WE, THE WOMEN

(60-90 minutes over one to two days)

OBJECTIVE

Students take the part of women suffragists and their opponents to understand the need for legal protection.

MATERIALS

Remarks of Orestes A. Brownson handout; *Remarks of Abraham L. Kellogg* handout; *Remarks of Reverend Father Walsh and Representative Clark* handout; *Jane Addams & Alice Stone Blackwell Respond to the Anti-suffragists* handout; *Women's Suffrage Timeline* handout

GET READY

- ✔ Divide the class into groups of four or five.
- ✔ Duplicate one anti-suffrage statement passage and one copy of the *Jane Addams & Alice Stone Blackwell Respond* handout for each group. (Note that there are two long and two short anti-suffrage statement passages, for groups of varying ability.) Duplicate a *Women's Suffrage Timeline* handout for everyone.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✔ Instruct each group to read its Anti-suffrage Statement passage and the *Jane Addams & Alice Stone Blackwell Respond* handout.
- ✔ Inform the groups that they need to adapt their Anti-suffrage Statement and one of the responses from the *Jane Addams & Alice Stone Blackwell Respond* handout to create a dialogue to present to the class.
- ✔ Have the students in each group work together to write a script based on the handouts where a suffragist and an anti-suffragist exchange opinions about women and the right to vote.
- ✔ Each group should designate two people to act the roles of the suffragist and the anti-suffragist.
- ✔ Have the groups rehearse a two-minute scene in which the anti-suffragist presents one or two of his arguments and "Alice Stone Blackwell" or "Jane Addams" responds.
- ✔ Have each group act out its skit in front of the class.
- ✔ After the groups present their scenes, ask the questions below.
- ✔ Next, review the process of amending the constitution (3/4 states ratification). Pass out the *Women's Suffrage Timeline* handout and ask students to highlight the five events they feel were most crucial in winning the vote for women.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *One viewpoint common to both suffragists and anti-suffragists was the conviction that women would vote differently from men. Was that the case then? Do they today? What has been the effect of women's suffrage on elections and policy decisions?*
- ★ *What do you think of the anti-suffragists arguments? Why do you think people used to support the anti-suffragists in great numbers?*
- ★ *Could you use the women in your family as examples of why the anti-suffragists were wrong? How?*
- ★ *Which trends and events in American history in the late 19th and early 20th centuries changed the role of women in society?*

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WE, THE WOMEN (continued)

MORE!

Look up the "woman vote" in a recent election. News magazines often have this reportage. Was gender a factor in the result?

VOTE QUOTE

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."
– Helen Keller

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REMARKS OF ORESTES A. BROWNSON
(1869 AND 1873)

The conclusive objection to the political enfranchisement of women is, that it would weaken and finally break up and destroy the Christian family. The social unit is the family, not the individual; and the greatest danger to American society is, that we are rapidly becoming a nation of isolated individuals, without family ties or affections. The family has already been much weakened, and is fast disappearing. We have broken away from the old homestead, have lost the restraining and purifying associations that gathered around it, and live away from home in hotels and boarding-houses. We are daily losing the faith, the virtues, the habits, and the manners without which the family cannot be sustained; and when the family goes, the nation goes too, or ceases to be worth preserving…

Extend now to women suffrage and eligibility, give them the political right to vote and to be voted for; render it feasible for them to enter the arena of political strife, to become canvassers in elections and candidates for office, and what remains of family union will soon be dissolved. The wife may espouse one political party, and the husband another, and it may well happen that the husband and wife may be rival candidates for the same office, and one or the other doomed to the mortification of defeat. Will the husband like to see his wife enter the lists against him, and triumph over him? Will the wife, fired with political ambition for place or power, be pleased to see her own husband enter the lists against her, and succeed at her expense? Will political rivalry and the passions it never fails to engender increase the mutual affection of husband and wife for each other, and promote domestic union and peace, or will it not carry into the bosom of the family all the strife, discord, anger, and division of the political canvass? …

