

WITH BALLOTS AND POCKETBOOKS:

Women, Labor, and Reform in Progressive California

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This selection from Danielle Swiontek's Ph.D. dissertation (History, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005) is presented here as part of a diverse group of previously unpublished dissertations chosen for inclusion in this volume of *California Legal History* (vol. 16, 2021) to give wider exposure to earlier research that remains valuable for the study of California's legal history. The complete work is available at <https://dissexpress.proquest.com/search.html>.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the activism of California women around suffrage and reform during the 1910s and 1920s. Although it begins with the 1911 suffrage campaign, it is more than a story of suffrage. It is a story of Progressivism, domestic reform, organized labor, and understandings of political economy. The sixth state in the nation to enfranchise women, California enacted woman suffrage in 1911, nine years before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. As a result, women exercised the right to vote at the height of the state's Progressive movement, making it a unique moment for reform, women's activism, and an evaluation of suffrage. In many ways, I argue, the importance of the suffrage campaign for California women lay less in their attainment of voting rights than in their development of a vision of society and a reform agenda. [Were I to write this work today, in 2021, it would be much less Anglo-American centered and more inclusive of the diversity of California's history, but it is published here as a work of its own time.]

More than simply advocating women's rights, California suffragists grappled directly with the construction of industrial capitalism as they sought to create an ideal society. In pursuing a "better" California, they developed a number of strategies and arguments for reform, turning to both

legislation and consumption in their efforts to harness the power of the state and the marketplace to restrain the worst excesses of industrial capitalism. Although some of the legislation pursued by activist women can be seen as “maternalist,” aimed at protecting women as mothers and potential mothers, in reality these laws came out of broad concerns with social and economic equity for both men and women. Similarly, California women’s consumption efforts sought to deal with pressing problems of the industrial order, particularly the high cost of living, the growth of monopoly, and state prosperity. This commitment to social and economic justice continued into the 1920s, halted only by the paralyzing effect of the postwar Red Scare and the increasing political conservatism of the decade.

At the heart of this study are a number of questions about California women’s use of suffrage as means of both social criticism and political mobilization specifically and the challenges of translating a vision of reform into political activism more generally. Utilizing collections located at UCLA’s Special Collections, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, and the Labor Archives and Research Collection at San Francisco State University, the dissertation uses prominent middle- and working-class women reformers, women’s clubs, trade unions, and middle-class reform organizations in Los Angeles and San Francisco as a window into women’s broad-based reform activism. Focusing on two very different cities — Los Angeles, an open-shop town, and San Francisco, a strong union enclave — provides a comparative context that invites attention to the effect of local economic conditions, political culture, and class structure on reform efforts. To discern the public and private “faces” of California women’s suffrage and reform activism, I paid attention to the content, language, and purpose of specific records as I sought to answer the following questions. How did working- and middle-class women construct a vision of the franchise during the 1911 suffrage campaign? How did they expand on their vision of the ballot to critique the existing political economy? Once enfranchised, how did they use political strategies, including coalition-building, grass-roots mobilization, and the existing party system, to achieve their reform goals? How did they implement consumption strategies, such as union and “California” label campaigns, boycotts, and boosterism, towards the same goals? How

were these strategies affected by political successes and losses as well as by the increasingly conservative political environment of the 1920s?

In fighting for suffrage and other reform measures, California women employed both “state” and “market” arguments in rallying voters to their cause. Focused on specific legislative goals, middle- and working-class women constructed a vision of activist citizens using their ballots and pocketbooks to create a more equitable society. By voting and buying properly, informed citizens could refashion capitalism into a system that would ensure adequate food, shelter, and clothing, personal dignity, and ideal communities for all Californians. Social and economic equity rested on safe working conditions, good wages, stable homes, a social safety net, and social equality among all classes (although not necessarily among all racial and ethnic groups). For activist women, industrial capitalism in its Progressive-era form posed the greatest threat to this vision. Their goal in attaining the ballot and wielding their purchasing power, then, was to restrain and reshape the existing economic system.

California suffragists initially used the language of boosterism and progress as a way of unifying a diverse suffrage campaign and appealing to male voters’ interests in creating a “better” California. At the same time, they detailed the different kinds of women’s productive labor to justify their claims to the ballot. Women needed the vote, they frequently argued, to perform their duties to home and family. By fulfilling these obligations, enfranchised women too could help create an ideal California. Through these arguments, suffragists constructed the figure of the wage-earning woman, one who needed the ballot — and sometimes trade unions — to secure protections in the workplace. Over time, the “working woman” became a trope for discussing issues of political economy. Suffragists warned of the dangers of “wage slavery,” the evils of monopoly, and the threat of unrestrained industrial capitalism to the republic. It is through this trope that suffragists presented their critique of the state’s political economy and laid out a framework for post-suffrage reform.

After winning the franchise, activist women turned their attention to specific reform measures to move the state towards fulfilling their vision of equity. Middle- and working-class women rallied around the women’s eight-hour day as a way of protecting women workers and establishing a precedent for a universal hours law.

Similarly, their concern with providing broad social provision to care for workers vulnerable to sickness, injury, and death resulted in a long, volatile campaign for social health insurance. Both efforts fell short, undone by ideological limitations on state provision and the heightened nationalism of World War I. As we shall see, the failure of the social insurance amendment at the polls left only mothers' pensions as its limited legacy. In the wake of the defeat of the universal hours law, the women's eight-hour day persisted as an important political symbol in California, although it was ultimately undone by the state's "reactionary" governor, Friend Richardson. Rather than a victory for the protection of women and children, this ostensibly "maternalist" legislation represented the failure of activist men and women to achieve their reform goals.

In addition to pursuing legislative reforms, California women attempted to use the power of the marketplace to reshape capitalism. Recognizing the potency of politically minded purchasing, suffragists maintained that, with the franchise, women would be more aware of the consequences of their buying decisions and thus purchase with an eye towards social and economic equality. As a complement to their efforts to secure state-provided social welfare and labor protections, women and labor activists sought to rally consumers around union and "home products" labels in an effort to counter the growth of monopoly and to protect workers. The problem, of course, was that these efforts could become disconnected from their political objectives, leaving these reform campaigns open to co-optation by opponents. With both legislative and consumption campaigns, reformers' ability to remain focused on specific political goals — and to sustain the interest of the rank-and-file — proved crucial. Even so, male and female activists found that external political conditions, from World War I to the Red Scare, from fears of Kaiserism to fears of Bolshevism, could derail even the most well-orchestrated effort.

In pursuing legislative and consumption strategies, middle- and working-class women formed alliances with predominately male organized labor groups and middle-class male reformers. As historian Kathryn Kish Sklar has asserted, women's activism in the Progressive era frequently "served as a surrogate for working class social-welfare activism." The structure of the political arena provided middle-class women with the political "space" to lobby for a nascent welfare state, Sklar suggests, while other

interest groups, especially male trade unionists, found their social welfare activism hamstrung by a conservative court system.¹ In California, however, middle-class female reformers were not acting because organized labor was excluded from the political process. Both groups actively lobbied for political reforms aimed at addressing larger concerns with class oppression and the excesses of industrial capitalism. With similar goals and an ability to mobilize rank-and-file members, the clubwoman-labor alliance proved to be a powerful force in California's Progressive-era politics. This partnership developed out of both parties' legislative efforts, beginning with the women's eight-hour day when middle-class clubwomen and male labor leaders discovered an effective political affinity. Although their broader reform goals were thwarted at times, they were able to stake a claim for the state's role in providing social welfare and labor protections for all citizens. Perhaps more important, this coalition was able to defend their reform achievements from the worst "reactionary" attacks, at least for a time. The clubwoman-labor alliance was not without costs, however. Over time, working-class women were pushed out of the political arena. Their silence on crucial legislative issues points to the ways in which social reform became increasingly focused on the needs of (white) male breadwinners. Similarly, the breakdown of this alliance in the face of growing political conservatism left their Progressive achievements vulnerable to political assaults by long-standing opponents.

