-elected him. . . . How do results of the recent election justify your editorial advice to the National Association?"⁴² A thoughtful response to the issues raised in this letter appeared subsequently in an article, entitled "Woman Suffrage and Party Politics," which gave credit to the National Woman's Party for facing and utilizing political realities to their advantage. The major political parties, the article claimed, would not act on the federal women's suffrage amendment unless they could gain votes by doing so. The writer admitted that "the work of bullying should not go so far as the Congressional Unionists propose," but defended the Woman's Party's

. . . aim to prevent the party in power from shirking responsibility. . . . The idea which gives birth to these tactics is, we believe, substantially correct. The politicians will shirk

the suffrage issue as long as they can; and when they cease to shirk it they will do so either in order to win votes or to avoid losing them.⁴¹

This exchange in the New Republic defined the issues well. The political strategy of the National Woman's Party was indeed exploitive of the political system as it existed. The disagreement about this strategy was rooted in the question of whether women had the right to use the system or not.

While the Woman's Party adamantly defended its right to exploit the system as a necessary means to its goal and the NAWSA expressed distress over the split in the suffrage movement that the Woman's Party's strategy was causing, the real issues were being aired in the public press. The basic question that pragmatic observers were raising was: "Will the Woman's Party's strategy work?" The New York Times, a strong Democratic voice that supported President Wilson, scoffed at the notion that this strategy might work and did what it could in its articles and its editorials to discredit the militants. Although far from objective, the Washington Post was less aggressive in its hostility to the strategy of the Woman's Party, probably because of the competition for readers that it faced. While the Post pointed out that women did not, in fact, vote as a group, the paper allowed Alice Paul to answer this criticism of the Woman's Party's strategy. The New Republic, won over to the suffrage cause by the ardent lobbying of Charles and Mary Beard, presented a positive view of the Woman's Party. It gave credit to the Woman's Party for the gains made for suffrage and endorsed the Woman's Party's strategy of working for a constitutional amendment by using the "party in power"

device as the only realistic strategy for the future. In the Independent, Helen R. Robinson, a United States Senator, gave a middle-of-the-road view of Woman's Party's strategy that was probably the most balanced one offered in the contemporary press. As Robinson pointed out, although Alice Paul and her group had succeeded in reviving the issue of a constitutional amendment, the Woman's Party was not going to be able to muster a two-thirds majority in the United States Congress while it insisted on actively opposing the party in power. Thus, predictions of success and failure for the Woman's Party's strategy were as varied as their sources. The methods that the Woman's Party chose intensified the debate.

NOTES

- ¹Irwin, p. 54.
- ²Blatch and Lutz, p. 247.
- ³Mary Beard to Alice Paul, March 15 (no year), NWP Papers.
- ⁴Suffragist, July, 29, 1916, p. 7.
- ⁵Ibid., August 5, 1916, p. 6.
- ⁶Charles Beard, New Republic, December 12, 1914, pp. 22-23.
- ⁷Charles Beard, "Tactics and Explosives," Suffragist, August 26, 1916, p. 4.
- ⁸Suffragist, September 9, 1916, p. 5.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 6.
- ¹⁰Ibid., September 30, 1916, p. 6.
- ¹¹Ibid., November 11, 1916, p. 6.
- ¹²Ibid., April 20, 1918, p. 8.
- ¹³Ibid., October 12, 1918, p. 4.
- ¹⁴Ibid., March 27, 1919, p. 4.
- ¹⁵Ibid., June 7, 1919, p. 2.
- ¹⁶Catt and Shuler, p. 247.
- ¹⁷Harper, HWS, pp. 454-455.
- ¹⁸Woman's Journal, July 29, 1916, p. 243.
- ¹⁹Ibid., August 19, 1916, p. 268.

²⁰Flexner, p. 284.

²¹Catt and Shuler, p. 247.

²²Suffragist, June 17, 1916, p. 4.

²³Elmer Davis, History of the New York Times 1851-1921 (New York: New York Times, 1921), pp. 252-254.

²⁴New York Times, April 29, 1917, VI, p. 8.

²⁵Ibid., June 7, 1916, p. 6.

²⁶Ibid., August 31, 1917, p. 8.

²⁷Ibid., November 23, 1917, p. 5.

²⁸Ibid., November 12, 1916, I, p. 1.

²⁹Ibid., June 22, 1916, p. 10.

³⁰Ibid., June 27, 1916, p. 10.

³¹Ibid., July 22, 1916, p. 8.

³²Ibid., July 28, 1916, p. 10.

³³Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 458.

³⁴Washington Post, November 11, 1916, p. 6.

³⁵Ibid., November 12, 1916, p. 5.

³⁶Helen Ring Robinson, "What About A Woman's Party?" Independent, September 11, 1916, pp. 381-383.

