

CHRISTOPHER VEITCH

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

UNIVERSITY of NEWCASTLE, 1987

WHY HAVE SO FEW WOMEN BEEN INVOLVED IN POLITICS IN AUSTRALIA?

Added a sentence paragraph

A number of factors have contributed to the dearth of women being elected to the parliaments of Australia.

Although research is being carried out by historians and sociologists about the conditions placed on the entry of women into the political life of the nation not much has come from the political science arena. *Source?*

? {

The great amount of effort that was put into the campaigns launched by the suffragists in the late 19th century was dissipated after the vote was gained by Australian Women in 1902. *Lenore?*

The record of the involvement by women including Rose Scott (NSW) and Vida Goldstein (VIC) is challenging. In 1891 Rose Scott founded the Womanhood Suffrage League through frustration with politicians' double standards towards raising the age of consent from 14 to 18. *Fuck name* Vida Goldstein was involved in 1884 in the first woman's suffrage association in Australia and by 1903 was a candidate for the Federal Elections.

Since Australian women were amongst the first in the world to gain the vote and then the first country where women had the right to sit in Parliament ~~the~~ the lack of participation in the process of politics takes some analysis. ✓

In some quarters it has been assumed that the gains made by women came from the generosity of male politicians. It was also suggested that women might have valued their political obligations and responsibilities more highly if they had to fight for them. However the male champions of votes for women were drowned by those who failed to allow participation in the party system, but women

Meaning?

did organise and lobby and wage very proper, thoroughly constitutional campaigns before they were admitted to full membership of the political system. Women have not always been apathetic about the use of their political rights, as their record, measured by the numbers of women who have succeeded in entering politics, suggests.

In the decade after women in South Australis were given the Vote they showed considerable and active interest in politics. It was at this time that the National Council of Women and the Labour Women's Organising Committee were set up. Their members offered themselves for election, usually as independent but without success.

Fifty-note?

Up to World War I there was a tendency among women to see the political position of women as very advanced and a source of inspiration to the rest of the world.

There was still hope through the 1920's and 1930's when some women were elected, that Australia had not slipped behind the rest of the world.

The first woman in Australia to be elected was Edith Cowan who gained the seat of West Perth in 1921. By this time she had already gained an outstanding record as a pioneer of womens involvement in public life. Cowan achieved the seemingly impossible task of unseating another Nationalist candidate, the Attorney-General T.P. Draper.

Another aspect which hampered the election of women was the fact that the system was stacked against them. In these early years it could be said that they had a better chance in the conservative parties than in the Labour parties. There seemed to be, in the traditions of the labour movement a strong Irish Catholic background of masculinity. This placed women in the home as wives

Evidence?

*If measured
on
numbers
participating,
the record is
not good.*

and mothers. It was also noted that the support for the party came from Trade Unions who opposed women in the workforce and thus in the union movement.

A pioneer feminist Louisa Lawson had the ~~printers~~[?] union campaign^a against her for years as she established her newspaper "Dawn" with women printers. This emphasised the coming together of forces in the political system and the structure of society as a whole. Another factor which had a significance was the absence of a strong tradition of local government. The steps whereby experience and confidence are gained in local politics first and then to the next levels would have gained valuable experience for women.

The intensity of women's political participation during the suffrage campaign rapidly subsided once the goal had been achieved. But it was also the modern party system which tamed the women's vote. Party loyalty rather than support for women by women dictated their political behaviour.

The gaining of endorsement by the parties was unlikely whilst the party members sought to exclude them.) It is interesting to note that in Finland in 1907. nine women were elected as soon as the right to vote was gained in 1906. But the explanation was that this suffrage was gained by men and women at the same time. However the male party system posed less of a problem because there was only one pre-existing party.

Another problem that applied to Australia was the tyranny of distance and lack of transport to speedily reach each state. This particularly affected women who were perceived to have ascribed social roles. With the vast distances to be travelled it placed demands on time and money. This was a hurdle for women who may have had families and homes to contend with.

Federal politics also covered powers which led feminist

You need to acknowledge the source of this information

Good point

Make your point clearer

again bring the point out

organisations to concentrate at the state level where social and domestic matters were on the political agenda. Still the successes by representation by women was minimal.

It is contended that the middle class women in Australia were less involved in public life than their counterparts elsewhere. *This may be explained by* ~~The reason this view was held related to~~ the lack of cheap domestic labour, so women were more involved in home and garden. *family*

The influence of the electoral system was another factor that mitigated against women. It was pointed out by suffragists that proportional representation like the Hare-Spence system was supportive of gaining parliamentary seats. In 1930 at the Conference of the Australian Federation of Women Voters ~~that~~ the pre-selection ballots, single electorates and preferential voting had prevented capable women from being elected to parliament. Countries which used proportional representation elected far higher proportion of women to parliament. *None?*

This is illustrated in the ~~Australian~~ Parliament in the 1980's where 20% of members in the Senate are women *though* proportional representation ~~by~~ only 5% sit in the House of Representatives.

As more study of the question of why so few women have been involved in politics in Australia is carried out we may yet get a better picture of the 40 years gap in the right to sit in the Australian Parliament, and the election of Enid Lyons to the House of Representatives. *at least 100 years for a woman to gain a seat in Parliament.*

Certainly the current period of time will lead to more involvement in the political process as women take their places in all tiers of government and the higher echelons of the union movement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Anne Summers, 'Damned Whores and God's Police', Melbourne, 1975.
2. Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, 'Uphill all the Way', Brisbane, 1980.
3. Beverley Kingston, 'The World Moves Slowly', Sydney, 1977.
4. Marian Sawyer & Marian Simms, 'A Woman's Place', Sydney, 1984.

✓
This is better Chris, but there are still style problems and there are no foot-notes. All this needs acknowledgement of course. You will have to get work in on time next year if you are intending to go on. I have had to penalise you for lateness

6 - 1.
10

5.