

California Progressives: The Ambiguities of Political and Moral Reform



California progressivism was by no means a unified phenomenon; rather, it comprised a large number of efforts that sought, among other things, to use the legislative process to ameliorate problems brought on by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. During the first decade of the twentieth century, criticism of the railroad machine continued to stimulate political agitation in California. Yet class antagonisms and divisive factionalism prevented a unified opposition from agriculture, industry, and labor. Instead, avers George Mowry, author of a major study of California progressivism, leadership "was seized by a group of supreme individualists, well educated and bound together by a particularistic code of morality, and more than the normal dash, perhaps, of a sense of indignation and a desire for power." These largely middle-class professional men and women were initially not concerned with battling the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, preferring to engage in municipal reforms particularly in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Beginning about 1910, however, they developed a common concern that the growing power of capital and labor would generate class conflict to the serious detriment of the middle class. These primarily urban, high-status, Protestant reformers thus sought to prevent special interest groups from controlling the state for those groups' own allegedly selfish purposes. Instead, with what now appears to be astonishing naiveté, they argued that legislation should more properly result from careful deliberation among honest men and women seeking the general welfare while maintaining strict neutrality with respect to competing organizations and groups.

This stance of neutrality was more enduring as rhetoric than as public policy, for once in power progressives were confronted with difficult practical choices. It became immediately necessary for them to develop specific programs to benefit or control various groups, but this process tended to erode their sources of support. For these obvious reasons, the hoped-for "classless" politics of 1910 and thereafter proved to be largely chimerical. As William Deverell and Tom Sitton have recently pointed out in California Progress-

sivism Revisited (1994), "Ironies abound: progressives disdained 'class politics' but were presumably forced to engage in them, if only out of motives of self-preservation. . . ."

Ironically, the organized special interest groups so earnestly opposed by the reformers tended to fill the political vacuum created when the party system was virtually demolished by progressive legislation. In subsequent years, California's political parties have rarely managed to advance or to enact coherent programs of public policy. Instead, legislation has tended to derive from well-financed, well-organized special interests such as oil, real estate, agribusiness, and organized labor.

The California progressives may have destroyed effective party organizations, but they provided the electorate with the tools of "direct democracy." These new instruments—the initiative, referendum, recall, and nonpartisan political primaries—were to be used to "return the government to the people." Although most reformers genuinely believed that such measures would permit the "incorruptible" people to purify politics and thereby improve the quality of government, they were overly optimistic about the long-term consequences of their efforts. As it has turned out, for example, the initiative has not been an effective means of enacting new legislation. Moreover, initiative measures have originated not with "the people" but rather with well-financed interest groups.

In their efforts to move beyond Mowry's narrow focus on the leadership of California progressivism, younger scholars, Deverell and Sitton included, are examining a much broader array of issues, such as the social bases of political reform, the contributions of organized labor and of women, and the role of cultural values. They are challenging existing interpretations, such as those that focus too single-mindedly on the battle between the Republican party and the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. The meanings and contributions of the so-called Progressive Era in California are therefore still very much in dispute.

How progressives dealt with gender, ethnicity, and race is especially interesting. Although progressive men supported the suffrage campaign that succeeded in giving California women the vote in 1911, they were ambivalent about the role women later claimed in politics. Women progressives, perhaps as a response to this male ambivalence, carved out a special role for themselves as educators of the growing number of European immigrants stepping ashore in the United States. With the anticipated opening of the Panama Canal, women progressives in California argued they must prepare to deal with the increased influx into Pacific Coast ports. Until immigrants learned American civic and domestic virtues—virtues that women progressives thought they were especially qualified to inculcate—the newcomers constituted a "menace" to American society and civilization.

But there was one group of immigrants that neither male nor female progressives were willing to tolerate—the Japanese. Their numbers in California continued to increase despite a so-called Gentlemen's Agreement made in 1907, in which the Japanese government agreed to stop issuing passports to Japanese laborers who aspired to go to the United States. The number of Japanese male immigrants did decline after that, but the number of female Japanese immigrants increased. To make California less attractive to the Japanese, the state legislature, with the support of Governor Hiram Johnson, passed an Alien Land Act in 1913 to make it illegal for "aliens

ineligible to [sic] citizenship"—a code phrase for Japanese—to buy farm land or to lease it for more than three years.

In short, though the progressives were willing to admit certain groups into the American body politic if they changed their ways, they failed to transcend the racism of the times. In the words of Roger Daniels, a leading authority in Japanese American history, the progressives did not hesitate to "draw the color line."



DOCUMENTS

Students of the Progressive period in California history are indebted to Franklin Hichborn, legislative correspondent for the *Sacramento Bee*, for his detailed reports about the state legislature beginning in 1909. Although Hichborn was strongly biased in favor of progressivism, his eyewitness accounts are nonetheless valuable primary material. From this chapter's first document, in which he praises the new progressive governor, Hiram W. Johnson, we can learn a great deal about the underlying assumptions regarding the democratic process shared by Hichborn and his fellow progressives.

One such political activist was Dr. John Randolph Haynes of Los Angeles, who as early as 1898 had organized the Direct Legislation League and had drafted the initiative, referendum, and recall provisions of the Los Angeles charter of 1903. On the eve of the 1911 election in which these constitutional proposals were to be voted upon statewide, Haynes appeared before the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco to present his arguments in favor of the amendment, excerpts from which are found in the second document.

In the third document, Chester H. Rowell, editor of the *Fresno Bee*, explains that progressives were opposed to Japanese immigrants not because they came from an inferior race but simply because they were different. In the parlance of the times, they were "unassimilable." As guardians of the frontier between "the white man's and the brown man's world," Californians, according to Rowell, could not afford to allow the Japanese to breach the natural racial divide at the continent's edge.

In the fourth, fifth, and sixth documents, progressive women leaders discuss why women should be involved in politics. Carrie Chapman Catt, who worked indefatigably in suffrage campaigns in several states, points out in the fourth document the multiple ways in which public policy impacts the home and vice versa.

Like Catt, Katherine Philips Edson was an effective organizer. One of her first statewide crusades was to get legislation passed to regulate the purity of milk. After campaigning for Hiram Johnson in the 1910 gubernatorial election and for women's suffrage in 1911, she was appointed by Johnson as a deputy inspector in the state Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1912. In that capacity, she lobbied successfully for a minimum-wage law for female and child labor. This 1913 law created an Industrial Welfare Commission, on which she also served. In the fifth document, she explains the significance of such protective legislation and women's influence in getting it passed. As a result of her strong concern for the well-being of workers, however, she opposed Japanese immigration because the Japanese "drove white labor" as well as "small white merchants" out.

Mary S. Gibson, author of the sixth document, was likewise concerned about women's welfare and the problems posed by immigrants. A school-teacher in Los Angeles, she worked in various charities and helped found an orphanage. Appointed to the Commission on Immigration and Housing by Governor Hiram Johnson, she became a leader in the Americanization movement, especially in programs to educate immigrant women.

Franklin Hichborn Praises Reform Governor Hiram W. Johnson, 1911

[On] January 3, 1911, Hiram W. Johnson was inaugurated Governor of California. . . .

Governor-elect Johnson, earnest of purpose, resolute and with a definite policy—as a plain American gentleman—walked to the Capitol unattended by military escort; entered the Assembly chamber with the retiring Governor, and took the oath of office.

Johnson had something to say, and, in his inaugural address, said it.

The Governor didn't tell his hearers that California has a glorious climate. He took it for granted that Californians are proud of California. But he recognized that before Californians may come into their own, before the best development of the State can be realized, California must be politically and industrially free.

To this live issue—the issue of the campaign through which he had just passed—Johnson devoted his inaugural address. Not a man or woman in the packed assembly chamber failed to realize that Johnson assumed office with a definite plan of action, and a determined purpose to press that plan to realization.

And after all, "the Johnson policies," the term by which the recommendations contained in this inaugural message soon became known, were nothing more nor less than the reforms for which the citizens of California had long been contending, and which were pledged in the State platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties.

The address was based on the assumption that The People of California are competent to govern themselves. Heretofore, California politicians have politely conceded that Californians possess this degree of intelligence, and have taken care that as little opportunity as possible for the exercise of such intelligence should be given.