³⁷See New Republic, November 21, 1914, p. 4 and December 1, 1914, p. 3.

³⁸Mary Beard to Alice Paul, November 30, 1914, NWP Papers.

³⁹New Republic, December 12, 1914, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁰Charles A. Beard, "The Woman's Party," New Republic, July 29, 1916, pp. 329-331.

⁴¹New Republic, November 18, 1916, p. 59.

⁴²Ibid., November 25, 1916, p. 97.

⁴³Ibid., December 9, 1916, pp. 138-140.

CHAPTER VI

IMAGE: METHODS OF THE WOMAN'S PARTY

To comment on the methods used by the National Woman's Party necessarily opens the whole Pandora's box of the debate on the use of militant tactics as an appropriate political method. To compile a complete account of all that was said in criticism of and in defense of the Woman's Party's pickets would be an enormous task: this study will not attempt such a cataloging. But some attention must be paid to this aspect of the Woman's Party's activities, for it was the picketing that created the most strikingly divergent images.

National Woman's Party Materials

Both the Suffragist and Irwin's Story of the Woman's Party give detailed accounts of the Woman's Party's non-militant activities such as the intensive lobbying in Congress. It is obvious from these Woman's Party sources that serious, behind the scenes labor was the basis of the Woman's Party's accomplishments. But both sources give strong rationales for and extensive coverage to the picketing.

The origins of the picketing are explained in a January 1917 Suffragist. President Wilson had refused to discuss any progress towards woman's suffrage with the Woman's Party delegation that appeared to present the Inez Milholland Boissevain Memorial Resolutions. Harriott Stanton Blatch's reaction was an angry rationale

for a more militant turn in the Party's political tactics: "We can't organize bigger and more influential deputations. We can't organize bigger processions. We can't, women, do anything more in that line. We have got to take a new departure. We have got to keep the question before him all the time."¹ The White House pickets started the next day.

A September 1917 editorial in the Suffragist explained "Why We Keep Picketing" in light of the current arrests of Woman's Party members. The editors recalled that the pickets were left alone for five months before the arrests began. The pickets, they said, were doing the same thing when they were arrested as they had been doing before the arrests began. "There is no law against holding a banner at the gate of the White House," the editors noted. "The Government is trying to intimidate those who ask for freedom. . . . the very effort of the Government to suppress them is carrying their message all the more clearly to the people of the United States."²

Anger at the "injustice" of the arrests of the pickets was evident in subsequent articles. The tone was one of disrespect for a government that was denying the women their rights. An October 1917 story reported: "Alice Paul is in jail. The Administration tools have sentenced the leader and inspiration of the active wing of the American suffrage movement to serve seven months, on the charge of 'obstructing the traffic' on Pennsylvania Avenue."³ With rhetoric such as this, the Suffragist continued to consistently downplay the violations of the pickets and played up the harsh sentences and suffering endured by the imprisoned women.

Justification for their militant methods is best exemplified in a Woman's Party press release that stated: "The popular mind is a believing mind." The Party contended that the press had made the public believe that the pickets were part of the "lunatic fringe." The "real" militant movement began, according to the Woman's Party, when women first asked for the right to vote: "Back in 1848 when a tiny group led by that gentle Quaker, Lucretia Mott, got together and drew up their 'Women's Bill of Rights,' they did a militant thing in the eyes of their time."⁴ Thus, although the Woman's Party did not ignore its militant methods, there was a definite de-emphasis of militancy as the distinctive feature of the National Woman's Party.

NAWSA Materials

The NAWSA, on the other hand, gave the militant methods of the Woman's Party much indignant attention. The History of Woman Suffrage notes that when the White House picketing began, "almost every newspaper in the United States held the entire suffrage movement responsible for it."⁵ The action taken by the NAWSA in regards to the picketing was to disclaim any association with the Woman's Party through numerous letters to the editor and speeches, many of which were reprinted in the Woman Citizen (formerly the Woman's Journal). In July of 1917, Carrie Chapman Catt wrote that "the absurd and unprofitable sensationalism of an extreme group of suffragists" was not representative of the suffrage movement as a whole.⁶ Maud Wood Park wrote a letter to members of the House of Representatives to state the position of the NAWSA that there was no connection between the National Association

and "the small group of women in a different organization" who were picketing the White House.⁷ When the Woman's Party expanded its methods to include a "watchfire" in front of the White House, the Woman Citizen was vehement in its denunciation and scoffed at "child minds tending bonfires."⁸