California women's focus on reshaping industrial capitalism and the power of the clubwoman-labor alliance revealed itself through the wider scope of this dissertation. By connecting suffrage to reform and the women's movement to the labor movement, this study offers new understandings of the meaning of suffrage, Progressive reform, and the origins of the welfare state. Due to issues of periodization and conceptualization, most scholarship on woman suffrage and women's reform activism have tended to treat the issues as discrete topics, focusing either on suffrage or reform. A few studies have brought the two together. Historian Ellen DuBois, for example, has examined suffragist Harriet Stanton Blatch's efforts to include

¹ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830–1930," in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 44–45.

working-class women in the suffrage movement and to place legislative politics at its center, resurrecting Blatch's efforts to create a third path of "constructive" feminism focusing on women's economic equality.² More recently, historian Maureen Flanagan has documented Chicago women's efforts to transform city politics based on an alternative "female" vision of municipal government that made the welfare of its residents, especially women, children, and families, its central purpose. Flanagan explores the difference that municipal suffrage made for these activist women in working for improved schools, protective legislation, garbage disposal, pure milk, and other reforms. Although Flanagan does find evidence of female alliances with particular men's groups, especially the Men's City Club, her focus is on Chicago women and their cross-class, cross-race efforts.³ My study joins this scholarship uniting women's suffrage and political activism, recognizing that the suffrage campaign itself could be a politicizing event. By examining a broader milieu, including working- and middle-class women, organized labor, male middle-class proponents and opponents, this dissertation reveals not only the power of women's alliances with male activist groups, including organized labor, but also the ways in which "women's" legislation could serve broader political functions. Like Flanagan, I find that women were central to California Progressivism, and their inclusion recasts our understanding of this reform movement.

This dissertation contributes to three broad historiographical conversations on woman suffrage, the origins of the welfare state, and the politics of consumption. Students of the woman suffrage movement have complicated our understanding of suffrage by closely examining the campaign strategies, ideological and rhetorical justifications, and regional variations in pro- and anti-suffrage campaigns, as well as women's post-suffrage political and party involvement. Rather than a story of decline or a moment of triumph (as suggested in early studies by historians Aileen Kraditor and Eleanor Flexnor, respectively), the woman suffrage movement has come to be seen as more contested ground, a site where competing notions of gender, democratic and pluralist politics, and race were played out. As

² Ellen Carol DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

³ Maureen A. Flanagan, *Seeing With Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871–1933* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

proponents chose deliberately to narrow their focus from broadly defined “woman’s rights” to the specific goal of suffrage, political scientist Sarah Hunter Graham has shown that suffrage organizations, such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), became more hierarchical and less democratic, damping down grass-roots activism and “crippl[ing] the women’s movement after the vote was won.” As a result, woman suffrage seemed only to have brought about women’s political ineffectiveness.⁴

Early scholarship suggested that the post-suffrage decline of women’s political power also stemmed from suffragists’ shift from nineteenth-century arguments concerning “justice” to a twentieth-century emphasis on “expediency.” First developed by historian Aileen Kraditor, this framework divides suffrage arguments into those based on the premise that women had the same natural rights as men, including the right to vote (“justice”) and those emphasizing the benefits woman suffrage would bring to society (“expediency”). With the turn towards expediency, Kraditor argued, suffragists compromised women’s moral power and tainted the ultimate suffrage victory.⁵ Subsequent scholars have argued that Kraditor’s

⁴ Sara Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), quote on 153; Elna Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Suzanne M. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); and Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 165–71.

The two early seminal works on woman suffrage are Eleanor Flexnor, *A Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States*, revised edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959; revised 1975); and Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). In general, Kraditor depicted the woman suffrage movement as a story of decline, with suffragists sacrificing broader ideas of democratic justice for “expedient” arguments for woman suffrage, while Flexnor saw the woman’s rights movement as a “century of struggle” resulting ultimately in a hard-won suffrage victory for women.

⁵ Kraditor, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 44–46, 52–74. See also William O’Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Garden City: Quadrangle Press, 1971).

model is overly reductive,⁶ noting that the two sets of arguments coexisted harmoniously as suffragists alternated between them throughout much of the seventy-year national suffrage campaign. That alternation, historian Rebecca J. Mead notes, was less a moral failing than a pragmatic response to a “political struggle” that “demanded . . . constant . . . negotiation” among various ideas and rhetorical strategies. More important for this study, Kraditor’s model and thesis, which relied on the ideas and experiences of elite, national leaders in the east, ignored early woman suffrage in the West.⁷ As a result, the difference made by a reformist political climate, such as that flourishing in Progressive-era California, in shaping women’s arguments for — and subsequent use of — the ballot has been generally overlooked.

The early attainment of woman suffrage in California thus offers a moment to reevaluate ideas and consequences of suffrage. Woman suffrage came early in the West, with Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah all enfranchising women by 1896. In 1911, California became the sixth state to enact woman suffrage. By 1914, one territory and ten states, all located west of the Mississippi, had given the ballot to women.⁸ Relatively few historians have attempted to explain this phenomenon. Historian Alan P. Grimes, for example, placed woman suffrage in the context of the West’s “Puritan revival” that focused on cleaning up American politics through “purifying” legislation such as alcohol prohibition, immigration restriction, and

⁶ See Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 29–30; Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*, 30–31; Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism*, 1–2. Even newer frameworks, such as Marilley’s description of early twentieth century suffrage thought as the politics of personal development and personal freedom, tends to obscure suffragists’ concerns with political economy, workers’ rights, and corporate capitalism and tends to overlook the still fairly vigorous socialist movement in the west during the Progressive era.

⁷ Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004), 4–5.

⁸ Kathryn L. MacKay, *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870–1896*, edited by Carol Cornwall Madsen (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), viii; and Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800–1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 233–34. Western states that enacted woman suffrage were (in order of enactment) Wyoming (1869 as a territory, 1890 as a state), Colorado (1893), Idaho (1896), Utah (1870 as a territory, 1896 as a state), California (1911), Oregon (1912), Arizona (1912), Kansas (1912), Alaska (1913 as a territory), Montana (1914), and Nevada (1914).

child labor laws, while historian Beverly Beeton argued that early western suffrage resulted from political expediency, as westerners sought to attract settlers and investors, embarrass political opponents, recruit eastern suffragists' support for statehood bids, and shore up white voter dominance by pitting white women against Hispanics and new immigrants. Historian Sandra Myers, on the other hand, supported a variation of Turner's "frontier theory," arguing that the frontier's practice of social and political "innovation" and "lack of restrictive tradition" fostered the "diffusion" of woman suffrage across the West.⁹

Only a single work explains the spread of suffrage across the West or, more importantly for students of California's past, accounts for the enactment of suffrage in specific states. In that study, historian Rebecca J. Mead demonstrates that western suffragists in Colorado, Washington, California, and Nevada gained critical urban support by working through trade unions and party organizations in their successful campaigns for the ballot.¹⁰ Less concerned with how and why California women won the vote, this dissertation explores suffragists' ideas and rhetoric during the campaign, examining proponents' suffrage language, their understandings of the ballot's potential for change, and the political consequences of their rhetoric. As we shall see, suffragists relied on the language of boosterism and "civilization" to gain broad support for the reform, while simultaneously basing their claim for full citizenship rights on different notions of women's productive labor. In so doing, California suffragists both expanded and limited the meaning and power of the ballot.

Scholars of the national suffrage movement have noted a decline in women's political participation following the Nineteenth Amendment, suggesting that suffragists' narrow focus on achieving the vote somehow deprived

⁹ Alan P. Grimes, *The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Beverly Beeton, *Women Vote in the West: The Woman Suffrage Movement, 1869–1896* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986); and Beeton, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," 99–116, in *One Woman, One Vote, Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, Ore.: New Sage Press, 1995); Myers, *Westering Women*, 233–34; and Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*. In the latter article, Beeton argues that the process of drafting state constitutions forced Westerners to rethink assumptions about who should have the right to vote, frequently resulting in the enactment of woman suffrage.