Woman was created to be a wife and a mother; that is her destiny. To that destiny all her instincts point, and for it nature has specially qualified her. Her proper sphere is home, and her proper function is the care of the household, to manage a family, to take care of children, and attend to their early training. For this she is endowed with patience, endurance, passive courage, quick sensibilities, a sympathetic nature, and great executive and administrative ability. She was born to be a queen in her own household, and to make home cheerful, bright, and happy. We do not believe women, unless we acknowledge individual exceptions, are fit to have their own head. The most degraded of the savage tribes are those in which women rule, and descent is reckoned from the mother instead of the father. Revelation asserts, and universal experience proves that the man is the head of the woman, and that the woman is for the man, not the man for the woman; and his greatest error, as well as the primal curse of society, is that he abdicates his headship, and allows himself to be governed, we might almost say, deprived of his reason, by woman. It was through the seductions of the woman, herself seduced by the serpent, that man fell, and brought sin and all our woe into the world. She has all the qualities that fit her to be a nurse, their early instructress, their guardian, their life-long friend; to be his companion, his comforter, his consoler in sorrow, his friend in trouble, his ministering angel in sickness; but as an independent existence, free to follow her own fancies and vague longings, her own ambition and natural love of power, without masculine direction or control, she is out of her element, and a social anomaly, sometimes a hideous monster, which men seldom are, excepting through a woman's influence. This is no excuse for men, but it proves that women need a head, and the restraint of father, husband, or the priest of God.[1]

[1]Aileen S. Kraditor, Editor, Up from the Pedestal, (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 192-194.

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REMARKS OF ABRAHAM L. KELLOGG

NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION (1894)

No, Mr. President, the true glory of womanhood is not in sitting upon the jury, not in being clothed in judicial ermine, not in being sent to the halls of legislation, not in following the example of the publican, who prayed aloud in public places to be seen and heard of men, but rather by such fond devotion in that sacred place where she stands as a queen in the eyes of all mankind, unrivaled and unsurpassed, as will enshrine her forever in the hearts of the father, the husband and the son. Their pathway to enduring fame is in teaching their daughters lessons of virtue and their sons to be manly, self-reliant and independent. Would the sons of Sparta have been more heroic or patriotic, had their noble women possessed the ballot when they uttered the historic words: "Come back rather upon your armor than without it"? Would the influence of the noble women of the late war, God preserve the memory of their heroic deeds, have been more refining, had they been educated in the mire of politics? Would it have added delicacy to the touch of the hand upon the fevered brow of the dying soldier? No, Mr. President, a thousand times no. It would have robbed the flower of its beauty and fragrance.

With my last breath will I defend from the realm of politics and partisan strife, the institution which has cost untold suffering heroic sacrifice and the priceless blood of patriots to preserve…

Women of the great State of New York, the diffusion of Christianity, no matter of what creed, will emancipate you more than the ballot can possibly do. Let the hand which rocks the cradle teach the coming young men and women of America the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and you will do more for your emancipation and for every right which you may possess in the whole realm of human rights, than you can do with both hands full of white ballots. Do this and it will not be necessary for you to teach them political ethics or shine in the political firmament, to make them love you, fight for you and die for you. Do this and they will revere their country and love their flag.

A few of the excellent and worthy women who are in this Convention demanding the right to vote, I concede would do so. There are thousands of bad women who would also vote, at least, upon some questions, thus enforcing upon millions of modest and retiring mothers responsibilities from which they shrink, and rightly so…

For a number of years the best minds of our State have been engaged in solving the question how shall we purify our politics, how best can honest government be attained and how shall we defend the suffrage against bribery and corruption? That some progress has been made in the right direction, I think all good men will admit. But, sir, before doubling twice over the voting population of the State, with its untold possibility of corruption, before we burden our taxpayers with a great expense to pay for such extension of the suffrage, let, rather, this Convention… use its time and bend its efforts towards purifying the augean stables which we now have to contend with, rather than to incur the possibility of new evils which we know not of, and which it is not possible for the wisdom of man at this time to comprehend.