The editorial board of the Woman Citizen warned of the publicity that the Woman's Party was getting through the arrest of the pickets. The "blame" for this was divided among the pickets, the press "that spreads the story in that way most calculated to make a prolonged sensation of it, and . . . the public that thrills humanly over its own shocks."⁹ In another editorial, Alice Stone Blackwell, while continuing to voice disapproval of the pickets, expressed shocked indignation over their treatment in jail. She also articulated an underlying fear that the added publicity would only bring aid to the pickets and thus urged greater leniency on the part of the judicial system, so as not to add to the "martyr" image that was bringing sympathy to the Woman's Party. She warned that "the local judiciary authorities are playing directly into the hands of the picketers. Their object is to arouse sentiment in the Western States against the Democratic Party, and this is the way to help them do it."¹⁰

The general attitude expressed by the National was summed up by Carrie Chapman Catt's observation that the antagonism aroused by this militancy was directed wrongly at the NAWSA because of a misconception that all suffragist actions "sprang from the parent organization." According to Catt, this antagonism caused many to oppose the principle

of suffrage, and, thus, the Woman's Party was destroying much that the NAWSA had sought to accomplish in the way of good will.¹¹ In regards to the public press, Catt may have been overstating her case, for it seems that the major press--especially the New York Times--did make a careful distinction between the Woman's Party and the NAWSA. Editorials often took care to endorse the conservative methods of the National Association while condemning those of the Woman's Party militants. But much of the public never reads an editorial and, in fact, bases its opinions on impressions gained by skimming the headlines, so Catt's point was valid in that the image of the women's suffrage movement was hurt by the militant methods of the Woman's Party in the minds of those who would not or did not have the information to make the distinction between the two factions.

Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals

The New York Times, consistent with its general attacks on the Woman's Party, was unrelenting in its criticism of the Party's militant methods. Its editorials on the picketing were often chauvanistic and, one would guess, infuriating to all suffragists--even though they were directed primarily at the Woman's Party. A burning editorial on January 11, 1917 condemned the pickets as "Silent, Silly, and Offensive":

. . . no one can imagine the Socialists, the Prohibitionists, or any other party conceiving of a performance at once so petty and monstrous. . . . Why? Because they are man, and men's minds may be wicked, virtuous, wise, or foolish, but . . . There is something in the masculine mind that would shrink from a thing so compounded of pettiness and monstrosity. . . . Yet no one is astonished that women suffragists should propose such a thing, and therein lies a matter of deep concern. . . . The granting of

suffrage would intrude into governmental affairs a great body of voters . . . to whom that compound of pettiness and monstrosity seems natural and proper.¹²

The actions of the pickets as reason to deny them the vote is echoed again and again in the Times editorials. In response to the jailing of Woman's Party's pickets, the editors said, "To obstruct the government in preparing for war and in the conduct of war is evidence not of fitness, but of unworthiness, to have a share in directing its policies."¹³ The Woman's Party received further special attention in a Times Magazine Section in September of 1917. The article, "Case Against Suffrage," involved an interview with Mrs. James W. Wadsworth, Jr. President of the National Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage. She spoke derisively of the "nagging" methods used by the Woman's Party and said that the suffrage campaign had brought out the "unlovely side of womanhood, the side that is hard, bitter, implacable, crafty." She concluded with her declaration (that was surely applauded by the Times editors) that "government is a man's job."¹⁴

The militancy of the Woman's Party came in for further criticism from the New York Times on the day after the suffrage amendment was defeated in Maine. In an editorial entitled "As Goes Maine," the editors noted that the defeat was "no fault of Mrs. Catt, or of the responsible suffragists, the majority." They expressed disgust with the Woman's Party's methods and concluded that "when the Nation is fighting for its life. . . . Woman suffrage seems, nay is, but an impertinence and a futility."¹⁵ The editorial the next day sought to further discredit the Woman's Party and its methods by linking it with leftist groups, sarcastically noting that "there is enlightenment in the activities

and strengths of the IWW in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and Washington, States blessed with woman suffrage. And Socialism is strong in those States." The editors postulated further links between women's suffrage and socialism and closed with the tongue-in-cheek comment that "there is no end of enlightenment."¹⁶

Criticism of the pickets and the women in jail intensified with time. In August of 1918, the Times editors became increasingly harsh in their judgment of the pickets by saying that the women should have never been sent to the workhouse because "they disturbed the order and discipline of the other lodgers." A court was not the place for these women to be investigated, suggested the Times: "The place for them is the clinic of the pathologist or the psychiatrist. . . . Witchcraft, tarantism, suffrage obsession, and its violent phenomena are proper subjects, as this humane age knows, for psychotherapy."¹⁷

The first major news special on the methods of the Woman's Party appeared in the New York Times in March of 1919 when the Times "discovered" the card-file index which was the heart of the Woman's Party's lobbying activities. The use of this systematic political tool diverted attention from the militant methods that had preoccupied the Times. But even this system seemed to have sinister implications as reporters revealed that at the headquarters of the National Woman's Party at Washington was a card index system "so extensive in detail, political and personal, that 22 different cards are required for each Senator and Representative. . . . No detail--in the words of an authoritative statement--is overlooked."