Johnson not only admitted the intelligence of The People, but on this intelligence he based his hope of the development, prosperity and well-being of the State. That the purpose of The People shall be given its freest expression, he held that the government of the State must be made responsive to The People. The first step toward this desired end he held was to eliminate every private interest from the government, and to make the public service of the State responsive to The People alone.

That this condition might prevail, he contended that the government must be brought closer to The People through direct legislation.

To this end, Governor Johnson urged Constitutional Amendments which shall give The People power to initiate laws—the Initiative; power of veto upon laws which may be enacted by the Legislature—the Referendum; power to remove from elective office the incompetent or the corrupt—the Recall.

He urged further that by legislative enactment the Australian Ballot be restored to its original simplicity and effectiveness, that men may be selected for office because of their personal worth, rather than their political affiliations; that the imperfections of the Direct Primary law of 1909 be corrected; that The People be given the machinery to compel from the Legislature recognition of their selections, by popular vote, to represent the State in the Federal Senate.

There was no half-way course advocated in Johnson's first word to the Legislature; no hesitancy about accepting the logical conclusion, after accepting his major premise that The People of California are intelligent enough to govern themselves.

If The People are intelligent enough to govern themselves, they are intelligent enough to recall from office an official who has shown himself incompetent or corrupt. Nor did the Governor exclude the Judiciary from this provision. If The People have the intelligence to select Judges, he argued, they have the intelligence to remove from the bench that Judge who, in their judgment, has, on trial, demonstrated his unfitness or his unworth.

Johnson's recommendation regarding the nomination by popular vote of United States Senators was based on the same principle. If The People are to be given any voice at all in the election of Federal Senators there is logically no half-way point. Either The People are competent to name their United States Senators or they are not. Johnson held them to be competent.

He accordingly recommended that legislation be enacted to provide that candidates for the United States Senate be nominated at the primaries as State officials are nominated, that the names of the nominees for United States Senator as made by the several parties be placed on the election ballot so that The People at the finals may vote for them the same as for the candidates for any State office; that a form of contract be provided by which candidates for the Legislature may be bound in the event of their election, to abide by The People's choice in naming the Senator, as is done in Oregon.

There was no questioning the logic of Johnson's position. Admit with him that The People are competent to govern themselves, and one must go in full sympathy with his policies from the beginning to the end of his message.

From the moment of the delivery of that message, there was a new alignment in the Legislature of the State of California. In unmistakable terms, Governor Johnson had made the Initiative, the Referendum, the Recall, Restoration of the Australian Ballot, Direct Vote for United States Senator, Effective Railroad Regulation—all the reforms, in a word, to which both parties stood pledged, and for which The People were clamoring—

"administration policies." And "administration policies" in no partisan sense. Johnson left no room for partisanship.

"It is in no partisan spirit that I addressed you," he said in concluding; "it is in no partisan spirit that I appeal to you to aid. Democrats and Republicans alike are citizens, and equal patriotism is in each. Your aid, your comfort, your highest resolve and endeavor, I bespeak, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as representatives of all the people of all classes and political affiliations, as patriots indeed, for the advancement and progress and righteousness and uplift of California. And may God in His mercy grant us the strength and the courage to do the right."

The "bracer" which the Legislature needed had been furnished. The Senator or Assemblyman who had more belief in direct legislation than in his own conviction that direct legislation is based on sound principle, and who was ready to accept any compromise which the machine was willing to offer, found himself confronted with the alternative of following with the administration or running with the "machine." That member who insisted that United States Senators should be elected by direct vote, but hesitated about adopting its equivalent, the Oregon plan, saw there were but two sides; he must either stand with those who advocated popular election of United States Senators, or with those who opposed.

Johnson's message wiped out partisan lines. In the Legislature of 1911, there were to be no Republican policies nor Democratic policies, only "administration policies." Those Democrats and those Republicans who continued faithful to the spirit as well as the letter of the platform of their respective party, must of necessity support the "administration measures."

And those who failed to support such measures would find themselves outside the pale of both parties. It was evident that some changes of attitude had to be made, or certain of the old guard would find themselves without a party.

And there were many such changes. Men of the character of those whom machine managers send to the Legislature were prepared to desert the machine for the "winner," just as they will desert the Progressives should the Reactionaries secure control again.

But even without this shifty crew, the Progressives had a good working majority in both Senate and Assembly. This majority included the Progressive Democrats as well as the Progressive Republicans. Governor Johnson had made it clear that neither party had a monopoly of the progressive movement; the reforms which he advocated in his message had been pledged in the platforms of both parties. The reputable element of both parties united to uphold the Governor in his recommendation that their platform pledges be observed.

John Randolph Haynes Advocates Direct Legislation, 1911

This amendment should be adopted by the people of California on the tenth day of October, next. The movement for direct popular government is not something by itself; it does not stand alone. It is part of a world-wide

movement. The nations and peoples of the earth are rushing towards democracy at a pace that astounds the conservative mind and fills the heart of the radical with joy. Despotisms are giving way to constitutional monarchies; witness Russia, Turkey, Persia, and even China. Constitutional monarchies are giving way to republics; witness France and Portugal; Spain and Italy seem almost ready to follow suit. Republics are giving way in turn to democracies; witness Switzerland and the commonwealths of our own republic. England, nominally a constitutional monarchy, appears almost to have overleaped the intervening stage of a republic, and, under the forms and stage dress of royalty, is taking on many of the characteristics of a pure democracy. . . .

In our own republic of America we find the same evolution in progress. Eight States through the adoption of the initiative and referendum now reserve to the people the right to take the control of affairs out of the hands of their servants at such times and in such matters as they may see fit. Popular rule through the introduction of the initiative and referendum became an actuality in South Dakota in 1898, in Oregon in 1902, in Montana, 1906; in Oklahoma, 1907; Maine and Missouri, 1908; Arkansas and Colorado, 1910. Besides these eight States in which popular rule is in actual operation, the question has been submitted to the people and carried in three other States, Utah, North Dakota, and Arizona, but is not yet in operation. In six [*sic*] other States both party platforms promise the people an opportunity to vote upon the adoption of these measures of direct government; Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, and our own California. In still six other States, Ohio, Minnesota, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Iowa, one of the two dominant parties has pledged itself to introduce the same measure. Municipalities are following the states in the adoption of direct government. Two hundred American cities have adopted the initiative and referendum.

Direct Legislation Is Not New

The measures are frequently spoken of as new, untried and experimental in character. Such is not the case. Both the initiative and referendum are older than our Federal Constitution. The people of Georgia as early as 1777 held the power to initiate constitutional amendments. For more than three hundred years the towns of New England have governed themselves under a system of pure democracy, differing little in principle from the legislation system coming into use in States and cities throughout the nation. The general court of Massachusetts in 1778 submitted to the people a constitution for a referendum vote. All of our States, Delaware excepted, submit their constitutions and constitutional amendments to the people; and in many States other measures concerning education, taxation, etc., are submitted to the referendary vote.

The amendment should be adopted in California for the following reasons:

A. Experience shows us that the happiness, wisdom and prosperity of a people bear a definite ratio to the extent of their power and participation in the business of government. Compare the conditions existing in Russia, for example, with those in Switzerland; one, an autocracy and the other a pure democracy.

B. The act of law making operates in the case of the individual voter as a great educator. Twenty per cent more newspapers are published in Switzerland in proportion to the population than in the United States. The Swiss voter feels that he personally bears the responsibility for the right conduct of his government. Hence his sense of responsibility is markedly developed.

C. The people are conservative and do not enact many, nor ultra radical laws. Switzerland and its political subdivisions enact fewer laws than any other political communities in the world. In the first quarter century after the adoption of the initiative in the Canton of Zurich, recourse was had to it in but three cases. In 1902 the people of Oregon, by a vote of ten to one, adopted a direct legislation amendment and since that time have voted upon sixty-four laws and constitutional amendments. They have by a vote varying greatly in the size of the majority adopted thirty and rejected thirty-four of the measures proposed. Maine voted upon and rejected three measures last election. South Dakota rejected woman's suffrage and Washington adopted it. On the fifteenth of November, last, San Francisco voted upon thirty-eight proposed charter amendments; adopted eighteen and rejected twenty. In looking over these amendments I must confess that they seem to have made very few mistakes in judgment. The people of Los Angeles have had the power to directly legislate for eight years and have had only one initiative election during that time and the measures submitted to the people at general elections have been few and have been voted upon with rare discrimination.