Gentlemen of the Convention, let us not at this time, by woman suffrage, or by its submission to the people, but rather by such wise efforts for entire religious liberty, for the diffusion of knowledge and the maintenance of our institutions of learning, for dispensing the greatest charity possible, consistent with the cause of good government, by demanding the strictest honesty in the discharge of all public affairs and by defending the sanctity and purity of the fireside, preserve this lovely land, this glorious liberty, this priceless legacy of freedom transmitted to us by our fathers. (Applause)[1]

[1]Aileen S. Kraditor, Editor, Up from the Pedestal, (Chicago, Quadrangle Books,1970),pp.196-198.

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REMARKS OF REVEREND FATHER WALSH

"A woman's brain evolves emotion rather than intellect and whilst this feature fits her admirably as a creature burdened with the preservation and happiness of the human species, it painfully disqualifies her for the sterner duties to be performed by the intellectual faculties. The best wife and mother and sister would make the worst legislator, judge and police.

"The excessive development of the emotional in her nervous system, ingrafts on the female organization, a neurotic or hysterical condition, which is the source of much of the female charm when it is kept within due restraints. In … moments of excitement … it is liable to explode in violent paroxysms … Every woman, therefore, carries this power of irregular, illogical and incongruous action; and no one can foretell when the explosion will come."[1]

– Reverend Father Walsh

REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE CLARK

In 1915, the 3rd session of the 63rd Congress, Representative Clark of Florida stated:

"I do not wish to see the day come when the women of my race in my state shall trail their skirts in the muck and mire of partisan politics. I prefer to look to the American woman as she always has been, occupying her proud estate as the queen of the American home, instead of regarding her as a ward politician in the cities. As the mother, as the wife, as the sister she exercises a broader and deeper and mightier influence than she can ever exercise or hope to on the stump and in the byways of politics in this land. The American mother, the American woman, has my admiration, my respect, and my love—." [2]

[1]AiIeen S. Kraditor, Editor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 1981), pp. 20.
[2]Ibid, p. 26.

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JANE ADDAMS & ALICE STONE BLACKWELL RESPOND TO THE ANTI-SUFFRAGISTS

JANE ADDAMS RESPONDS

Women who live in the country sweep their own dooryards and may either feed the refuse of the table to a flock of chickens or allow it innocently to decay in the open air and sunshine. In a crowded city quarter, however, if the street is not cleaned by the city authorities no amount of private sweeping will keep the tenement free from grime; if the garbage is not properly collected and destroyed a tenement house mother may see her children sicken and die of diseases from which she alone is powerless to shield them, although her tenderness and devotion are unbounded. She cannot even secure untainted meat for her household, she cannot provide fresh fruit, unless the meat has been inspected by city officials and the decayed fruit which is so often placed upon sale in the tenement districts, has been destroyed in the interests of public health. In short, if a woman would keep on with her old business of caring for her house and rearing her children she will have to have some conscience in regard to public affairs lying quite outside of her immediate household. The individual conscience and devotion are no longer effective… If women would effectively continue their old avocations they must take part in the slow upbuilding of that code of legislation which is alone sufficient to protect the home from the dangers incident to modern life.