The writers, with obvious skepticism, reported that Woman's Party officials said "that the system included no improper tactics."¹⁸ The revelation of the Woman's Party's card index system was treated with predictable contempt on the paper's editorial page, where the editors "poked fun" at the systematic "sociological approach" taken by the Woman's Party. Warning of "a thorough card-index system that gives the feminists the moral, mental, social and political fingerprints of every Representative and Senator," the Times satirically assured the readers "that a natural harmless, feminine curiosity combined with the sociological and card-index habits of an enlightened age, has inspired these collections so valuable to future students of twentieth century private life."¹⁹ Even when it brought success, the card-file received negative response from the New York Times. The same day that it was announced that the suffrage amendment had passed the House of Representatives in 1919, the Times editorial was entitled "Triumph of the Index." The editors continued their tongue-in cheek praise of this great "sociological" tool: "Doubtless, in the interest of continuous and comprehensive statistics, the trays of that elaborate index will be kept full."¹⁰ The sarcasm of the editors implied their discomfort with these ruthless women's methods. The New York Times' hostility to this use of a card file as a method of lobbying was probably not caused by general distress over the idea of women lobbying, for the Times had often complimented the ladies of the NAWSA on their dignified and appropriate lobbying techniques. The hostility to the Woman's Party's use of a card-file index can not be explained by saying that the women had introduced a startling new tactic, for this was a

tool used by many politicians and lobbyists. Indeed, it was acceptable for women to lobby--if it was done discreetly and quietly--and it was acceptable for a card-file index to be used--if it was used by an expert politician. But apparently it was not acceptable to the editors of the New York Times--and others--for women to gain the political expertise needed to use such a method as a part of their lobbying technique.

A second major article on the political methods of the Woman's Party appeared in May of 1919. This article went beyond description of the card-index system to describe the Woman's Party's Political Committee and the Organization and Legislative Committee. This article was reasonably objective but described the Woman's Party's activities suspiciously in terms of an efficient "machine." An interview with Alice Paul that was a part of the article is significant in that the line of questioning pursued the "sinister" implications of the "machine." To the question, "Have you considered the political morality of bringing pressure on a member of Congress to vote against his real convictions?", Paul responded that the Woman's Party was just trying to organize the public opinion that a Congressman was obligated to represent. The Times countered with the accusation that: "If the amendment goes through, you will impose suffrage on some States where recent votes have shown they are opposed to it." Paul responded that suffrage was indeed something women in every state wanted. "We are proceeding according to the machinery of the Government by constitutional amendment," she continued. "We are fighting a battle without a vote in the decision."²¹ It was a strong reply, but necessarily defensive.

The day after the suffrage amendment was signed, the New York Times did reflect some begrudging admiration for the National Woman's

Party's political astuteness, though the tone of derision persisted. The editor noted that the NAWSA deservedly received the pen with which the resolution was signed "in just testimony of the . . . habitual moderation of the majority feminist organization." Yet he called the National Woman's Party "bolder" and "more original" and reflected that "in the hands of determined women a full card index of politicians is mightier than a pen or sword."²² It seems that only success brought legitimacy to the Woman's Party in the eyes of the Times, and even their congratulations were laced with sarcasm.

The Times continued to analyze the organization and methods of the Woman's Party as it began the fight for ratification in the states in September of 1919. "Suffrage Index of Good and Bad Governors-- How the Card System Which Forced Congress Into Line Is Being Used to Expedite Ratification by States" was the headline of an article which reported that "one governor told us privately that he was sorry he had taken a position in the beginning against calling a special session and wouldn't have done so if he had known how much agitation was going to follow."²³

It seems that it was the militant methods and then the astute use of "men's" political tools that were so offensive to the New York Times. Tacit condoning of the NAWSA's methods kept the Times from being a hard-core anti-suffragist paper, but the editors had no room in their scheme of things for a group of women who were so improper as to manipulate the political system with militant and politically astute methods. It was admissable, it seems, for women to participate in the political system. But it was deemed unladylike to manipulate

that system successfully. This was a direct threat to men's mastery of the political arena, and the New York Times rose to defend the status quo.