¹⁰ Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 1–4, 119–21.

them of the kind of broad political agenda necessary to wield the vote effectively. Recent scholarship suggests that suffragists' campaign strategies were not entirely to blame for the post-suffrage fall-off in female political activism. Although politics and parties opened up to include women voters, political scientist Kristi Andersen has shown, party organizations in the 1920s typically relegated women activists to subordinate roles, redrawing gender boundaries within the parties and confining female politicians to low-status positions focused on "women's" issues. The failure of women's suffrage groups to reform as a "woman's party," political scientist Anna Harvey has argued, maintained women's subordinate status in the political arena. Political scientist Jo Freeman, on the other hand, finds that political parties did make room for women following suffrage. Valued for their organizing skills and their votes, women played important roles as party workers, performing much of the difficult organizing work from grassroots to national levels. Although suffrage did not result in the immediate sharing of political power with women, Freeman argues that this early party work laid the groundwork for the political gains of 1970s "second wave" feminism.¹¹

As part of this debate over the consequences of suffrage, many historians have viewed the period before suffrage as a time of greater and more effective women's political activism. Studies of women's reform efforts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have noted middle-class women's success in attaining the passage of "municipal housekeeping" and "maternalist" legislation, such as clean milk and water laws, mothers' pensions, kindergarten movements, and minimum hours laws for women. Despite their disenfranchised status, historians have argued, middle-class female reformers successfully employed the "politics of influence" to achieve municipal improvements, early welfare legislation, and labor protections for working-class women that labor groups and other middle-class (male) reformers were unable to achieve.¹²

¹¹ Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Anna L. Harvey, *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920–1970* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

¹² Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935*

California women pursued this kind of legislation as enfranchised citizens, a fact that allows a new understanding of the origins of these reforms. In examining laws such as mothers' pensions, social insurance, and protective laws for women workers, scholars Theda Skocpol, Gwendolyn Mink, and Linda Gordon, among others, have demonstrated the central role women reformers played in the construction of a "maternalist" welfare state during the Progressive era. Not only did middle-class women justify their public activism based on their duty as mothers and potential mothers, these scholars have shown, but they conceived of, lobbied for, and implemented a variety of statist welfare reforms that ultimately restricted aid to a narrow segment of poor women and their children.¹³ Although more recent scholarship on other social insurance measures, such as historian Beatrix Hoffman's work on New York's health insurance campaign, has broadened its focus to include the participation of organized labor, manufacturers, insurance companies, and policy groups — as well as women reformers — it has continued to concentrate on single welfare policies.¹⁴ Examining these policies independently has obscured the larger contemporary debates over social provision. In the process, this work has tended to overemphasize the role of particular groups, especially clubwomen in the case of maternalist legislation, concealing the contingent nature of the development of the welfare state and the more complicated nature of

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Lori Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 165–71.

¹³ This scholarship includes Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; and Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, among others. These reforms ranged from the establishment of the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912, to state-level mothers' pension programs and birth registration drives, to the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act in 1921, the first federally funded social welfare program.

¹⁴ Beatrix Hoffman, *The Wages of Sickness: The Politics of Health Insurance in Progressive America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

maternalism itself. Although maternalism frequently functioned as an effective rhetorical strategy during particular legislative campaigns, as an ideology it did not necessarily reflect the entirety of women reformers' policy agenda.

In addition to scholarship on the origins of the welfare state, protective legislation, such as women's eight-hour day and minimum wage laws, has invited the attention of students of legal, labor, and gender history. These scholars have explored the dual functions of these laws as protections for women workers and legal precedents for broader labor legislation. Legal historians have traced the twists and turns of the arguments for protective legislation, as sympathetic lawyers sought to find the constitutional basis for state "interference" in the freedom of contract between workers and employers. The winning strategy emphasized the state's social interest in protecting female workers as "mothers of the race," thereby permitting limitations on women's hours and other kinds of work.¹⁵ Legal and labor historians have also examined how labor leaders and other reformers aimed to use protective legislation as an "entering wedge" to broader, "universal" legislation benefiting the working class and especially male workers. For these scholars, state labor organizations' willingness to engage in partisan politics and legislative lobbying demonstrated a flexibility and pragmatism often absent at the national level of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Ultimately, this entering wedge strategy foundered on maternalist ideology, as courts and lawmakers became convinced of women's need for protection, but not men's.¹⁶

¹⁵ Julie Novkov, *Constituting Workers, Protecting Women: Gender, Law, and Labor in the Progressive Era and New Deal Years* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 77–182; David A. Moss, *Socializing Security: Progressive-Era Economists and the Origins of American Social Policy* (Cambridge and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996), 97–116; and Melvin I. Urofsky, "State Courts and Protective Legislation during the Progressive Era: A Reevaluation," *Journal of American History* (June 1985): 63–91.

¹⁶ K. R. Willoughby, "Mothering Labor: Difference as a Device Towards Protective Labor Legislation For Men, 1830–1938," *Journal of Law and Politics* 10 (Spring 1994): 445–89; Miriam Cohen and Michael Hanagan, "The Politics of Gender and the Making of the Welfare State, 1900–1940: A Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Social History* (Spring 1991): 469–84; Elaine Johnson, "Protective Legislation and Women's Work: Oregon's Ten-Hour Law and the Muller v. Oregon Case" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1982), cited in Holly J. McCammon, "The Politics of Protection: State Minimum Wage and Maximum Hours Laws for Women in the United States, 1870–1930," *Sociological*

More recently, feminist scholarship has used protective legislation as window into analyzing maternalism as a legal and political strategy. According to these studies, the success of protective legislation in legislative halls and courtrooms rested on gendered assumptions of women workers' physical frailties and reproductive functions, the state's interest in protecting them as mothers and potential mothers, and the belief that women were short-term workers. Feminist scholars, in particular, have noted the ways in which the ideology of maternalism discriminated against women in the long run, working to confine them to low-wage, sexually segregated jobs and limiting their access to employment-based welfare benefits.¹⁷ As insightful as this work has been, its close focus on maternalism has obscured the

Quarterly 36 (Spring 1995): 217–49; and Urofsky, "State Courts and Protective Legislation," 63–91. Urofsky notes that state courts upheld most protective legislation during this period; thus, state labor groups were not being naive in pursuing entering wedge and legislative strategies to gain high wages, shorter hours, and improved working conditions. On state labor organization's willingness to pursue legislative strategies, see Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881–1917* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Gary M. Fink, *Labor's Search for Political Order: The Political Behavior of the Missouri Labor Movement, 1890–1940* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973). For a good overview of protective legislation for women, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 180–214.

¹⁷ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 373–423; Mink, *Wages of Motherhood*; Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston: South End Press, 1988); *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); and Miriam Cohen and Michael Hanagan, "The Politics of Gender and the Making of the Welfare State, 1900–1940: A Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Social History* 24 (Spring 1991): 469–84. The maternalist label has been used particularly to describe efforts by middle-class clubwomen to build a nascent welfare state. Historian Kathryn Kish Sklar notes Florence Kelley's use of maternalism as a legal strategy for justifying protective legislation. See Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 258–59. On working-class women's use of maternalism to gain protective legislation, see Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900–1965* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 121–68. On the effects of the enforcement of protective legislation on women workers, see Holly J. McCammon, "Protection for Whom? Maximum Hours Laws and Women's Employment in the United States, 1880–1920," *Work and Occupations* 23 (May 1996): 132–64. Other scholars have examined the construction of

ways in which protective legislation was bound up with the larger political issues at the time. As we shall see, the popularity of protective legislation for women among voters and lawmakers in California had as much to do with navigating Progressive-era politics as assisting wage-earning women in the workplace.

Recent scholarship on consumption (and even President George W. Bush's exhortation, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, that Americans should do their patriotic duty and go shopping) has highlighted "the relationship between material culture and citizenship," the way that states as well as grassroots organizations have attempted to persuade "consumer-citizens" to use their purchasing power in politically minded ways.¹⁸ Students of consumption have typified the Progressive era as a critical period of transition¹⁹ to a "consumers' republic" beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, where citizens turned to the private marketplace, constructed and supported by the state, to pursue economic, political, and social goals for "a more equal, free, and democratic nation."²⁰ As historians Dana

a maternalist welfare state without specifically discussing protective labor legislation. See, for example, Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*.

Not all scholars of protective legislation have emphasized maternalism in their analysis, although they note the ways in which the laws accommodated capitalism's contradictory needs for a cheap, female labor supply and a reproducing labor class. See, for example, Susan Lehrer, *Origins of Protective Labor Legislation for Women, 1905–1925* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). For a general overview of protective legislation, see Nancy Woloch, *Muller v. Oregon: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996). Woloch notes the dual purpose of these laws to protect women workers and to provide a precedent for universal labor legislation.

¹⁸ Matthew Hilton and Martin Daunton, "Material Politics: An Introduction," in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, eds. Matthew Hilton and Martin Daunton (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 3, 5. See also Meg Jacobs, "The Politics of Purchasing Power: Political Economy, Consumption Politics, and State-Building, 1909–1959" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1998), 31–32; and Charles McGovern, "Consumption and Citizenship in the United States," in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37–58.

¹⁹ Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 15–52.

²⁰ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 13.