Do the People Vote Intelligently Upon Measures?

D. They are better fitted to vote upon measures, the text of which is sent to them three months before election with arguments pro and con; than they are to vote for a long array of office holders of whom they know little or nothing. Surely they are better fitted to express an intelligent opinion on a few measures after three months' consideration, than a legislative body is to act upon two or three thousand measures during a session of sixty days.

Do the People Vote Upon Measures?

E. A surprisingly large number do so and the percentage increases with succeeding elections. In Maine, a few months ago, in the first election in which the people voted upon measures, fifty per cent of those voting for Governor voted upon the measures submitted. In Missouri sixty per cent of the people voted upon measures submitted. In San Francisco the vote cast upon measures exceeded forty-five thousand out of a total registration of

sixty-three thousand; and in Oregon, where direct legislation has been longest in working order, the percentage varies from 61 to 87 per cent of the vote cast for candidates.

F. A writer in the March issue of the *Political Science Quarterly*, George Haynes of Worcester, Mass., in an article treating on "People's Rule in Oregon," although approaching his subject in a frankly unfriendly attitude, nevertheless feels called upon to admit that upon the whole, the people and people's rule have made good in Oregon. Referring to the election of last autumn, he says: "As the smoke of the contest clears away, it is evident that 'people's rule' has strengthened its position." In the first place slavish adherence to national party lines must have been very largely destroyed in an election where a State normally Republican by a 25,000 majority chose a Democratic Governor by a plurality of 6,000. In the second place, the conditions of the campaign were such that it "would have been difficult for any Oregon voter to have remained totally ignorant of the principal points involved in the more important measures on which he was to vote." In the third place, the conditions of the campaign brought out a very heavy vote. The State contains about 135,000 registered voters. The vote on these measures referred directly to the people for settlement reached the extraordinary total of 120,248. He concludes thus: "Considering the immense complexity of the task which was set before them, it must be acknowledged that the Oregon voters stood the test remarkably well." . . . There has been a vitality, a genuineness in Oregon politics sharply in contrast with the State campaigns in many of the eastern States. . . .

Bribery of the people's representatives by special interests is the great demoralizing factor in our unchecked representative system of government. The majority of the electorate are honest, and desire good government. If you wish to have a truly representative government, and an honest and efficient one, give to the honest majority the power to directly legislate and to veto the acts of their representatives. It is much easier to bribe a few representatives than to bribe the majority of the many electors.

Chester H. Rowell Analyzes the Problem of Japanese Immigration in California, 1914

Injustice has been the only American way of meeting a race problem. We dealt unjustly by the Indian, and he died. We deal unjustly with the Negro, and he submits. If Japanese ever come in sufficient numbers to constitute a race problem, we shall deal unjustly with them—and they will neither die nor submit. This is the bigness of the problem, seen in the telescope of the imagination, and is the whole reason for the emotional intensity of California's agitation over a situation whose present practical dimensions are relatively insignificant. Californians are vividly conscious of their position as the warders of the Western mark. They hold not merely a political and geographic, but a racial, frontier—the border between the white man's and the brown man's world. To a keen sense of this trust, the possible crisis takes

on the significance of a new Thermopylae. Psychologically, this is the Japanese problem in California, and no view of the situation would be just to California if it omitted a sympathetic appreciation of this state of mind, and of its possible ultimate justification.

It is equally necessary to recognize that the question has a psychological aspect on the Japanese side also. At this very moment, while this is being written, twenty thousand people are surging through the streets of Tokyo, clamoring for war with America, all because the California legislature is considering a measure which is already the unprotested law of the United States, by three separate Federal statutes, which is the law of five states, and has been immemorial law in Japan itself. Even a mob would not be so irrational on merely practical provocation. It is the whole revulsion of the brown man's race pride against the white man's race exclusiveness, concentrated for the moment on an otherwise inconsequential act of the white man's outpost province. It is a mutual state of emotional hyperesthesia. . . .

Statistically, the quality of the Japanese immigrants is good. They bring in more money per capita than any but the English and German immigrants; they have less illiteracy than the immigrants from Southern Europe; they are nearly all of vigorous age and in good health; they do not become dependents nor provide many serious criminals: they are intelligent, energetic, and self-reliant, well able to take care of themselves. If white immigrants of equal quality were available, they would be welcomed enthusiastically in unlimited numbers. The opposition to the Japanese is wholly racial. . . .

From the superficial American standpoint, the Japanese are probably less popular than the Chinese whom they displaced. They are less docile and less fitted to that status of human mules which the American wishes the Oriental to occupy. . . .

They are a polite, vivacious, and delightfully likable people. And the bitterest anti-Japanese agitator in California has never once suggested that they are an inferior race. They are of a different and physically unassimilable race; that is all. . . .

That the two chief races of mankind shall stay each on its own side of the Pacific, there to conduct in peace and friendship the commerce of goods and ideas, and of the things of the spirit, but without general interpenetration of populations, or commingling of blood—that is precisely the greatest thing in the world.

Carrie Chapman Catt Argues That Home and Government Are Related, 1907

It is sometimes thought that politics deals with matters difficult to understand, and quite apart from affairs of the home; that while politics touches business, which is man's sphere in all directions, it nowhere touches the home, woman's sphere. Instead, the home is a very important consideration of politics, and is a source of much labor on the part of our "public

servants." It would be impossible to maintain the immense machinery of government we do were it not for money. Consequently, that is the first consideration. It is obtained by taxation. A direct tax is laid upon the home; and an indirect tax upon nearly every furnishing of the home; upon nearly every utensil used within the home; upon nearly every article of clothing worn by occupants of the home; upon nearly every article of food consumed in the home, and upon nearly every dose of medicine taken in the home. . . . Indeed, so large a tax is paid through the various avenues of "home consumption," that if it were possible to suddenly remove the home without the pale of government it would find its chief source of support gone. . . .

But not alone in the collection of its annual income does the government—the people—touch the home. Law not infrequently controls what the occupants of the home shall both eat and wear. The children are vaccinated by law, quarantined by law, educated from particular school books and particular methods by law. The health of the family is preserved by law, or endangered by the neglect of the "servants." Even the relative amount of work necessary to keep a home in proper cleanliness depends upon the condition of the streets which are cared for by law. Law determines the disposal of ashes, garbage and litter from the house. Indeed, there is no end to the connections of the home and the government. If the "Queen of the Home" is to be taxed upon nearly all she eats, wears or uses in order to maintain a government; and if this government is to regulate her water supply, her gas supply, her health, her conduct, her comfort; and since the government consists only of officers who act as servants of the people, and the "Queen of the Home" is one of the people, does it not follow by all the logic of common sense and all the sentiment of justice, that she should act as one of the rulers of our land? Aye. Then seat the "Queen of the Home" upon the throne of government beside the "King of Business," and let them rule together. Put upon their brows the diadem of royalty and into their two right hands the same wands of authority.

Katherine Philips Edson Boasts of Women's Influence on State Legislation, 1913

Now, what was woman's particular influence upon legislation? Women are supposed to have a moral influence on legislation. I know that is expected of us, and I think we made good. The bill we women were supposed to be greatly interested in, and in which we were, is the red-light abatement act. . . .

This measure is very revolutionary, but I think that it is an experiment worth the trial. Speaking about the influence of the women particularly, when the time came to get that bill out of committee, all the committeemen were besieged with thousands of letters. It was done by the women of the W. C. T. U. [Women's Christian Temperance Union]—and they deserve credit for it because it was well done. When the time came for voting, I don't think any legislator had less than five hundred letters from con-

stituents saying he had to vote for it. It was pitiable to see men get up and say: "I am entirely out of harmony with this bill, but my constituents say they wish me to do so, and therefore I vote aye." . . .

We have lots of law on the subject of prostitution . . . but this is . . . the first time in the history of the world that the punishment for prostitution has been taken away from the woman and put on property, and for that reason we think it is worth the trial.

Before I attended this session of the legislature, I never realized how strongly men felt on this question. The discussion on this and the health certificate for marriage brought it out, and when the question arose of making the age of consent eighteen instead of sixteen, the discussion was behind closed doors. The wives of some of the Senators and Assemblymen told us the discussion was positively unfit for us to hear.

Which all goes to show that what Bernard Shaw said is true, that many men are afraid of votes for women because they know that if women get power they will impose on men the same standards of sexual morality that men have imposed on women. Now, that is just exactly what we are going to do. If those standards are wrong for men, they are wrong for women. I don't know any better way to find out which is right than by enforcing the same standard for both.