The Washington Post began its coverage of the National Woman's Party with less hostility than that found in the New York Times. But when the Woman's Party refused to pledge its support to the war effort in 1917, the Post became more hostile. One of the first editorials reflecting this hostility made no direct reference to the Woman's Party and its methods, but the criticism was definitely there:

The injection of such side issues as prohibition and woman suffrage into the deliberations of Congress at this time is a poor method of assisting the country in its colossal task of war. . . . At present, the first duty of the United States is not to bring about minor improvements at home, but to win the war against the German government.²⁴

The news article about the arrests of the pickets the next day was openly critical:

Alice Paul's suffragettes . . . think they are proving the fitness of women for the ballot by displaying their own contempt for law and order. . . . The suffragettes had succeeded in forcing an unwilling police department to place them under arrest, they had gained an enormous amount of publicity, and now the really big thing in the career of a suffragist--prison bars and a hunger strike--was in prospect of consummation.²⁵

On June 30, 1917, a news story in the Washington Post declared the suffragettes as a "War Menace" and attacked the picketing as an improper method of protest. The writer even suggested that "reports have been current that its activities are financed by German propagandists. . . . The whole strength of their campaign at present is devoted to an attempt to embarrass the President."²⁶

Washington Post editorials became increasingly hostile from that point on. Declaring "Militant Tactics a Failure," the editor asked,

"Do not these women realize that the farces enacted at the White House by them are really detrimental to the cause of suffrage?"²⁷ When wartime came and the National Woman's Party did not officially leap to the aid of the government, it was only a matter of months before the editorial pages of the Washington Post and the New York Times were hardly distinguishable. It seems that wartime patriotism allowed no condoning of protest, especially on the editorial pages of one of the capital city's leading newspapers that was facing fierce competition for its readers.

Even the friendly New Republic gave some editorial criticism to the pickets as the passage of the woman's suffrage amendment seemed imminent. "The strength of the women's claim on Congress does not . . . depend on their new voting power," the New Republic claimed. "It depends greatly on the cool and restrained nature of the campaigns that have succeeded."²⁸ The New Republic, which had previously found the political strategy of the Woman's Party praiseworthy, seemed to find the militancy of the pickets at this point irresponsible and potentially dangerous to the women's suffrage amendment. This was a widely held view in the media and it is significant that a friend, like the New Republic, found this criticism to be creditable. The timing of this editorial is significant in that it was written at the height of America's involvement in the war in Europe. Christopher Lasch, in his study of American intellectuals, has shown how the New Republic vacillated from an uneasy stance early in the European war of support for American non-intervention to a vigorous stance of support for intervention for the sake of democracy.²⁹

When America entered the war, the New Republic was by that time a staunch supporter of administration war policy based on what Charles Forcey has identified as "the nationalism of the new liberalism"-- simply a commitment to the war founded on the liberal's version of aggressive nationalism.³⁰ This commitment to the war explains the New Republic's belated scolding to the Woman's Party for its methods of protest against the Wilson administration. The Woman's Party was protesting administration policies during wartime; the New Republic was supporting the administration's wartime policies; so the New Republic criticized the Woman's Party's actions.

Once again, each different source's perspective on the methods adopted by the Woman's Party was significantly influenced by external factors--such as concern over the image of women's suffragists in general or attitudes toward wartime policy. The conclusions that can be drawn must allow for some credibility from each source. It is evident that the Woman's Party was an aggressive lobbying group that was organized for efficiency and used sophisticated techniques to reach success. It is also true that the techniques used and the success attained by Woman's Party lobbyists created an uneasiness because these women seemed "unladylike" in their professionalism. The distaste for such behavior was indeed reinforced by the Woman's Party's militance in picketing and their behavior in jail. Although hostility toward such behavior may have been temporarily generalized to include other suffrage groups, such activities were probably ultimately advantageous to the women's suffrage movement because of the pressure

they brought to "do something about these women" and about women's suffrage. So, although the methods of the Woman's Party were not a pleasure to watch, their effectiveness must be considered a practical endorsement for their use.

NOTES

- ¹Suffragist, January 17, 1917, p. 6.
- ²Ibid., September 1, 1917, p. 6.
- ³Ibid., October 27, 1917, p. 4.
- ⁴"Press Release--National Woman's Party--Exclusive to Washington Times," March 20, 1920, NWP Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
- ⁵Harper, HWS, vol. 5, p. 529.
- ⁶Woman Citizen, July 7, 1917, p. 100.
- ⁷Ibid., September 29, 1917, p. 332.
- ⁸Ibid., February 15, 1919, p. 778.
- ⁹Ibid. June 30, 1917, p. 79.
- ¹⁰Ibid., November 24, 1917, p. 490.
- ¹¹Catt and Shuler, p. 243.
- ¹²New York Times, January 11, 1917, p. 14.
- ¹³Ibid., July 19, 1917, p. 10.
- ¹⁴Ibid., September 9, 1917, VI, pp. 4-5.
- ¹⁵Ibid., September 12, 1917, p. 10.
- ¹⁶Ibid., September 13, 1917, p. 12.
- ¹⁷Ibid., August 4, 1918, p. 10.
- ¹⁸Ibid., March 2, 1919, VII, p. 1.