Frank, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Margaret Finnegan have shown, effective consumption campaigns in the early twentieth century required the tight linkage of consumer behavior to specific political goals in order to motivate consumers to buy union label goods, follow National Consumer League guidelines, or support woman suffrage. Even with clear objectives, consumers, usually women, often found it difficult to seek out “approved” items.²¹

In a “proto-citizen consumer” moment, historian Lizabeth Cohen argues, Progressive-era consumption campaigns complemented reformers’ political efforts to protect workers, children, mothers, and consumers “from the dangers of an industrial and increasingly urban society.” Consumers, then, came to be seen as yet another class of citizens requiring the state’s protection. Similarly, Cohen sees in Progressive reforms like the eight-hour day, minimum wage, and even union label campaigns the beginning of organized workers’ willingness to accept “the reality of industrialized labor,” no longer opposing “wage slavery” and instead “agitat[ing] for ‘a living wage’ adequate to provide an ‘American standard of living.’” In California, consumption operated as another means to broad objectives of restraining industrial capitalism. Rather than seeking to protect consumers from corporate malfeasance, activists placed politically minded consumers on the front lines, encouraging them to wield their voting and buying power for specific political objectives. More than an attempt to get “a fair shake at consumption,” as Cohen sees it,²² these political reforms and the consumer campaigns represented a continuation of efforts to shape a just society. As historian Meg Jacobs has noted, early twentieth-century consumerism and the language of purchasing power represented an ongoing debate about “how to organize, reform, and regulate American capitalism.” The struggle over economic citizenship, combined with the simultaneous debates over state-provided social welfare, helped legitimate

²¹ Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Kathryn Kish Sklar, “The Consumers’ White Label Campaign of the National Consumers’ League, 1898–1918,” 17–35, in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture & Votes for Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

²² Cohen, *Consumer’s Republic*, 21–22.

the rise of an “interventionist” state.²³ In California, Progressive activists, male and female alike, relied on both political and consumption methods in their efforts to achieve a more equitable distribution of social and economic power.

The connection between politics and consumption can be seen in the suffrage campaign nationally, as historian Margaret Finnegan has shown. In the Progressive era, she suggests, the rising consumer culture, coupled with Progressive concerns over industrial capitalism, led to arguments that women needed the ballot to protect women’s traditional roles as family purchasers as well as to counter the threat of moral degradation posed by movies, dance halls, racetracks, and other kinds of vice. Women’s politically empowered consumption could create a better world. By the 1920s, Finnegan argues, consumption had become a goal rather than a method for suffragists. By acting like consumers — shopping among candidates rather than putting forth their own agendas and representatives — female consumer-voters drained the ballot of its potency.²⁴ The seductiveness of this new consumer culture, I would argue, was less at fault than the crushing political conservatism of 1920s, which limited both legislation and consumption as means to broader political ends. In California, activist leaders found the state’s political climate stultifying, blocking their attempts at reform and fostering a kind of apathy among rank-and-file clubwomen and female trade unionists that was difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, for many California activists, consumption still held potential as a reform tool.

The dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One explores middle- and working-class women’s use of state boosterism and concerns about civilization’s progress in the woman suffrage campaign. In the process, suffragists developed a strategy based on symbols and rhetoric that tied women’s enfranchisement to male voters’ desires to create a “great state” of California. Although this rhetoric was effective in gaining male support, it ultimately made suffrage about something other than women’s rights — which had the potential to undermine women’s exercise of political power in the post-suffrage period. Chapter Two examines how middle- and working-class women constructed a vision for the ballot the during the 1911

²³ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 264–65.

²⁴ Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage*, 31–32, 39–43, 171–74.

campaign and how this vision translated into a post-suffrage critique of the state's political economy. In particular, suffragists used the figure of the wage-earning woman as an accessible trope to discuss the ways in which they believed the excesses of industrial capitalism threatened the republic. Rather than "expedient" arguments, I argue, their construction of the need for justice and class uplift and the dangers of "wage slavery" rested on their understandings of women's productive labor. At bottom, suffragists made women's civic work central to the creation of a more equitable society.

Chapter Three examines the linkage of suffrage, voter registration drives, and protective legislation for women in the immediate post-suffrage period as new women voters attempted to act on their vision of economic reform. The chapter shows that protective legislation, especially the women's eight-hour day, functioned as an important political tool in balancing and appeasing the competing needs and interests of middle- and working-class women, male labor leaders, and large employers. Chapter Four uses the successful mothers' pension and failed old-age pension campaigns as a window into the efforts of female reformers and male trade unionists to attain broad-based social insurance for the working class. This chapter demonstrates that "entering wedge" victories, such as mothers' pensions, were less maternalist reforms aimed at protecting poor women and children than the result of a complex calculus of political factors. Over time, the labor-clubwoman coalition became increasingly focused on the needs of male breadwinners, squeezing out activist working-class women and reflecting a belief in traditional gender roles. Chapter Five explores how progressive-minded women and organized labor turned to consumption strategies, such as "buy California" campaigns, union label efforts, and Consumer's Leagues, to achieve their reform goals during the 1910s and 1920s. The connection between consumer efforts and clear political objectives significantly affected the success of these efforts before and after World War I.

The dissertation begins with a prologue situating the project in the context of California history and ends with an epilogue describing the implications of women's efforts to deal with industrial capitalism for California history.

By widening the lens of inquiry to include reform-minded women and organized labor in the study of political and consumer activism, this study

complicates our understanding of woman suffrage, Progressive reform, and the politics of consumption. It demonstrates that the importance of suffrage lay not simply in women's attainment of voting rights, but in their construction of a vision of society and a plan for reform. California women, allied with organized labor, sought to reshape the state's political economy to achieve a more equitable society — first through the power of their ballots and then through the power of their pocketbooks. In doing so, they challenged received historical wisdom about the maternalist origins of the early welfare state, the ultimate (in)significance of woman suffrage, and the functioning of gender and class in the Progressive era. In short, they demonstrated the centrality of women's activism in California and the West to understanding Progressive reform.

★ ★ ★

PROLOGUE

On October 10, 1911, California became the sixth state to enact woman suffrage, joining Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, and Washington in enfranchising women. This western trend continued, such that, by 1914, one territory and ten states, all located west of the Mississippi, had given women the ballot.¹

Although a few historians have attempted to account for this western phenomenon, only a single work explains the spread of suffrage across the west or, more importantly for students of California's past, accounts for the enactment of suffrage in a specific state.² In her study, historian Rebecca J. Mead demonstrates that western suffragists in Colorado, Washington, California, and Nevada gained critical urban support by working through trade unions and party organizations.³ In California's case, the 1911 campaign for woman suffrage found its impetus and success in the state's long history of protest and reform. Since the gold rush, Californians conceived of themselves and their state as free and egalitarian — a place “wide open”

¹ See Introduction above, note 8.

² See Introduction above, note 9.

³ Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004), 1–4, 119–21.

to financial opportunities and political and social freedoms. The protest movements that arose during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on the contradiction between the state's promise of freedom and prosperity and the constraining reality of economic monopoly. Capitalizing on the momentum of the state's Progressive movement, suffragists in 1911 tapped into the state's tradition of discontent and protest to argue for their right to the vote. As reform-minded state legislators and voters in the 1910s sought once again to expand democracy and to curb the excesses of monopoly — with the Southern Pacific railroad⁴ as the most clear and reviled symbol of economic excess — suffragists were able to lay claim to their rights as part of this new reform movement, while simultaneously framing suffrage as part of the state's history of reform and protest.

Anglo-Americans' interest in California began in the late eighteenth century with the development of a lucrative fur trade between New England and Chinese merchants with the help of Yankee, British, and Russian hunters. With the resulting near extermination of the region's population of sea otters and fur seals, California's economy turned to cowhide and tallow trade. Also profitable, the hide-and-tallow trade, more importantly, cemented in the minds of eastern Americans the idea that California was a place of potential economic bounty, if only it were "in the hands of an enterprising people." Determined to be those "enterprising people," early Anglo-American settlers arrived with commerce and profit in mind. American immigrants to northern California focused on trade and

⁴ Although before the mid-1880s, the railroad was known as the Central Pacific railroad, I will refer to it as the Southern Pacific for simplicity's sake. The transcontinental Central Pacific railroad was founded in 1861 by Mark Hopkins, Collis P. Huntington, Theodore Judah, Leland Stanford, and Charles Crocker, known as "the Big Four." To eliminate competition, the Big Four in the late 1860s gained control of the original Southern Pacific, designated to be a western transcontinental route, linking Los Angeles with New Orleans. Although they tried to maintain the fiction that the Central Pacific and the Southern Pacific railroads were under separate control, few were fooled and California newspapers generally referred to the whole system as "the railroads." In 1884, the railroad system officially became called the Southern Pacific, when the Big Four incorporated their company in Kentucky, where incorporation laws were most lax. Thus, from the mid-1880s on, the railroad in California was called the Southern Pacific. See Walton Bean and James J. Rawls, *California: An Interpretive History*, 5th ed. (New York, St. Louis, and San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988), 155–57, 165–67.

merchandising; in the south, they generally concentrated on establishing large mercantile firms and acquiring land, usually through a series of strategic marriages to wealthy *Californios*. In 1845, a more significant overland migration to California began, but, before the gold rush, American settlers tended to be more attracted to Texas and Oregon, which, unlike Mexican-controlled California, were considered to be part of “the states.”⁵

With the discovery of gold, however, attitudes underwent a significant change. Gold proved to be the biggest impetus to westward immigration, and its discovery coincided with the cession of California and other territories to the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago, which ended the Mexican-American War.⁶ American settlers streamed into the state. In 1849, 80,000 “forty-niners” immigrated, and by 1854 approximately 300,000 persons had moved to California.⁷ Most were young married men who hoped to make their fortunes in the gold mines and return to their places of origin.⁸ In contrast to this rapid immigration in the north, southern California was largely unchanged by the gold rush. Culturally, the region remained a Spanish-Mexican territory, with Spanish as the primary language for both spoken and written communication. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Los Angeles remained essentially a small Mexican town, and the surrounding “cow counties,” for the most part, lay undeveloped and uninhabited.⁹ White Americans’ focus stayed to the north and on gold.