– from Jane Addams, "Why Women Should Vote," *Ladies Home Journal,* 1909, reprinted in Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1981),p. 69

ALICE STONE BLACKWELL RESPONDS

Professor Goldwin Smith says:

> *That the sex has its privileges in America, no woman, it is presumed, will deny. Does the woman's rights party expect to combine the prerogatives of both sexes, and have equality and privileges too? … Chivalry depends on the acknowledged need of protection, and what is accorded to a gentle helpmate would not be accorded to a rival. Man would neither be inclined not bound to treat with tenderness and forbearance the being who was fighting and jostling him in all his walks of life, wrangling with him in the law courts, wrestling with him on the stump, maneuvering against him in elections, haggling against him in Wall Street, and perhaps encountering him on the race course and in the betting ring. But when woman has lost her privilege, what will she be but a weaker man?*

If we were at present arguing the propriety of letting women practice law, make public speeches, take part in political canvassing, speculate in stocks, or bet at races, these remarks would be more to the point. But women already are as free before the law to do all these things as men are, and society does not seem to have been seriously overturned in consequence. Some of them, like public speaking, are perfectly fit for women to do; others, like betting, are not fit for anybody to do. But none of them have any immediate connection with voting.

What Prof. Smith means is that men would no longer show chivalry or tenderness to women if women were admitted to the suffrage. So Bishop Vincent is reported to have said that if women were allowed to vote, he should never again offer a lady his seat in a horse-car. But the Bishop has forgotten his logic. Why does he now offer a lady his seat? Is it because she cannot vote, or because she is presumably not so well able to stand as he is? So far as the chivalry now shown to women has any rational basis, the same ground for it will continue to exist, and it will, doubtless, continue to be manifested by men of a chivalrous nature… It is a matter of education and custom more than anything else. The Mohammedan thinks women would cease to be respected if they walked the streets with faces unveiled. So they would in the East, where custom has caused it to be regarded as shocking… Justice is better than chivalry, if we cannot have both; but the two are not at all incompatible. On the contrary, they help each other. 'As all the vices play into one another's hands, so all the virtues stand shoulder to shoulder.'

–from Alice Stone Blackwell, "Losing Her Privilege," *Woman's Journal,* January, 1890, reprinted in Aileen S. Kraditor, Editor, *Up From the Pedestal* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books,1970), pp. 204-205

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE TIMELINE

1848 Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights: 68 women (inducting organizers Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton) sign a "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments" which includes the first formal demand made in the United States for women's right to vote.

1850 First National Women's Rights Convention, Worcester, Mass.

1866 At the end of the Civil War, African-American men get the vote but women do not; suffragists bring petitions signed by 10,000 to Congress.

1872 For casting a ballot in the presidential election of 1872, Susan B. Anthony is arrested, tried, and fined in New York.

1878 Senator Sargent of California introduces a women's suffrage amendment in Congress, the wording of which remains unchanged until it is finally passed by Congress in 1919.

1890 Wyoming is admitted to the Union; women had been granted voting rights in Wyoming Territory since 1869. The American Women Suffrage Association and the National Women Suffrage Association merge, becoming the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), pledged to state-by-state campaigns for suffrage.

1890s Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Washington become additional states with women's suffrage.

1911 Women's suffrage succeeds in a California election, after a huge campaign. The National Association *Opposed* to Woman Suffrage is founded.

1912 Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona adopt women's suffrage.

1914 Largest women's suffrage parade ever held takes place in New York City; Montana and Nevada adopt women's suffrage.

1917 New York state adopts women's suffrage; Jeanette Rankin of Montana is formally seated in the U.S. House of Representatives, the first woman elected to Congress.

1918 Michigan, South Dakota, and Oklahoma adopt women's suffrage; President Wilson first states his support of the federal women's suffrage amendment.

1919 In an urn directly in line with the White House front door, the National Women's Party builds a perpetual "watchfire for freedom," in which they burn speeches by President Wilson. Members of the NWP who have been imprisoned for picketing the White House tour the country on a train called the "Prison Special." At each stop they speak about their experiences.

1919 The House and Senate pass the 19th Amendment.

1920 Tennessee becomes the 36th and final required state to pass the 19th Amendment. Women's suffrage becomes law on August 26th.

Excerpted with permission from "Years of Hope, Years of Struggle," in the gazette Women Win the Vote.

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