- ¹⁹Ibid., March 3, 1919, p. 12.
- ²⁰Ibid., May 22, 1919, p. 14.
- ²¹Ibid., May 25, 1919, VII, pp. 1-2.
- ²²Ibid., June 6, 1919, p. 12.
- ²³Ibid., September 7, 1919, VII, pp. 4-5.
- ²⁴Washington Post, June 26, 1917, p. 6.
- ²⁵Ibid., June 27, 1917, p. 2.
- ²⁶Ibid., June 30, 1917, p. 2.
- ²⁷Ibid., November 12, 1917, p. 2.
- ²⁸New Republic, December 8, 1917, p. 135.
- ²⁹Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America (1889-1963): The Intellectual as a Social Type, chapter 6 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 181-224.
- ³⁰Charles Forcey, The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippmann, and the Progressive Era 1900-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 196h), p. 268.

CHAPTER VII

IMAGES AND PERCEPTION: "INAPPROPRIATE"

RHETORIC, TACTICS, AND TOOLS

The images, then, created by the National Woman's Party were disturbing in various degrees to both the less radical suffragists and to the public press. Discomfort with and disapproval of Alice Paul's aggressiveness as a leader, the singlemindedness and vengeance of the Woman's Party's political strategy, and the militant methods of the Woman's Party are seen repeatedly in NAWSA reports and in the contemporary media. Woman's Party materials, on the other hand, seem to constantly be justifying the actions and attitudes of the Party. The questions that have arisen again and again throughout this study are: Why did the Woman's Party's activities seem so inappropriate to the critics? What was it about the Woman's Party that so disturbed most observers? Part of the answer lies in the fact that the quest for the vote was threatening in and of itself to the accepted role of the American woman--and thus, to that of the American man. Women had never before been a force in political life and no one knew--though many claimed to know--what their influence would bring. Many men, defending the traditionally male status of the political arena, gave eloquent testimony to the fact that the dirty world of politics was not an appropriate sphere in which their idealized women should spend energies that could be better used in such "womanly" realms as the church and the home.

Richard Hofstadter, in his discussion of reformers of American politics, elaborated on this attitude as he pointed out that most Americans of this time accepted the notion that "capacity for an effective role in politics was practically a test of masculinity. . . . [and that] so long as [women] stayed out of politics, the realm of ideals and purity belonged to them."¹ Endless reference to an elusive "ideal American woman" appeared throughout the discussions about women and their possible involvement in politics. One must ask: Exactly who, or what, was this ideal woman?

The image of the ideal American woman at the turn of the century has been the topic of several scholarly studies. Variouslly identified as the "true woman," the Victorian woman, the "ideal" woman, and, simply, "the lady," this image was made up of such components as innocence, selflessness, timidity, highly emotional temperament, moral and religious strength, physical weakness and helplessness, and devotion to the home. These various descriptions can be pulled together and discussed efficiently within Barbara Welter's schema of "the cult of true womanhood." The components of Welter's "true woman" are piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.² Although Welter developed this concept particularly in regards to the period of 1820-1860, her now classic thesis provides the basis for understanding the American woman into the twentieth century--and, it could be argued, even up to the present. Subsequent works on the images of women in nineteenth and twentieth century America seem to be merely amplifications of Welter's definitive model of the pious, pure, submissive, and domestic "true woman." It is the images inherent

in this model that should be explored and then viewed in terms of the suffragists' choices of language, tactics, and tools.

The first component of the "true woman" was piety, or an obsession with religion. Women were committed to a continual struggle to "attain the perfection and submissiveness demanded of them by God and man."³ A woman was expected not only to be religious herself but to be excessively religious and thus to provide for the religious guidance of her family. Purity as a virtue of the "true woman" was related to her piety, but this quality also encompassed the innocence, the helplessness, and the protection from worldly affairs that the Victorian man thought was required for women.⁴ The "true woman" was a paragon of virtue who had no great educational or career-oriented aspirations and who would never even think of entering discussions about the base world of politics. She left the world of political decision-making up to men, which was part of the submissiveness that is the third aspect of Welter's model. The submissive woman looked to her mate for guidance in all important decisions and consistently deferred to the leadership of men. This notion of submissiveness was one that was especially important to the stability of many Victorian males who, according to Peter G. Filene, found that the concept of "manliness" was suffering unsettling strain in terms of economic, family, sexual, and social changes in the industrialized society of the early twentieth century.⁵ The "cult of domesticity" for their women provided a shelter from these changes for many men. The virtue of domesticity was built on the other three aspects of "true womanhood," for if a woman was pious, pure, and submissive, then surely her

appropriate duty in life was to devote herself to the home. Filene describes the cult of the "lady": "Placed on a pedestal of piety and sensibility, she governed the domestic half of the middle class world while men did economic, political, and military battle beyond the doorstep."⁶ Christopher Lasch amplifies this theme as he notes that American women "came to represent cohesion, decency, and self-restraint; and the cult of the home, over which they presided, became a national religion."⁷ The home, then, provided the woman with her own domain in which to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. This, it seemed to most Victorian men, should have been enough to compensate women for the fact that they were denied participation in the male world of politics.