Despite this population explosion and the land’s legal cession to the United States, California lacked a formal government from 1848 to 1850, although it was nominally under military rule. The region’s status as territory

⁵ Walton Bean and James J. Rawls, *California: An Interpretive History*, 5th ed. (New York, St. Louis, and San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988), 56–58, 61, 65–66. Quote on 57.

⁶ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 68, 79.

⁷ Malcom Rohrbough, “No Boy’s Play: Migration and Settlement in Early Gold Rush California,” in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 25.

⁸ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 92–93. According to Bean and Rawls, at the end of 1848, 6,000 miners had extracted \$10 million worth of gold. By the end of 1849, 40,000 prospectors worked the mines, and by 1852 100,000 miners lived in the state.

⁹ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 50.

became embroiled in the larger national debate over slavery, when white settlers drafted a constitution banning slavery. As a result, California's entrance into the union was nearly rejected by Congress as southern Senators sought to extend the Missouri Compromise line to divide the territory into slave and free states. After much wrangling in the Senate, California gained its statehood as part of the Compromise of 1850, skipping the territorial phase entirely.¹⁰

The significance of the gold rush lay not simply in easing California's entrance into the union and fostering rapid immigration, but in developing the cultural foundations for what settlers considered to be "western" ideas of freedom, liberty, and equality. For newcomers, California and the gold rush became symbols of the nation's promise of economic democracy. The gold rush suggested that anyone, regardless of class or status, could strike it rich in the gold fields. Hard work, miners believed, would naturally be rewarded with economic success, the result of one's own daring and labor; wealth, in their view, was available to all.¹¹ San Francisco residents in particular embraced these ideas, seeing their city — the gateway to the gold country — as the embodiment of unparalleled freedom, equality, and

¹⁰ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 95, 96, 101; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 58. Historian Sucheng Chan provides a succinct description of the problem: California's "admission into the upset the formula that had been established thirty years earlier in the Missouri Compromise — that territories would become states in pairs: one free and one slave, in order to preserve the fragile balance between free and slave states. A problem arose because California was the only state seeking admission in 1850. But its statehood could not wait until another territory was ready because the discovery of gold made Congress eager to incorporate California into the nation. Its entry as a free state was part of the Compromise of 1850, which also made New Mexico a territory and abolished the slave trade in the District of Columbia. To placate the slave-owning states, Congress passed a stringent fugitive slave law." See Sucheng Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush," in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 70. See also Spencer C. Olin, Jr., *California Politics, 1846–1920: The Emerging Corporate State* (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1981), 1–2, 5, 9, 12. Olin notes that the provision in the state constitution banning slavery was less an humanitarian gesture than an economic one: white miners refused to work alongside Black slaves, fearing both the social degradation of their work and the possibility that slaveholders would have "an unfair advantage" in extracting gold.

¹¹ Rohrbough, "No Boy's Play," 28.

democracy. Rapid urbanization and industrialization accompanied this sense of egalitarianism and economic opportunity, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among miners and merchants alike. Many merchants found that the real riches lay in supplying miners with tools, housing, food, and other necessities and equipment.¹² The discoveries of oil and silver in the 1860s continued the economic expansion, attracting new immigrants as well as technological innovation and corporate investment to these capital- and labor-intensive, extractive industries.¹³

In this way, San Francisco, along with other western cities such as Denver and Seattle, became an “instant city,” arising almost overnight around mining ventures for gold, silver, and copper. The city’s rapid economic development came at a social and cultural cost, however. Instant cities, as historian Gunther Barth notes, were marked by social instability and a culture narrowly focused on the attainment of individual wealth. Inhabitants gave little thought, at least initially, to creating cohesive, stable societies.¹⁴ Moreover, the transience of population and wealth prevented broad-based civic participation in both state and local matters. As a result, in California, the more stable elites, including large farmers, ranchers, merchants, lawyers, and miners, gained unfettered influence over the state legislature and single-mindedly furthered their own political and economic interests. The concerns and needs of laborers — whether small-time miners or farm workers — received little attention.¹⁵

Nevertheless, San Francisco’s population grew quickly, from 56,802 inhabitants in 1860 to 342,782 in 1900, according to the U.S. census.¹⁶ From the beginning, San Franciscans were a diverse lot, and this heterogeneity

¹² Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 6–7, 38. Despite the sense of disarray and rapid change, San Francisco did create its own urban culture, based on the experiences of the diverse group of people it attracted. Unlike rustic mining towns, urban centers like San Francisco and Los Angeles did search for “social cohesion and cultural identity,” often based on a self-conception of freedom and egalitarianism and setting them apart from eastern cities. Moreover, these cities were forced to urbanize and industrialize quickly — and to deal with urban problems common to the late nineteenth century.

¹³ Olin, *California Politics*, 15–18.

¹⁴ Barth, *Instant Cities*, 129.

¹⁵ Olin, *California Politics*, 15–18.

¹⁶ Barth, *Instant Cities*, 135.

continued into the twentieth century. Although the vast majority (94 percent) of the inhabitants were white, this “white” population was itself diverse, made up of Irish, German, English, and Italian immigrants, among others. By 1900, foreign-born inhabitants composed 30 percent of the city’s population, while 40 percent were first-generation Americans. Chinese and Japanese residents constituted just 5 percent of the city, and African Americans represented only 0.5 percent. This racial and ethnic diversity had important results socially and economically. Beginning in the 1860s, for example, anti-Asian sentiment among white working-class San Franciscans helped galvanize labor organization through “white only” campaigns. These efforts, racist though they were, paid off. By the early twentieth century, San Francisco was the most heavily unionized city on the west coast.¹⁷

Although non-elites tended to lose out in this system, the small numbers of women and Blacks actually worked to reinforce San Francisco’s self-concept as an egalitarian and “wide-open city.”¹⁸ African Americans were able to attain economic security — and sometimes amass small fortunes — working at relatively well-paying jobs, even as they experienced blatant discrimination.¹⁹ White women, although still constrained by nineteenth century limits on female employment, were often able to capitalize on a favorable sex ratio to make advantageous marriages and remarriages. Moreover, the demand for female labor as schoolteachers, boardinghouse keepers, and seamstresses in woman-scarce San Francisco meant that single women could often manage to live independently based on their own labor. A few exceptional women, such as Marietta Lois Beers Stow, managed to achieve significant prominence. Stow published and edited a

¹⁷ Mansel G. Blackford, *The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning on the Pacific Coast, 1890–1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 22; Olin, *California Politics*, 23–26; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971, 1995), 262–65.

¹⁸ Barth, *Instant Cities*, 175.