The age of consent was raised to eighteen years and we have equal guardianship of our own children. We women have been fighting for that ten years and could not get it, and yet at this session there was not a man who voted against it. . . .

The bills of largest interest to me were those of great industrial importance—the minimum wage law, the extension of the eight hour law and many of the industrial bills having to do with the sanitation of work shops. My interest in those has been developed by my work in the Bureau of Labor.

The minimum wage legislation we feel proud of, and we believe we have the best bill in the United States. We have a law which is very advanced, from the economic standpoint. It gives the wage commission power, after an investigation lasting about a year, to fix wages if it deems it necessary. This commission may call into existence wage boards of employees and employers who may recommend to the commission standards of work, hours of work and the amount of the minimum wage. However, the commission is not under obligations to accept these. The commission itself has the fixing of the wages. The whole thing is, we have a flexible law in California that will give us an opportunity to go into a careful experiment and see if it is or is not the proper thing. . . .

We have been criticised because we have been anxious to extend the eight hour law. The only extensions made were apartment houses, public lodging houses and places of amusement, and student nurses in hospitals; and upon that part of the bill the battle raged. It was one of the most interesting fights in the whole session. The hospitals were there in force with their very powerful lobby. The women who were to be protected by the law, of course, could not have a lobby, and their work was carried on by Mr.

Beach, of San Francisco, who did perfectly splendid work in presenting to the legislators their position.

I don't believe there is any class of women that need protection more than the student nurses. I know there have not been so many complaints brought to the Bureau of Labor from any other place as have come to me from the hospitals. I don't mean from the girls themselves, but the people who are in the hospitals. Patients have written me letters and telephoned me and come to me and complained of the lack of efficient care these girls have received and the long hours and overwork demanded of them. That being the case, it seems to me they should be given the protection of the law, just as women in the stores and places of that kind.

There was a great deal of hubbub about the "professional standing" of nurses. It was going to put them in the same class as labor unions. That is the sort of argument used against this bill. My only answer to that is this—that the young women who go into the nursing profession are the very finest we have. They are girls who have instilled in them the spirit of self-sacrifice; but that is no reason why they should be sacrificed. . . .

Then the cotton mills of Oakland made a hard fight on it. . . . I believe the cotton industry in Imperial is growing very rapidly, and it can't grow, it seems, unless women have longer hours. . . . [W]e asked why they did not run two eight hour shifts, if their machinery was so expensive that they would lose too much on their investment if they did not run longer, and they said they were working two shifts of fifteen hours—altogether fifteen hours and a half—and nobody understood why they didn't pay them the sixteen hours. Then, all of a sudden, it occurred to me. They said: "We don't work after 10 o'clock at night." I asked them: 'Is the reason because the majority of your employees are minors'; and they said: "Yes, madam, that is the reason." That means child labor and that is what is in the cotton mills; and we could not afford to let those children be exploited. . . .

It is by reason of such things we are interested in politics. . . .

Woman's business in politics is to keep alive the ideals and not to forget them.

Mary S. Gibson Explains Why Progressive Women Should Uplift Immigrant Women, 1914

The burning question in America today is that of the immigrant who may arrive by way of the Panama Canal. Every wild rumor as to hordes buying tickets on the installment plan is given more or less credence.

The printing press supplies a greedy public with books, magazines and newspapers dealing with the subject of immigration.

Those who think that America must still be the refuge for the world, and those who are sure that restriction is the only salvation of the commonwealth, are equally interested in what the future holds. . . .

California, with its three ports, is filled with mixed emotions of hope and fear. Governor Johnson has appointed a Commission of Immigration

and Housing to consider matters affecting immigrants and for the care, protection and welfare of immigrants.

The State waits with bated breath for the opening of the canal with its stately ships, steerage laden with picturesque immigrants—but is gaily unconscious of the stranger now within her gates. California already has an immigration problem of considerable proportions, which she has neither solved nor seriously acknowledged. Her larger cities have undeniable slums, poverty and unemployment, and yet she looks forward with some degree of equanimity to a possibly overwhelming tide of humanity dependent upon her powers of assimilation! . . .

The whole question of immigration, for the immigrant and for the State, resolves itself into the one vital problem of the family, the establishment and the maintenance of the Home—the home which depends upon employment at a living wage, comfortable and reasonable housing, education and protection. . . .

California is distinguished as the State in which the alien who applies for his citizenship papers is given the address of a school where he may learn English and citizenship—as the State that has put its school houses into the hands of its citizens to be used as civic centers—as the State where playgrounds are developed to meet the social needs of the neighborhood.

In the foreign quarters our splendid teachers are doing real immigration work, doing it in crowded and ill-arranged quarters and at high pressure; striving devotedly, intelligently and determinedly to make Americans out of the swarming little aliens, and developing themselves into a new type of social expert—the expert who knows his case ten months in the year.

And the result of this magnificent effort?

The answer is unpleasant but as it is the truth we have no choice but to accept it.

Suddenly we discover that in our zeal to Americanize the foreign children we are destroying parental discipline. . . .

“Obedience to parents seems to be dying out . . .” says a Boston charity visitor. . . .

“Through the knowledge of our speech and ways, the children have a great advantage in their efforts to slip the parental leash. The bad boy tells his father that whipping “doesn’t go” in this country. Reversing the natural order, the child becomes the fount of knowledge and the parent hangs on the lips of his precocious offspring. If the policeman inquires about some escapade or the truant officer gives warning, it is the scamp himself who must interpret between parent and officer.”

“Still the child is not always to blame. ‘Often the homes are so crowded and dirty,’ says a probation officer, ‘that no boy can go right.’ The Slavs save so greedily that their children become disgusted with the wretched home conditions, and sleep out.”

“Our immigrants,” says a Superintendent of Charities, “often come here with no standards whatever. In their homes we find no sheets on the beds, no slips on the pillows, no cloth on the table, and no towels except

old rags. Even in the mud floor cabins of the poorest negroes of the South you find sheets, pillow slips and towels, for by serving for, and associating with the whites, the blacks have gained standards. But many of the foreigners have no means of getting our home standards after they are here. No one shows them. They can't see into American homes and no Americans associate with them."

These instances, which could be extended indefinitely, in no way militate against the education of children—they merely point a new field of endeavor and a readjustment of our forces. A new and decisive step to be taken for the preservation of the American home, so long as immigration is stimulated by steamship agents, labor contractors and land owners, so long as the Federal government allows more or less free entrance to immigrants, just so long must we—the people—accept the responsibility of their education and protection.

And this education and protection, to be efficient, must begin at the root—with the young parents who for various reasons have come to cast their lot with us hoping for a new freedom and added opportunity.

Statistics show that 38.4 per cent, or over one-third of the alien population of America, ranges in age from 20 to 45 years.

For the men there is the opportunity of contact with his fellows, the assimilation of the unions which unite them upon an economic basis, and the political call for naturalization which beckons to the evening school and social center. For the young men and women in industry there is opportunity, but there is another group especially appealing to the women of America—the group composed of mothers busy tending their broods of children, living under the handicap of ignorance of our language and our ways. Who has not been touched by the sight of these shy creatures in their foreign clothes, painfully trying to purchase necessities for their families? These women do not go to evening schools because the babies must be tended, because they have no American clothes, because they do not learn as readily as the children who laugh at their mistakes, or because their husbands hold old-world notions regarding their women folk.

At a disadvantage with their own children, these women often lose confidence in themselves and shrink into either hopelessness or hardness, while the more yielding follow meekly in the circumscribed paths of usefulness marked out by the children. This reversal of relations is pitiful for the immigrant mother and fraught with imminent peril to the child and to the state. . . .

The home educator course works from the bottom up and is now imperatively needed to meet the splendid effort of our public schools—to round out and complete our educational system. . . .

The condition and position of the immigrant woman is of peculiar significance to the women of California, because by law the woman becomes a citizen upon the naturalization of her husband. Upon the women, brave enough and strong enough to win their own political emancipation, rests the responsibility of the education and protection of these alien women; and to so establish and sustain the mother in her own domain, is to protect the state from delinquent children and an ignorant vote.