But women were calling for the right to participate in the political arena. And since the major goal of the NAWSA and other less militant suffragists was the same as that of the National Woman's Party, one must return to the question of: Why did these other suffragists not provoke the vehement denunciations that the Woman's Party did? In fact, all suffragists did receive some criticism based on the appropriateness of their quest. But what saved the NAWSA from the widespread disdain which the Woman's Party received?

It is quickly evident that the NAWSA did exactly what the National Woman's Party would not do: they strove to appear to conform to an image consistent with the American man's "ideal woman." The NAWSA established a claim on piety by drawing much support and being open in its ties to such groups as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, one of the leaders of the NAWSA, was an ordained

minister as well as a doctor of medicine.⁸ The National Association laid its claim on purity in their rhetoric by calling for the vote for women as a means of bringing "morality, compassion, and peace into public affairs. . . . [The] masculine brain they [would] supplement with feminine heart."⁹ The NAWSA showed remnants of submissiveness in condemning the Woman's Party's aggressive militance and by demanding "ladylike behavior" from its own lobbyists.¹⁰ Domesticity became what Filene calls a "motif" of suffragist propaganda. He quotes Maud Wood Park of the NAWSA: "We can say that much of our municipal and state and national housekeeping is a good deal like the housekeeping of a bachelor who is trying to run a house without the help of a woman." Filene analyzes the NAWSA's manipulation of the "domesticity motif" as an effective answer to anti-suffragist feelings.¹¹ This analysis can be extended to the "piety motif," the "purity motif," and the "submissiveness motif." The language of these women emphasized the morality that women voters would bring to public affairs, their tactics were always ladylike and proper and tended toward such activities as tea time discussions with politicians, and the tools that they used were only as threatening as the use of feminine persuasion. In short, the NAWSA claimed and accentuated the virtues of the "true woman" through its choices of rhetoric, tactics, and tools.

The Woman's Party, on the other hand, seemed to antagonize those who valued the image of the ideal American woman. Each of the components of the "true woman" was challenged or offended in some way by the language, tactics, and tools of the Woman's Party. In regards to the piety

that a "true woman" should embody, the Woman's Party largely ignored the theme of religion in its rhetoric. This absence of emphasis on religious concerns, one would guess, was one of the things about the Woman's Party that greatly disturbed early twentieth century observers. Woman's Party materials often stressed Alice Paul's Quaker background--perhaps in hopes of using her religious background to mollify her critics. But beyond the erratic attention paid to Paul's Quakerism, there is little in the activities of the Woman's Party that gave or could have given these women any claim to piety. In fact, their actions calling for expanded opportunities for women in politics were very un- pious in the view of many of their contemporaries. According to what Anne Scott calls "the mythology," God had created women to hold subservient positions to their husbands--in fact to all men.¹² Actively and aggressively seeking the vote certainly used tools and tactics and worked towards goals that were contrary to this scheme. Thus, not only was the Woman's Party obviously an un-religious group; its activities could even be construed to be anti-religious!

The notion of purity, the second component of Welter's "true woman,"--especially the implied lack of political sophistication--was mocked by Woman's Party activities. Leader Alice Paul had not only succeeded in the educational realm--having earned her Ph.D.; she was even proficient in the tools and tactics of politicians. For women to be successful in politics was especially shocking because that was considered to be an exclusively male domain. The prevailing opinion of the age was expressed in 1887 by Senator Joseph Brown of Georgia

when he noted that "the male sex is infinitely better suited than the female" for the practice of politics and that:

While the man is contending with the sterner duties of life, the whole time of the noble, affectionate and true woman is required in the discharge of the delicate and difficult duties assigned her in the family circle, in her church relations and in . . . society.¹³

It should come as no surprise then that the New York Times seemed horrified that Alice Paul and her organization could carry their singleminded devotion to the goal of suffrage to the point of organizing vengeful strategies and utilizing the threats and calculating methods that were so effective in the political arena.

The nature of the Woman's Party's quest for admittance to the process of political decision-making was also threatening to the notion of "submissiveness that is such an important part of the "true woman." The militant and aggressive women of the Woman's Party were anathema to the image of a submissive woman who deferred to the leadership of men. The women of the Woman's Party used threats in their rhetoric--something that a submissive woman would never do. And the defiant tactics and tools that were part of their methods made these women seem an abomination to those who cherished submissiveness. Those men who idealized a woman who "was raised to please men, not herself" ¹⁴ were aghast at women who would burn the words of the President in order to show their disdain for him. A submissive woman would certainly have never adopted the militant tactics of the Woman's Party, for submission and militance are antithetical in theory and in practice. Thus, the language, the strategy, and the methods of the Woman's

Party made a farce of the notion of submissiveness that so many men cherished in the Victorian Era.