¹⁹ Douglas Henry Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 35–37. Daniels notes that some Black hotel workers at the Palace Hotel did particularly well based on the wise investment of salary and tips. The Palace was eventually forced to fire all its Black employees when white workers unionized.

newspaper aimed at women's industrial education and later ran as an independent candidate for California governor. Women like Stow enabled white women to imagine themselves as free and equal, at the very least, with some arguing that California's political and economic opportunities "presaged a 'golden dawn of a new era for women.'"²⁰

Los Angeles, on the other hand, grew more slowly than San Francisco and had a much more homogeneous population. Southern California did not experience its first boom until 1868, driven by the spread of the citrus industry (lemons, navel and Valencia oranges) and the "health rush" to the south. Physicians, newspaper editors, and other boosters encouraged the chronically ill and their families to move to southern California for their health. Although the cure had little basis in medical fact, it did persuade thousands to immigrate.²¹ Unlike San Francisco's diverse population, Los Angeles during the nineteenth century attracted primarily native white Americans and western European immigrants, despite its Mexican-Spanish background.²² Aggressive railroad promotions of southern California as a tourist attraction and retirement locales contributed to the real estate boom that peaked in 1887, as midwesterners, in particular, were enticed west to a supposedly beautiful and bountiful rural land. By the twentieth century, however, southern California became increasingly more urban in character, and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Mexico, and Japan began to join the ranks of *Angelenos*.²³ With a population of only 50,395 in 1890, by 1910 the city had 319,198 residents.²⁴ Still, the city remained largely Anglo, with 96 percent of the city considered "white." Of these white *Angelenos*, 81 percent were native-born Americans. Unlike the prospectors who traveled to San Francisco during the gold rush, Los Angeles was primarily comprised of independent farmers and small-town

²⁰ Barth, *Instant Cities*, 175–76. Quote on 176. Even by 1880, the ratio of women to men in San Francisco was still only 5 to 7. Despite the greater economic opportunity in California, wages for female workers in the west were 25 to 50 percent lower than wages for male workers in the 1880s. For more on the sheer variety of Western women's occupations, see Glenda Riley, *Building and Breaking Families in the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 137.

²¹ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 189–91.

²² Blackford, *Lost Dream*, 23.

²³ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 191–92.

²⁴ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 130.

midwesterners who had come to retire. The city, as a result, had a markedly middle-class flavor.²⁵

While the discoveries of gold, oil, and silver and the growth of the railroad, tourism, and the citrus industry shaped San Francisco and Los Angeles, early federal land policy profoundly affected the social, economic, and political realities of California's central valley. Beginning in 1860, the federal government began to break up early Spanish and Mexican land grants, selling California land to private individuals. The intention was not to redistribute land to small shareholders and settlers, however, and these land sales tended to concentrate land in the hands of private individuals and corporations. By 1880, wealthy individuals had purchased most of the valuable land, while the federal government gave nearly 11.5 million acres to the railroads. These grants and land sales totaled almost 36 million acres — over one-third of the state's land. By removing the most desirable property from the open market, historian Spencer C. Olin, Jr. notes, these early land transfers worked to undermine the Homestead Act in California. As contemporary critics argued, this land monopoly frustrated small independent farmers and fostered instead large-scale agriculture based on low-paid wage labor.²⁶

The development of an early form of agribusiness had important, long-term social consequences for the state. Rural areas suffered from social instability, longstanding labor problems, land monopoly, and a sharply divided social structure made up of absentee corporate owners, corporate farm managers, small farm owners, and poor migratory farm workers. In 1916, the state Commission of Land Colonization and Rural Credits acknowledged the negative consequences of the system, noting that “at one end of the social scale [we have] a few rich men who as a rule do not live on their estates, and at the other end either a body of shifting farm laborers or a farm tenantry made up largely of aliens, who take small interest in the progress of the community.” In the view of the Commission, the concentration of land in the hands of a powerful few was detrimental to society as a whole as well as to poor farmers and laborers. Moreover, migrant workers were primarily of Asian or Mexican descent, and thus the majority was

²⁵ Blackford, *Lost Dream*, 23.

²⁶ Spencer C. Olin, Jr., *California's Prodigal Sons: Hiram Johnson and the Progressives, 1911-1917* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 27.

disenfranchised. Those who were American citizens frequently did not vote because they could not meet the residency or literacy requirements.²⁷

The concentration of wealth and power into the hands of a few individuals and corporations shaped California's political culture in the late nineteenth century. Although other corporations and individuals were also guilty of monopoly, corruption, and power grabs, state politics from 1870 to 1910 centered on the Southern Pacific Railroad and the reform movements its monopolistic tactics generated. The railroads received generous benefits, including land grants and rights-of-way over state land, from both the state and federal government. In addition, the Southern Pacific spent thousands of dollars lobbying legislators and generally controlled the state Senate through much of this period. Not as evil as its critics maintained, the railroad did bring real benefits to the state by "encouraging immigration, stimulating agricultural growth, fostering economic expansion, and promoting land values." In the context of the economic depression of the late 1870s, however, these benefits hurt rather than helped, or so farmers and workers argued. Small farmers protested unfair rail rates, while urban laborers blamed railroad-sponsored immigration for expanding the labor pool, resulting in rising unemployment and declining wages. Moreover, the Southern Pacific's efforts to use its political influence to protect its economic position smacked of corporate privilege and political corruption. In late 1877, small farmers and workers formed the Workingmen's Party to provide a militant political voice to their concerns, targeting both corporate corruption and Chinese workers for the economic downturn.²⁸

²⁷ Olin, *California's Prodigal Sons*, 27–28.

²⁸ Olin, *California Politics*, 30–32, 33–36, and William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850–1910* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994), 131. The Southern Pacific's power became so pervasive that it tried to name and control every politician from the governor on down. In 1884 the Southern Pacific spent \$600,000 on influencing legislation. Other reform movements during this period also attempted to address the growing concentration of corporate power. As Olin notes, "Recovering slowly from the wounds earlier inflicted by intense internal debates over slavery, secession, and the Civil War, and from a decimation of its ranks by former Democrats who had gravitated into the Workingmen's Party, Democratic leaders were faced with a major rebuilding task. In this process of reconstruction, antimonomopolists took the lead. They assumed control of local Democratic organizations across the state and won the election of 1882. In capturing nearly every state office, all positions on the Railroad Commission, six congressional seats, and a vast majority of

In response to these protests and widespread concern over the depression and increasing corporate control, California voters took very specific action in September 1878: They called a new constitutional convention. Delegates hoped to address the problems of class division, social conflict, economic depression, and growing poverty that had accompanied the state's rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth. The convention highlighted Californians' fundamental belief in the importance of ensuring equal opportunity for all individuals as they attempted to address the problems of monopoly. The domination of the Southern Pacific in the state's politics and economy, the concentration of land into the hands of a few wealthy corporate and individual landowners, and political cronyism and corruption all came under fire as betrayals of American ideals. Delegates of the Workingmen's Party in particular sought to mitigate the power of large landowners and urban bankers who, in their view, had "reduced workers and small farmers to a condition of servitude and dependency." The new constitution attempted to exert public control over corporations, stock and bond markets, and rate-manipulating railroads through greater state regulation.²⁹ Although it provided for equal education and employment opportunities (to enable white women to compete more effectively against male Chinese workers), the new constitution did not enfranchise women. What limited discussion of woman suffrage there was at the convention highlighted the Party's anti-Chinese sentiment, as it centered on the potential advantages of enfranchising white women to counter Chinese-American male voters.³⁰ Ultimately, the revised constitution failed to achieve its goals. The power of the state railroad commission

the state legislative seats, the Democratic Party in California demonstrated a vital resurgence as a political force as well as the broad popularity of its antimonopoly stance." See Olin, *California Politics*, 41–44. Historian William Deverell notes that anti-railroad sentiment was central to the creation of the Workingmen's Party. See Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 43.

²⁹ Olin, *California Politics*, 37–39. As Olin notes, "By 1879 the population of California was approaching a million, having dramatically increased 800 percent since statehood and having become ethnically and racially more heterogeneous through continuous immigration. Moreover, 37 percent of the total population now lived in cities, such as San Francisco (with one quarter of the state's residents), Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose, Stockton, and Los Angeles." See also Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 60.

³⁰ Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 39–40.

was undermined by the co-optation of the railroad board by the Southern Pacific as well as by pro-railroad decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. By 1880 the Workingmen's Party had lost steam, unable to attract members from the emerging labor movement and unable to sustain organizational momentum among poor, often unemployed, laborers and farmers. At the party's demise, Workingmen's members moved into the state Democratic Party, bringing with them their anti-monopoly, anti-railroad, and anti-Chinese stances.³¹

In the mid-1880s, California underwent significant economic, demographic, and political change, stemming in large part from the state's recovery from an extended recession. Rapid immigration accompanied economic recovery, as 340,000, primarily midwestern, immigrants streamed into southern "cow counties." This population growth not only helped revive rural economies, but also fundamentally altered the state's political balance, as the demographic shift also marked a shift in political power to the south. Although San Francisco remained the eighth largest city in the country at this time and fielded a powerful, united legislative bloc, southern California gained more seats at the state capitol and thus more power in state politics. In addition, the state Republican Party began to threaten Democratic control over state legislative and executive branches.³² Ultimately, San Francisco lost its economic preeminence in both the state and the west coast during this period. By the end of the 1890s Seattle and Portland began to rival San Francisco in economic ventures, while by the early 1900s Los Angeles and Oakland had gained significant ground in foreign commerce, manufacturing, and trade with the state's interior valleys.³³ Economic recovery also lessened the anti-railroad rhetoric, as voters began to worry about the effects of government involvement in the economy and encroachment on private property rights. Lower rail rates — due to competition between the

³¹ Olin, *California Politics*, 37–39. As Olin notes, "By 1879 the population of California was approaching a million, having dramatically increased 800 percent since statehood and having become ethnically and racially more heterogeneous through continuous immigration. Moreover, 37 percent of the total population now lived in cities, such as San Francisco (with one quarter of the state's residents), Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose, Stockton, and Los Angeles." See also Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 60.