Is there not some way by which this magnificent organization of womanhood can concentrate efforts upon this great problem of education, make the necessary demonstration by which it can prevent delinquency, by which it can carry hope and courage and opportunity to the helpless immigrant woman, and thus make the most important possible contribution to the public welfare of the state of California?



ESSAYS

Gerald Woods, in the first essay, analyzes the moral righteousness characteristic of the progressive reformers' "crusade against the disreputable pleasures" and reveals the different ways in which San Francisco and Los Angeles approached such problems. In doing so, he tries to present a nuanced interpretation of the larger progressive social and political movement. Such an interpretation, he argues, must incorporate considerations of religion and ethnicity as well as political philosophy. Woods received a doctorate in history from UCLA and is at present an independent consultant on criminal justice. He is the author of *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (1993).

Gayle Gullett, who wrote the second essay, teaches history at Arizona State University. By focusing on several progressive women activists, especially Mary S. Gibson, who provided leadership for the Americanization movement, she demonstrates how gender, ethnicity, race, and conceptions of nationhood were intertwined in the progressives' worldview. She exposes how middle-class female reformers used the idea that different segments of society were interdependent to promote their own class interests. Although progressive women were the main focus of her study, Gullett also notes the power of immigrant women, who were by no means unquestioning *tabulae rasae* on which American values and behavior could be inscribed. Gullett interprets their low rate of participation in the reformers' educational programs as a form of resistance against the progressives' efforts to erase immigrant cultures from American society.

Progressive Efforts to Banish Vice

GERALD WOODS

The men and women who created the progressive movement in California and led it to signal victories included people of diverse races, creeds, and colors. The leaders, however, were white, generally born in California or the midwestern states, more likely to be Republican than Democrat, and more likely to be Protestant than any other religion or sect. California progressive leaders tended to be comparatively young—in their thirties and

forties—and comparatively successful. Newspaper owners and editors were well represented, as were lawyers, realtors, bankers, doctors, and other professionals. The large majority of leaders had at least one university degree. As a group they were independent, democratic, somewhat nativist, somewhat anti-labor, generally opposed to monopolies, and committed to free enterprise.

Their . . . motivation was . . . to reform the political and social institutions of their society. . . .

The ills the progressives set out to cure were of old origin. The struggle to reform the nation had been under way since at least the 1880s, when most of those who became progressives were still in school. Benjamin Parke DeWitt observed in 1915 that “although differences in name, in the specific reforms advocated, and in the emphasis placed upon them, have obscured the identity of the movement, the underlying purposes and ideals of the progressive elements of all parties for the past quarter of a century have been essentially the same.” DeWitt then pointed out common interests endorsed by the Democratic, Republican, Progressive, Socialist, and Prohibition parties.

One characteristic of the progressives about which most historians could agree was their abiding antipathy toward saloons, prostitution, gambling, slot machines, horse races, prizefights, dancing (especially in nightclubs where black men played jazz music), and liaisons between black or Asian men and white women. In this regard, Spencer Olin notes that “this penchant for probity, this moral absolutism, was part and parcel of the progressive mind.” George Mowry points out the “middle-class Christian respectability” implicit in the closing of saloons and gambling halls in Los Angeles at the turn of the century.

Both comments are accurate but say little about motivation. Benjamin DeWitt stated the case from the progressive perspective: “if the American city fails, it will fail not because of the work its people do or the places in which they live, but because of the pleasures which they seek. It is vice, high living, and deterioration of moral fibre more than anything else that destroys cities and democracies.” For DeWitt, nothing less was at stake than the soul of America.

In California, the crusade against the disreputable pleasures was a tale of three cities. San Francisco and Los Angeles, the north and the south, proudly embodied the poles, respectively, of civic vice and civic virtue. Sacramento, specifically the state legislature, was a relatively neutral ground where proponents of “personal liberty” did battle with neo-puritans to preserve the lurid entertainments that for decades had characterized West Coast cities. In Washington, D.C., progressives in the Congress also warred against evil and won some significant victories.

During the progressive heyday, from 1909 through 1918, a variety of sumptuary laws were passed. At the national level, these included the Mann Act, directed at the transport of women across state lines for immoral purposes; more restrictive immigration regulations and anti-“white slavery” agreements with European governments, to reduce the remarkable migra-

tion of foreign prostitutes into the United States; and national wartime prohibition, the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and the Volstead Act, intended to close the saloons and end forever the consumption of beverage alcohol by Americans.

In 1909, the state assembly, described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "a legislature of progressive cranks," narrowly passed the Anti-Race Track Gambling Act. The act forbade "wagering or pool selling or book-making in any way, shape, form or place." The Local Option Law, allowing prohibition by local option, followed in 1911. This act was known generally as the Gandier Ordinance, after Daniel M. Gandier, legislative superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League. By 1913, nearly one thousand saloons had been closed through the introduction of local prohibition. About half the state went dry. The Red Light Abatement Act, aimed mainly at the owners of properties where brothels were operated, was passed in 1913. It allowed for the padlocking of such premises, thereby denying rental income to the owners.

The progressives did not win easily. . . . Once the laws were in place, however, the state legislature was out of the picture. Local governments could enforce the statutes or ignore them. Hichborn complained in 1915 that, despite the regulations, gambling was wide open during the great San Francisco Exposition. Saloons and brothels also flourished. It had ever been thus in the City by the Bay.

San Francisco had an unsavory municipal government (a "California Tammany") and a wicked demimonde. Brash San Franciscans viewed their town as "the future seat and center of the world's commerce . . . that advertised the notorious Barbary Coast to the world as a symbol of its anti-Puritan tradition." And tradition it had! In the 1880s, the city supported an estimated two thousand saloons and brothels in the Chinatown, Barbary Coast, and tenderloin districts. San Francisco's bawdy reputation was nationwide, and numerous books described the fun to be had in the city that took "uncommon pride in its past sins, real or imagined." Crusades for moral purity might come and go, but, as one prostitute told a reporter, "the police wink at us." When the police did make arrests, judges often dismissed the cases. . . .

In 1913, a reform crusade briefly closed the Barbary Coast and the tenderloin. They soon were back in operation. Herbert Asbury noted that the election of Mayor James Rolph and a new Board of Supervisors put an end to "an unfriendly, if not actively hostile" municipal administration. There were then an estimated 2,800 legal and 2,500 illegal saloons. From 1913 to 1917, "Sunny Jim" Rolph, mayor of San Francisco, and Madam Tessie Wall, the city's most notorious brothel keeper, rode together through the vice districts at the head of an annual parade organized by the entrepreneurs of pleasure. This could not have happened in Los Angeles.

Rolph favored "personal liberty" and had no identifiable interest in moral reform, progressive style. In 1917, however, an anti-vice crusade led by the Reverend Paul Smith, a Methodist from Boston, caused the Barbary Coast and the tenderloin to be shut down. Vice entrepreneurs and defenders

of personal liberty argued that the spirited city had been wide open for sixty-nine years but could not carry the day. Although vice operation continued, the two most famous districts never were the same.

Douglas Henry Daniels has pointed out that "a long-established reputation as a pleasure or sin city permitted night life to thrive without gangland violence." Even during the Prohibition Era, when gangs in Los Angeles and other major cities warred for control of the liquor traffic, San Francisco remained relatively calm. Although there was plenty of graft for police and politicians, there were few scandals.

The depredations of Boss Abe Ruef and Mayor Schmitz, during the first decade of the twentieth century, are well known. It was revealed during the trials that Ruef and Schmitz shared in the profits derived from vice. Yet—significantly—the ill-gotten gain was not what the fuss was about, and alone would not have been a likely cause for throwing the rascals out. Charles Rudebaugh, a newspaper reporter, observed that "everyone knew and boasted" that the city was open and that the police took bribes. The mayor's discussing the situation in public, however, was considered bad for the municipal reputation. A private investigator was brought in to gather evidence of misconduct. The investigator took pains afterward to point out that he had been given no mandate to close illegal businesses, because the citizens of San Francisco wanted them open. The issue was the extortion of bribes from vice operators by policemen.

Reformers in San Francisco described themselves as progressives at least as early as 1896. Some of them favored moral reform of the city, including suppression of the vice districts. Associations of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews campaigned against the "adult entertainment" industry for decades. Black and Chinese residents also struggled to suppress open vice in their neighborhoods. Eventually, over a period of four decades, they succeeded. In the short term, they failed. Local-option prohibition was soundly defeated. Legislation such as the Red Light Abatement Act was seldom used. Police would not arrest. Judges would not convict. Vice, *per se*, apparently was not a serious issue for a majority of voters. As long as the vice districts remained quiet, the tradition of benign neglect could be maintained.