The "cult of domesticity" was also challenged by Woman's Party actions and ideals. The women of the Woman's Party openly and defiantly left the domestic circle to lay claim to their rights to participate in men's battles. One can hardly imagine a more flagrant denial of the cult of domesticity than the sights of women picketing, being arrested, and being dragged to jail. These women were certainly not at home keeping house and tending the children! The activities of the Women's Party created the furor that they did largely because these women had stepped outside the domestic circle and were manipulating the machinery of the political arena--a man's world.

It seems then that the Woman's Party and its activities were consistently offensive to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century concept of "true womanhood." The rhetoric of the Woman's Party was threatening, its tactics were aggressive and politically astute, and its methods were unladylike in their militance. Add to this the dilemma that Filene has identified for the American male of this time: "How was a man to be manly in the twentieth century world?" Indeed, the concept of traditional manhood was undergoing a crisis caused by the fact that America was no longer a "pre-industrial, pre-urban society" of independent businessmen and yeoman farmers who valued rugged individualism and a laissez-faire economy. In other words, men were having to cope with a society that had drifted away from the masculine ideals for which their upbringing had prepared them.¹⁵ The insecurity that this caused for American men could only

feed the antagonism they felt towards the Woman's Party militants-- who, through their demands and their actions, presented a discomforting challenge to the concept of appropriate behavior for women.

Clearly, it was not simply the demand that a new dimension be added to woman's role that frightened American men. If the impending identity crisis of American womanhood--and manhood--were the sole cause of the Woman's Party's image, these negative feelings would have been transferred to all suffragists. This, in fact, did not happen, as the New York Times and others defended the actions of the "responsible ladies" of the NAWSA. So the riddle as to why the Woman's Party suffered from the violently negative images that it did when both the Woman's Party and the less radical suffragists were striving for a reform that would alter the American woman's--and man's--role is answered by attention to the choices that each group made in regards to rhetoric, tactics, and tools. The Woman's Party made choices that were less acceptable to the public's notion of what was expected of women than the less radical suffragists did. But since most scholars agree that the role of women was changing in the early 1900's before women won the right to vote,¹⁶ one must ask a final question: If the role of the American woman was indeed changing, why did these women of the Woman's Party create such a stir by adopting a model of womanhood that was different from the "old" model of the nineteenth century?

The key word in the above question is: "changing." It is true that the role of American women was changing--but the perceptions of

of what women should be and do had not changed. For those--especially men--who were living through this period of shifting expectations for women and men, the tactics of the NAWSA were much "easier to swallow" than those of the National Woman's Party. The NAWSA chose tactics and tools that tried to bridge the gap between the images of the "true woman" of the nineteenth century and the newness of this "New American Woman," while the Woman's Party adopted a radical change in role as an immediate role model rather than as something to aspire to. Acceptance of the Woman's Party required acceptance of a change that, in conservative eyes, was only beginning--not one that was already accomplished.

Therefore, the degree of acceptance of this "New American Woman" on the part of the writer determines the tone of the "story" that is told of the National Woman's Party. Woman's Party sources, NAWSA materials, and contemporary periodicals can all agree on the fact that the National Woman's Party, formed in 1916, worked exclusively for a national women's suffrage amendment, which was finally passed by Congress in 1919. But beyond that, there are inconsistencies in the images portrayed. This does not mean that the author of one source was distorting the record while another was presenting Truth. The honest perceptions of each source are in conflict with each other because they, like all history, are perceptions of reality based on assumptions about society. Keeping this in mind allows each new source to add legitimate, if conflicting, input to the story of the National Woman's Party.

NOTES

¹Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 189-190.

²Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800-1860," American Quarterly. XVII, Number 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174.

³Anne F. Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 8.

⁴David M. Kennedy, Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 51.

⁵Peter G. Filene, Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America (New York: New American Library, 1974), p. 69.

⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁷Lasch, p. 65.

⁸Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920 (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1971), p. 8.

⁹Filene, p. 31.

¹⁰Scott and Scott, One Half the People, p. 33.

¹¹Filene, p. 32.

¹²Scott, The Southern Lady, p. 23.

¹³Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁴Kennedy, p. 53.

¹⁵Filene, pp. 76-77.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 5-35. In this chapter, entitled "Women and the World," Filene presents a great many indicators of women's changing role: clothing styles, rebelliousness, educational patterns, employment patterns, etc. See also, Kennedy, pp. 36-71. This chapter, entitled "The Nineteenth Century Heritage," presents the "new woman" and the modern family as established phenomena before the beginning of World War I. See also, Scott and Scott, One Half the People, pp. 27-28.

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