³² Olin, *California Politics*, 45.

³³ Mansel G. Blackford, *The Politics of Business in California, 1890–1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 9.

Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads — also decreased animosity toward the railroads, as did the economic boom in southern California due to increased immigration and a rising real estate market.³⁴

In the mid-1890s, the return of economic depression and the railroads' continuing monopolistic practices reinvigorated antimonopoly and anti-railroad sentiments.³⁵ Farmers, urban laborers, and others joined together in the state's Populist movement, targeting the railroad and advocating a variety of direct democracy measures. California Populism grew out of the Nationalist movement and Edward Bellamy's vision of utopian socialism. In his novel *Looking Backward*, Bellamy advocated replacing private ownership of the means of production and the individual pursuit of wealth with a "nationalized, cooperative state" where public control of the economy would provide for the general good. For many Californians, frustrated with the Southern Pacific's control over the economy and state legislators, Bellamy's vision proved enticing. Nationalism clubs spread rapidly, finding particular strength in Los Angeles and San Francisco. By 1890, more than one-third of all Nationalism clubs nationwide could be found in California, with 3,500 members in 62 clubs. Despite this apparent strength, Nationalist candidates failed to win broad public support in the 1890 elections. Yet Nationalism did not disappear. Both ideas and members migrated to the new People's Party of California. In rural, economically depressed regions of southern California, in fact, many Nationalist clubs simply renamed themselves Farmers' Alliance cooperatives.³⁶

Initially, Alliance leaders chose to endorse Democratic and Republican legislators who favored their goals, but by late 1891, the growth of the state's Farmers' Alliance — approximately 30,000 members in more than 500 cooperatives — encouraged its leaders to create the People's Party to push their own political agenda. As formulated in its October 1891 platform, the People's Party advocated "government ownership of communication and transportation, woman's suffrage, and the eight-hour day on all public works." Despite its popularity among small farmers and — unlike the movement elsewhere — some urban workers, Populism was unable to garner the broad-based support necessary to win significant numbers of

³⁴ Olin, *California Politics*, 44, and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 62–63.

³⁵ Olin, *California Politics*, 44, 46–47, and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 63–64.

³⁶ Olin, *California Politics*, 46–47.

public offices and legislative positions. Democratic leadership was able to undercut Populist appeal in rural areas in southern and central California by supporting anti-monopoly and anti-railroad measures, while Republican candidates branded Populists as radical and dangerous. By 1896, Populism in California had largely disintegrated over its leaders' fusionist strategies with the Democratic Party and the rising prominence and popularity of Eugene Debs and his brand of socialism. Nevertheless, the state's Populist movement was important in detailing a critique of the existing political, social, and economic order and in supporting the expansion of democracy. Populist-supported direct democracy measures, such as the initiative, referendum, and recall, as well as woman suffrage, continued on in Progressive reform circles — as did anti-railroad sentiment.³⁷

Despite these similarities, California Progressivism was in many ways significantly more conservative than Populism. Rather than attempting to restructure entirely the political economy, most Progressive activists aimed to reform and stabilize the state's economic, social, and political order. Fiery rhetoric about the Southern Pacific railroad coupled with this inherent conservatism in action allowed a wide range of political perspectives to come together under the Progressive umbrella. Progressive businessmen sought to use the state's regulatory power to preserve their competitive advantages by stabilizing a previously turbulent economy. Other Progressive reformers hoped to bring about a more fair and equitable economy by constraining the forces of monopoly and opening politics to the interests and influences of "the people."³⁸ All these aims could be accommodated in a movement targeting the railroads as symbols of monopoly and corruption.

The heyday of Progressivism in California grew out of ongoing demographic changes and a shift in the balance of power from the north to the southern part of the state. Continuing the trends of the late nineteenth century, Los Angeles, and southern California more generally, made gains in population as well as economic and political power. In the early 1910s, the state's tremendous population growth — from 1,485,053 in 1900 to 2,377,549 in 1910 — was largely attributable to mass immigration to southern California. By 1910, Los Angeles' population had risen to 319,198 — a 212 percent

³⁷ Olin, *California Politics*, 47–49.

³⁸ Blackford, *Politics of Business in California*, x.

increase over the decade — and not far behind San Francisco's 416,912 inhabitants. In this same period, the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys grew quickly, as did the populations of Berkeley and Oakland. Favorable railroad rates, coupled with the chaos following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, helped Los Angeles merchants control the flow of goods to and from the San Joaquin Valley. San Francisco also lost out to Los Angeles and Oakland in shipping and manufacturing. By the 1920s and 1930s, Los Angeles had surpassed its northern rival in both industry and population.³⁹

This tremendous growth in the south not only undermined San Francisco's preeminent position in the state, but it also provided the impetus to the Progressive movement as a response to this rapid economic, political, and social change. Progressivism in California began as a city-based reform effort to root out municipal corruption and smash local political machines through direct legislation measures, but the movement rapidly became a statewide phenomenon.⁴⁰ Progressive reform took dramatically different shapes in the state's two major cities. In Los Angeles, a loose coalition of reformers came together to oppose the Southern Pacific's domination of the city's politics. Through the political talents of Dr. John Randolph Haynes, a wealthy physician and real estate mogul, prominent businessmen, lawyers, and journalists, along with socialists, Nationalists, and union labor leaders, joined to clean up government and attempt to create a more equitable society. (Although Los Angeles was ostensibly an open-shop town, labor unions did wield some political power, if limited economic power.) Through a Direct Legislation League, Haynes and his compatriots persuaded voters to include the initiative, referendum, and recall in the new city charter in 1903. Despite ridicule and denunciations from conservative Harrison Gray Otis's *Los Angeles Times*, Haynes and his Good Government League succeeded in throwing out corrupt city councilmen and in sweeping much of the 1906 city election. Most notably in Los Angeles, middle-class political and moral reformers were able to ally fairly successfully with working-class and socialist activists on particular issues.⁴¹ Nevertheless, labor strife

³⁹ Blackford, *Politics of Business in California*, 9–12.

⁴⁰ Olin, *California Politics*, 55, and Olin, *California's Prodigal Sons*, 6.

⁴¹ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 244–45. On Los Angeles as an open-shop town, see McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 274–77, and Bean and Rawls, *California*, 230–34.

consumed the city from 1907 to 1910, with union organizers pitted against Harrison's *Times* and the conservative Merchants & Manufacturers Association (the "M&M" in local parlance). With the fateful dynamiting of the *Times* in October 1910 and the McNamara brothers' subsequent confession to the bombing, organized labor and socialists lost much of their political strength and credibility. Not only was the socialist candidate for mayor, who had led in the primaries, soundly defeated by the Republican incumbent, but the labor movement was almost fatally weakened.⁴²

In San Francisco, on the other hand, organized labor drove much of the city's politics and reform efforts in the early twentieth century. After limited success in organizing sailors and coastal seamen in the 1880s and 1890s, the city became a union stronghold through the early 1920s after a sometimes violent, but successful, waterfront strike in 1901. Union members formed their own political party, the Union Labor Party, and successfully ran candidates for mayor and city supervisor. Unfortunately for organized labor and the long-term success of the party, the Union Labor Party, under the control of political boss Abraham Ruef, became embroiled in the infamous graft trials beginning in 1906.⁴³ The graft trials directly manifested the Progressive impulse to end municipal corruption and, to an extent, reflected class tensions between middle-class reformers and working-class Union Labor politicians. Federal prosecutor and San Francisco native, Francis J. Heney, headed up the investigation, ultimately gaining confessions of bribery from the city's mayor and most of its supervisors. When, quite dramatically, Heney was shot in the courtroom by a prospective juror, attorney and future governor Hiram W. Johnson took over the case. Reform-minded, middle-class clubwomen added to the spectacle by attending the trials everyday in order to demonstrate the proceedings' moral legitimacy. In the end, the trials fizzled,

⁴² McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 279–83.