The story was very different in Los Angeles. As with San Francisco, rapid growth in population followed the discovery of gold. Los Angeles became "the toughest town in the West," home to all the traditional frontier amusements. During the 1850s, with a population of fewer than six thousand residents, the city supported about four hundred premises providing gambling, alcohol, and prostitution.

By the 1870s, native-born Protestants had become the dominant political force in Los Angeles. They later boasted that the town contained more churches in relation to population than any other city in the United States. The new middle class exhibited a strong interest in law enforcement and in control of vice operations. They found the town marshals ill-equipped to provide the safe streets and moral order to which they aspired. In 1876, the marshals were replaced by the newly formed Los Angeles Police Depart-

ment. Thereafter, the police force usually was at the center of local politics, either because it could not be controlled by the municipal government or because it was involved in the protection of illegal enterprises.

At the same time that the LAPD was created, the Los Angeles Common Council issued ordinances limiting the location of vice premises, the type of "personal service" permitted, and the times at which such entertainments could be provided. At first, the ordinances merely forbade vice operations within prescribed boundaries in the central business and residential areas. Later, the council established a legal vice district but soon withdrew the law. An anti-prostitution act forbidding single women to reside on the ground floor of any dwelling was overturned by the state Supreme court. The council also forbade gambling and introduced early-closing hours and Sunday closing for saloons. Consequently, the purveyors of traditional pleasures suddenly made illicit by the council were compelled to bribe the police or the politicians, or both, if they wished to stay in business.

Despite their largely unsuccessful efforts to reform the city, the reformers believed that they might be more successful if the police were removed from politics. (The workings of politics dictated short careers for police chiefs: between 1877 and 1889, at least sixteen men held the post.) To that end, progressives set out to reform the city charter. The Los Angeles city charter was rewritten or revised in 1889, 1902, 1909, 1911, and 1925. In each case, control of the police was a major element. In 1889, the first police commission was established, replacing a council committee, to deal with appointments, promotions, dismissals, and general policy. True to their faith in nonpartisanship, the progressives first tried dividing authority between Republican and Democratic councilmen, who each appointed two members to the commission; the mayor also served but could not be chairman. Depoliticizing lines of authority over the police failed because all the commissioners were political partisans, and their decisions concerning the police force were partisan decisions.

In 1902, progressive voters ratified the initiative, referendum, and recall; established a municipal civil service; and revised the rules governing the police commission and the police. All police jobs were classified except the positions of police chief and secretary to the police chief. Physical and mental entrance standards and competitive promotional examinations were certified. Salaries were mandated by the charter and could not be reduced by the council. The charter further required that any order having to do with the police must be sent directly to the chief for action. The mayor became chairman of the police commission and could remove other commissioners with consent of the council. By these measures, the progressives hoped to raise the caliber and establish the independence of the individual officer, and place day-to-day control of the department in the chief's hands. The mayor, as chief executive officer, was given greater responsibility for the overall management of the police force.

The charter amendments of 1902 outlawed gambling and prostitution within the city limits. Before these amendments were passed, commercial vice had prospered in "the segregated zone"; indeed, directories were

printed that identified brothels by address and the name of the madam, often including words of praise for the comely damsels who "assisted" her. Then two churchmen found "the Ballarino," a building of many narrow cells or "cribs," designed for prostitution. Their anti-vice crusade closed the place and brought calumny upon the police force. Afterward, the progressives won a great victory at the polls.

Whether knowledgeable progressives, hoping to gain political support, guided the two ministers to the Ballarino is not known. What is clear is that the anti-vice crusade became the standard election tactic in Los Angeles for half a century afterward. That vice should be the most volatile political issue over a period of five decades spoke volumes about the electorate, although concerns about vice were not entirely misguided. Despite the will of the voting majority, scandal after scandal occurred. Progressives routinely elected "reform" candidates who abandoned reform after the election.

Between 1904 and 1909, the voters rejected, in one way or another, three mayors accused of misconduct involving liquor and prostitution operations. . . . Five police chiefs left in disgrace.

Until about 1905, there was still some frontier-style joie de vivre apparent in Los Angeles, but it was soon to disappear. In 1908, the district attorney closed down the brothel of Pearl Morton, the city's best-known madam. The same year, Mayor Arthur Harper boasted that he did not protect vice, he condoned it, notwithstanding the laws against gambling, prostitution, and after-hours saloons. The Municipal League, formed in 1901 by Charles Dwight Willard, then initiated a recall campaign. Other reform clubs joined in, including John R. Haynes's Direct Legislation League, Edward A. Dickson's City Club, and Meyer Lissner's good government organization.

These groups formed the vanguard of the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, which became a powerful, statewide organization. The progressives could depend also on the Anti-Saloon League, the Anti-Race Track Gambling League, the Sunday Rest League, and the League of Justice. . . .

Between 1900 and 1909, Los Angeles's population tripled, to 300,000 residents. Most of the newcomers apparently were native Protestants of progressive sentiments. In the 1909 election, the progressives won all twenty-three elective offices. Subsequently, charter amendments were approved that abolished the ward system and installed nonpartisan election laws. These laws, in effect, eliminated the municipal Democratic party. The great victory of 1911 also initiated the destruction of the movement for political reform, since it witnessed the progressive/conservative coalition built to thwart the challenge from the left. By 1915, although control of the city remained in the hands of Protestant Republicans, the reform coalition was in ruins. With it went the integrity of the police force.

For the six years between 1909 and 1915, nevertheless, vice had been virtually suppressed. In this effort, the police had been aided by a platoon of ministers sworn in as special constables and by the Morals Efficiency League, also staffed by clergymen. Artistic censorship had been introduced, not only for motion pictures but for dance and drama as well. Isadora Dun-

can had been forbidden to dance. Eugene O'Neill's play *Desire under the Elms* was not allowed to open. Racetrack gambling and prizefighting had been abolished. To ensure the conviction of prostitutes, a local ordinance forbade sexual relations between persons not married to one another. . . .

The moral reformers who provided the voting strength of the progressive movement supported a new mid-teens coalition, led mainly by Protestant ministers. They continued the struggle to suppress vice. The various groups were vociferous and determined. They "raided" dance halls and roadhouses, and sometimes had them closed. They held tumultuous press conferences, often in the offices of the mayor or the police commission. They attacked mayors and got police chiefs ousted. They were influential on voting day . . . and they forced restrictions on anyone whose idea of fun differed from their own.

In the early 1920s, reformers persuaded the police commission to restrict the conduct of dancers. Dancing with the cheek or head touching one's partner was forbidden. The male could place his hand only on his partner's back, between shoulder and waist. The female could place her hand only in her partner's left hand. No music "suggestive of bodily contortions" could be played. Moreover, women were forbidden to smoke in any room or place adjacent to a ballroom or dance academy. One minister led a campaign against a female candidate for the school board because the woman smoked tobacco. The candidate promised to quit if elected, but the reformers were adamant. She was defeated.

For twenty-five years, the second wave of reformers campaigned for civic purity. They constantly harassed the police by publicly identifying premises where various illegal enterprises were operated. They held press conferences and large church meetings. They wrote pamphlets. They sat in court to find out which judges convicted vice operators and which ones did not. They voted overwhelmingly for charter revisions to reform the police department. Nevertheless, vice operations continued.

The success of these reformers was minimal because the police department was again at the beck and call of officials who owed their support to one or another corrupt interest. The ministerial associations and federations of laity lacked the cohesion and efficiency of the good government organizations. More important, perhaps, they lacked the financial support of philanthropic progressives such as Meyer Lissner and E. T. Earl. Political campaigns required money, but civil service regulations curtailed patronage, nonpartisan election laws vitiated precinct organizations, and abolition of vice eliminated the most generous contributors.

The electoral victories of 1902-1915 proved that the numerous and potentially all-powerful reformers could not be ignored. They could be circumvented, nevertheless. Every political candidate of the time styled himself or herself a progressive. Since the reformers would not or could not finance a municipal slate of preferred candidates, they were compelled to support the most promising of those who stood for office. Consequently, the venal politicians and purveyors of vice, the so-called underworld combination, regained influence by financing ostensible reformers who, once in

office, cooperated with corrupt interests, especially by manipulating the police department. The department operated as a sort of licensing and inspection bureau for organized vice operations. Those approved by the combination were protected; independents were put out of business.

The market for disreputable pleasures grew enormously after 1910. The number of transient males—the most likely “consumers”—increased substantially with the opening of the Panama Canal, the construction of the Los Angeles harbor, and the onset of World War I. The city had a seaport, a naval station, and an army camp. New industries attracted more workers. “Factories in the fields” employed many laborers. The large, continuing migration to the area required thousands of tradesmen to construct houses and services. Transients aside, the population rose from 100,000 in 1900 to 576,000 in 1920, and to 1.3 million in 1930.

Concurrently, local prohibition in 1916, followed by the Eighteenth Amendment, created a law enforcement crisis of unprecedented proportions. Opportunities for graft exceeded anything previously known. The number of police officers and other officials eager to share in the bonanza increased as profits increased. With the vice lords ascendant, the reformers concerned themselves almost entirely with moral issues. . . .

On the surface, the similarities between San Francisco and Los Angeles were quite marked. Both had manufacturers’ associations opposed to organized labor. Both had men’s and women’s service clubs devoted to economic prosperity and the improvement of public morals. Both accepted municipal socialism with respect to public utilities. Both engaged in successful struggles for charter reform. Both were bumptious, rapidly growing, polyglot communities dominated by white, native-born Republicans. Both were progressive. Both had stringent anti-vice laws, flourishing tenderloin districts protected by the police and politicians, and crusading religious leaders opposed to commercial vice.

Why, then, did the two cities diverge so widely where “adult pastimes” were concerned? The reason seems to be that the differences between the two cities, though fewer than the similarities, were far more significant. The simplest but most cogent explanation combines religion and ethnicity: San Francisco was a Catholic and Irish city; Los Angeles was a Protestant and evangelical midwestern city, “the capital of Iowa” moved west.

Catholic churchgoers outnumbered Protestant churchgoers in San Francisco by about a five-to-one margin. Most came from countries where the consumption of wine or beer was a part of the national way of life, or they were descended from immigrants from such countries. These people generally opposed restrictions on personal behavior. The politically active and astute Irish dominated municipal politics. Block and precinct headquarters usually were located in saloons.

The Protestants of San Francisco did favor measures for moral reform and would have passed them if they could. . . . [T]here were Catholic anti-vice crusaders and Catholic progressives in San Francisco. But no temperance campaign ever succeeded there. . . . The city was “wet” during the entire period of national prohibition. Los Angeles voters, on the other hand,

voted for local prohibition in 1916 and approved other laws intended to suppress gambling and sexual promiscuity.

In retrospect, it is easy to ridicule the progressives' belief that one can reform a community by changing its laws. In truth, progressives believed more in good people than in good laws. They believed that police officers of good moral character, intelligent, educated, well trained, well paid, with tenure of office and adequate pensions, could and would enforce good laws and rid their communities of moral blight.

This ideal, never completely realized, still sustains civic reformers, as well it should. In Los Angeles, when honorable men and women held municipal office, the police enforced the laws, protected commercial vice was virtually eliminated, and the disreputable pleasures were reduced to an acceptable level. Charters, no matter how well drafted, could not achieve those goals.

The nonpartisan public service is an enduring legacy of the progressive movement. The police in particular have responded to the drive to professionalize every human vocation. Intelligence tests, mental health examinations, educational requirements, competitive promotional examinations, educational requirements, competitive promotional examinations that favor candidates with advanced education, physical health and strength regulations, even requirements to employ females and members of ethnic minorities—all these things are in the progressive tradition. When the ideal of impartial public service is violated, it is a matter of personal choice, not the failure of an institution or a law.

Fortunately for their place in history, the California progressives were more than puritanical moralists, although without their religious zeal their movement might have been less significant. . . . The progressives saw that their society was sick, and they moved to cure it with laws prohibiting certain kinds of personal, political, and economic conduct. They succeeded to a limited degree in every area, and their inheritors have generally followed the same path.

Women Progressives and Immigrant Women

GAYLE GULLETT

California women won the vote in 1911 and fundamentally changed the status of their citizenship. Over the next few years women reformers searched for ways to further transform their citizenship. They wanted to go beyond enfranchisement and acquire more political power, thereby enhancing both their membership and their position within the American polity. They sought to gain political equity in their state by influencing public policy, with their first serious attempt to do so occurring in 1913 in a campaign focusing on sexual mores. In that campaign they won legal and political

victories, but not equality. Two years later in 1915 California women enthusiastically entered a different effort to redefine the meaning of U.S. citizenship, the Americanization movement, an aggressive attempt by businessmen, patriotic groups, settlement workers, and educators to acculturate immigrants. . . .

The suffragists belonged to a loose network bound by a sense of identity they called "organized womanhood." This designation reflected their belief that all women shared the same basic concerns of home and morality and their faith that gender solidarity would enable a diverse coalition of women's groups to form a single movement. Organized womanhood functioned as a separate movement and as part of the coalition known as California progressivism. Many of these women were deeply involved in the state's politics as progressives. . . .

Organized women joined the Americanization movement because the fundamental question of that campaign, defining American citizenship, merged with the basic issue they sought to resolve: how to transform women's citizenship. Americanization illustrates how women reformers combined ideologies of gender, class, and ethnicity to construct a new model of citizenship and thus answer a question posed by both social movements: Who is an American citizen? Women reformers rejected women's traditional citizenship status that relied upon the male head of household to speak for all the female members of the family; instead, the activists called for a full and independent citizenship for women that included the ability of women to speak for themselves, shape state policy, and change American nationalism.

Who is an American citizen? Women progressives in the Americanization movement responded that women, immigrant as well as native-born, qualified but not equally among themselves nor in the same way as men. Women activists extended citizenship to immigrant women, an important democratic advance. But the reformers' efforts were at least partially self-serving; they demanded that the newcomers learn from them how to become acceptable women citizens by remaking their homes into American homes. Organized women thus created a political role for themselves as managers of other women's homes. This role gave the reformers a voice over some policy issues but they gained it at the expense of immigrant women who were seen as needing uplift and not able to provide it for themselves. Furthermore, women's citizenship continued to be linked to the home and, consequently, it differed from that of men. Women progressives thus placed themselves, white, middle-class, native-born, at the center of their model for the female citizen and made the citizenship of all women distinct from that of men.

Organized women began supporting Americanization efforts in the 1890s but their numbers increased appreciably after 1915 when the California Daughters of the American Revolution, the national DAR, the California Federation of Women's Clubs (an organization that represented the largest number of women's civic groups in the state), and the national General Federation of Women's Clubs joined the campaign. . . .

According to the activists, American values could not take root unless immigrant wives and mothers taught them in the immigrant home; moreover, that instruction could not effectively occur unless women reformers had first instructed immigrant women. Women progressives perceived Americanization as crucial to the nation's well being and dependent upon women's political activism. The Americanization campaign, they concluded, offered them a vehicle for sponsoring legislation, managing programs, and even holding office—in short, for achieving full citizenship.

Progressive women viewed Americanization in this manner partly because they, along with the progressive men who joined the Americanization crusade, belonged to that part of the progressive coalition whose political objective was building an interdependent society. They envisioned society as consisting of unequal parts that must hold together if those parts and society itself were to survive. They saw their political mission as creating social cohesion through responsible political actions that they defined as those efforts that maintained a productive capitalist system. Such a system allowed for unequal class divisions but also permitted reforms protecting society from the worst hazards of unregulated capitalism. They thus avidly supported capitalism yet they abandoned the old notions of *laissez faire* and sought political means to bind society together—to achieve an interdependent society.

Progressives viewed Americanization as a tool to integrate immigrant workers into this interdependent society. Their means were to be “education and protection”: reformers themselves teaching immigrants the values appropriate to a capitalist economy while protecting them from the most oppressive injustices of industrial capitalism. The ultimate goal of Americanization was to transform rural peasants of dubious national loyalties into contented and reasonably rewarded American workers who accepted the elite leadership of American society. This was the key, progressives felt, to building a harmonious society. These middle-class reformers used the language of interdependency to protect their own class interests.