⁴³ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 229–30; Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 113, 128–32, 136–39, 177–201; Lucille Eaves, *A History of California Labor Legislation with an Introductory Sketch of the San Francisco Labor Movement* (Berkeley, 1910); William Issel, "Business Power and Political Culture in San Francisco, 1900–1940," *Journal of Urban History* 16 (November 1989): 65–67, quote on 66; William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865–1932: Power, Politics, and Urban Development* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 139–99.

as Heney and Johnson began targeting wealthy San Francisco businessmen. In 1909, voters threw out politicians favoring the prosecution for an administration pledging to end the graft trials. Despite the demonstrated corruption of Union Labor politicians, organized labor remained a potent political force in the city. In the 1911 mayoral race, pro-labor Republican James Rolph won the mayoral race and retained his seat through 1931, in large part, by pledging government support of unions.⁴⁴

California Progressivism grew out of its municipal roots to become a statewide movement largely by attacking the Southern Pacific, as reformers turned their focus from cleansing their cities to cleansing their state of the railroad's political and economic corruption. Anti-railroad activism resonated with voters in all political parties, particularly those in southern California, the San Joaquin valley, and San Francisco — a response in large part to the railroad's continual displays of monopolistic power and its disregard for individual rights and the public good. In Los Angeles, Collis Huntington — one of the Southern Pacific's Big Four — demonstrated the railroad's overreaching power in his attempt to relocate the Los Angeles harbor from San Pedro to Santa Monica, where he had extensive land holdings.⁴⁵ In the San Joaquin valley, the Mussel Slough incident dramatized for the public the Southern Pacific's high-handedness and fueled popular resentment. At Mussel Slough, farmers had settled on land that was promised to the Southern Pacific by the federal government. When the railroad finally gained title to the land and offered it to the settlers, the price was set at market value (some claimed as high as \$80 per acre) rather than the \$2.50 per acre that the Southern Pacific had paid the government. When a small group of militant-minded settlers refused to buy or to vacate the land, U.S. Marshals, at the railroads' behest, attempted to evict forcibly the settlers. The result was the "battle of Mussel Slough," ending with the deaths of seven settlers and the imprisonment of

⁴⁴ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 244; Gayle Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880–1911* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 156–57; Olin, *California's Prodigal Sons*, 10–11; and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 154–55.

⁴⁵ Olin, *California's Prodigal Sons*, 5, and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 94–95, 121. For a complete discussion of the Los Angeles "Free Harbor Fight," see Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 94–122.

five others.⁴⁶ In San Francisco, anti-railroad sentiment united, for once, organized labor and business leaders; workers opposed its anti-labor practices and businessmen its monopolistic rates.⁴⁷

This statewide Progressive campaign began as an attack on the railroads, but ended with Progressive control of the governorship and much of the statehouse. In 1907, reform-minded Republicans formed the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, with the aim of wresting control of the state Republican Party from the Southern Pacific. The League called for state regulation of railroads, the direct election of U.S. senators, and direct primaries in state and local elections. By 1908, the Lincoln-Roosevelt League directly challenged the Southern Pacific on a statewide basis and succeeded in electing one-half of Republican legislators.⁴⁸ The 1909 legislature went on to enact a direct primary bill, which prevented the Southern Pacific from controlling the nominations of state and local candidates. Candidates could appeal directly to voters,⁴⁹ which, in 1910, enabled Hiram W. Johnson to win the Republican nomination for governor.

Johnson won the gubernatorial race largely due to his fiery anti-railroad rhetoric, and his election to governor in 1910 signified for many reformers the triumph of Progressivism in California. Yet, his victory was hardly decisive. Progressive strength remained concentrated in the south. Although he squeaked out a victory in San Francisco, Johnson lost 21 out of 50 counties in the state. It was only his overwhelming victories in southern California, where he won all nine counties, that enabled him to secure the governorship. Despite the narrowness of his victory, Johnson was quick to claim a mandate for reform. In his inaugural address, he argued that “the interests’ were choking off economic and political opportunities from ‘the people’” and pledged to curb the power of special interests and monopolies to ensure an overall public good.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Bean and Rawls, *California*, 171, and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 56–57, 143–44. Although the settlers legal standing and claim to the land was murky at best, public opinion laid the blame for the incident entirely at the feet of the Southern Pacific.

⁴⁷ Olin, *California’s Prodigal Son*, 5.

⁴⁸ Olin, *California Politics*, 55, 56, 58–59, and Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 160–61.

⁴⁹ Olin, *California’s Prodigal Sons*, 13.

⁵⁰ Olin, *California Politics*, 59–60.

The Progressive reform agenda thus focused on expanding democracy and the regulatory power of the state through “railroad legislation, direct legislation, woman suffrage, labor legislation, and conservation.” Johnson’s most direct attack on “the interests” came in his aggressive curtailment of the Southern Pacific’s political power and economic monopoly. Through the enactment of the Stetson-Eshleman railroad bill, the state gained broad regulatory authority over the railroads, enabling the state railroad commission to establish rates for both freight and passengers. This regulatory authority was later expanded in 1911 to include all public utilities (in the 1911 Public Utilities Act). Although widely billed as a victory for all the people, this regulatory-based reform was largely conservative. State regulation of the Southern Pacific primarily benefited other large capitalists, including large farmers and ranchers, oil producers, and other businessmen. Johnson and his male Progressives sought to foster competition among corporations — not to challenge or overhaul capitalism.⁵¹ Women reformers, as we shall see, had a broader definition of reform and sought more comprehensive change in the economy. Nevertheless, Johnson’s regulation of railroads and public utilities represented a significant ideological shift away from laissez-faire attitudes of the nineteenth century and toward a centralized state government with control over business.⁵²

During his term in office, Johnson and his Progressive friends pursued legislation that followed a general Progressive framework. They sought to free government of corruption and influence by passing the initiative, referendum, and recall. They expanded democracy by enacting a woman suffrage amendment and the direct election of U.S. senators. They sought to establish a nonpartisan government by making the positions of judges, school officials, and county and township lawmakers nonpartisan. As a result, candidates for nonpolitical offices were elected on a nonpartisan basis. Cross-filing destroyed the party system, seen as corrupt, by allowing the most popular candidate to win a party’s nomination, regardless of the candidate’s party affiliation. In addition to promoting democracy and curtailing partisanship, California Progressives sought to regulate the economy to ensure the general social welfare, going well beyond the regulation of

⁵¹ Olin, *California Politics*, 59–62.

⁵² Olin, *California’s Prodigal Sons*, 172, 173.

railroads and public utilities to assist poor and working-class Californians. Progressive lawmakers passed an eight-hour law for women, workmen's compensation, mandatory periodic payment of wages, child labor laws, and mothers' pensions, as well as creating an Immigration and Housing Commission and a Conservation Commission.⁵³

In this context, woman suffrage was part and parcel of broad-based reform. State suffragists could be hopeful for their own victory when they saw other progressive and democratic measures enacted, especially "women's" legislation such as the eight-hour day, workmen's compensation, and child labor laws long supported by Progressive and Socialist women. As we shall see, women suffragists drew on deep roots of California history and protest, as well as on longstanding concerns with monopoly, democracy, egalitarianism, and other western values, to argue for their right to the ballot. Suffragists successfully placed the woman suffrage campaign in the context of California culture by using the state's cultural values and political identity to their advantage. Proponent rhetoric that suffrage was a uniquely Californian and western reform not only resonated with voters but also normalized and deradicalized their call for enfranchisement. Moreover, their critique of California's political economy resonated with businessmen and workingmen alike — both of whom sought to change and free up California's economy, albeit in different ways. Suffragists could appeal to all these currents to make their demand for the franchise appear reasonable, sensible, and Californian.

As we shall see, once enfranchised, reform-minded women used the ballot in the period of progressive reform to lobby for a wide range of legislation aimed at reshaping the state's economy. Seeking to constrain capitalism through both legislative and consumption efforts, female activists hoped to create a more equitable society for all Californians. Their successes and failures depended as much on contemporary political realities as on the power of the ballot. Nevertheless, it was through their belief in the strength of the franchise that women activists developed their broad vision of reform. The 1911 suffrage campaign proved critical to this process, and it is to this movement that we now turn.

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⁵³ Olin, *California Politics*, 65, 70.