The women who participated in the Americanization campaign shared with their male colleagues the goal of interdependency but the women described themselves, their means of achieving this goal, and the goal itself in gender specific language. We are, they announced, patriots who engage in “home defense.” This definition of patriotism revealed two legacies from the antebellum women's movement. One of them defined patriotism in terms of gender. From the beginning of the nineteenth century women reformers believed that “home defense,” or building a family environment supportive of the social order, was women's distinctive political responsibility. By the 1840s Americans commonly accepted that women's defense of the home might well require them to perform public tasks outside the home, such as charity work. Women of the progressive era enlarged this notion of domesticity by contending that women's “home” duties required the transformation of the immigrant family, and this necessitated women's inclusion in the Americanization campaign. By using domesticity to justify their participation in the Americanization movement, women both expanded and limited their political role in the movement.

The second legacy from the antebellum women's movement involved the interrelationship of class and gender. Early nineteenth-century female charity workers attributed the poverty of workers' homes to the moral lapses of the workers themselves; the charity workers also believed their own affluence came from the morality they taught in their homes. Because of these assumptions, the women saw their patriotic duty clearly: they must teach all women how to serve as moral guardians of the home. If women throughout the United States followed the example of elite women, America would become a morally united, prosperous nation without class conflict.

Middle-class women reformers during the progressive era intended their message for all Americans, not just the newly arrived immigrants. . . . [T]hey gave themselves . . . the responsibility for teaching the "right" values to citizens and foreigners [alike].

At first, these reformers debated sharply over the best means to achieve national unity, with businessmen and those belonging to ultra-patriotic organizations stressing the need to acculturate immigrants immediately and completely into American society, and by force if necessary. Others, especially social and settlement workers, urged a slower approach, one addressed to creating an interdependant [*sic*] society based on Anglo-American values that the immigrants themselves would help shape. In time, these two views merged, with the latter position virtually disappearing after World War I. . . .

The settlement house movement deeply influenced reformers in California, leading to the development in the 1890s of two significant settlements, the College Settlement in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Settlement. Both closely modeled themselves after Hull House in Chicago and offered Americanization programs for immigrants. Both expressed their ultimate goal in terms of "nation-building" or building a social consensus that crossed class and ethnic lines. The College Settlement, managed completely by women, was dedicated "to help[ing] the privileged and the unprivileged to a better understanding of their mutual obligations." In San Francisco, where men and women shared management responsibilities, the settlement had a similar goal: "to serve as a medium among the different social elements of the city for bringing about a more intelligent and systematic understanding of their mutual obligations."

In 1912 Simon Lubin heard Jane Addams and Frances Kellor, two renowned settlement workers, present the plank regarding immigrants to the national Progressive party. Lubin, who had served in social settlements himself, was impressed with the women's presentation, particularly with their advocacy for state agencies concerned with immigrants. He persuaded California Progressive Governor Hiram Johnson to create in 1913 a state Commission on Immigration and Housing.

The Commission's education programs, especially its home teacher program that sent female public school teachers into immigrant homes, won the praise of Americanization advocates across the nation. These programs were the creation of Mary Gibson, a Los Angeles school teacher, the

widow of a banker, and nearly sixty when she joined the Commission in 1913. She came with thirty years of service in women's civic activities and more recent experience in partisan politics. . . .

Gibson's appointment to the Commission of Immigration put her in a political world where women's role remained uncertain. . . . [M]any male progressives felt uncomfortable with women in politics, a discomfort illustrated by the limited support the men gave to the fight for women's suffrage. Male progressives pushed the California legislature of 1911 to pass a constitutional amendment giving women the vote so the issue would come before the male electorate; after that, male reformers generally gave women's suffrage a minimum amount of attention. It passed in 1911 because of women's efforts. . . .

Sensing this equivocal support from male reformers, Gibson enlisted organized womanhood to promote her Americanization program. She created a place in government where women wrote, directed, and carried out policy. Immigrant wives must be Americanized, she told her superior, Commissioner Lubin. The most efficient means of doing that was by sending women teachers into immigrant homes. Lubin agreed. Gibson wrote the California Home Teacher Act. She and the Women's Legislative Council of California, the political umbrella of the California women's movement, insured that the bill passed the state legislature. The California Daughters of the American Revolution raised funding for the first home teachers. The program's success, reasoned Gibson, would strengthen American society and thus underscore women's crucial contribution to its stability. Women would subsequently be rewarded with greater political responsibilities. "If they [women]," declared Gibson in a 1915 speech, "carry through but half their far-reaching plans [for Americanization], the women of the country will have justified themselves and their claims to suffrage a hundred-fold."

As Gibson worked to make this prediction come true, she emerged as leader of women's Americanization efforts within California. She transformed her hometown of Los Angeles into a showplace of Americanization activities. She became an officer of the California Federation of Women's Clubs in 1915 specifically to direct Americanization activities statewide and then in 1919 served a similar function as chair of the Americanization committee for the national organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs. She lectured frequently, wrote for state and national journals, and during World War I was chair of the Americanization Department of the Women's Committee of the State Council of Defense of California.

Gibson and others caught up in the California Americanization movement worried that when the Panama Canal opened in 1915, immigrants would "flood" the state. That did not happen. During the first two decades of the twentieth century the percentage of immigrants within the total population of California remained essentially the same, twenty-five percent in 1900 and 1910 and twenty-two percent in 1920. But the immigrants' place of national origin shifted. From 1900 to 1910 England and Germany headed the list of countries sending immigrants to California, but after 1910 Italians and Mexicans began coming in increasingly larger numbers. By 1920 they constituted the majority of newcomers from abroad.

To supporters of Americanization in California, Mexicans posed the most serious challenge to the state. They were the fastest growing immigrant group, and they were perceived as coming from an especially flawed culture that hindered their ability to assimilate. The California Commission of Immigration compared "the Italian with his love of industry and frugality, whose adaptability makes him quickly assimilated," to the "Mexican with his lack of initiative, whose roving temper increases the difficulty of adjusting him." . . . Mexicans could become good American citizens but only if they were so changed they could no longer be recognized as Mexicans.

Until that transformation was achieved, they remained a danger to American society. "Unguided and unprotected," stated a leaflet distributed by the California Immigration Commission, "he [the immigrant] is liable to become a menace. The correction of these evils is no more than a matter of our own self-protection." To which Gibson added in a 1915 California Outlook article: "These [immigrant] families are with us and make up a definite part of our civilization—whether that part shall be valuable[,] or a menace to the body politic, rests with us." . . .

[A]ccording to Gibson and other advocates of Americanization programs, all immigrants needed to be socialized into their proper place in American society. In this task the idea of "interdependence" was crucial. . . . She envisioned an interdependent society as hierarchical and relying on humane yet powerful experts to achieve and maintain social harmony.

Gibson, Lubin, and the others on the Commission of Immigration and Housing saw themselves as those experts, transforming the culture of immigrants through their programs of "education and protection." Immigration presents "a series of peculiar problems," affirmed Lubin, "which require for their intelligent solution a specially created body of experts, with one general view—the protection, assistance and education of the new-comer." . . .

Gibson focused her attention on education. . . . Her most significant contribution was her home teacher program, an innovation designed to send female teachers into the immigrant home to teach the foreign mother "American" standards. . . . [T]he teachers attempted to convince foreign-born wives themselves to attend classes in English, civics, and "domestic science" or home economics. The classes were held at local schools or in neighborhood homes, while later some were moved to "cottages," small houses equipped with American-style furniture and household equipment. In 1915 there was a single home teacher in Los Angeles; three years later there were twelve salaried teachers working in nineteen of the city's school districts and offering classes in five model homes. By World War I, other cities, such as Oakland, had also adopted the program.

In seeking public support for the home teacher program, Gibson emphasized that immigrant women were a potential "menace" to American society. Because they lived a life of painful isolation, either unable or unwilling to engage in a dialogue with native-born American society, foreign-born mothers, according to Gibson, did not make their homes "Amer-

ican homes." The result was that their children, who were more accepting of American values, developed contempt for their immigrant homes and parents, especially for their mothers, the least Americanized parent. This conflict could lead to juvenile delinquency and other problems. If the state failed to rescue immigrant women and restore family order, warned Gibson, it faced "imminent peril" and would have to "pay the penalty of social disorder." . . .

[I]mmigrant women became the object of such concern because they served as "linchpins" in maintaining immigrant culture. Immigrant wives and mothers stood at the center of immigrant culture, creating homes that honored the values of pre-industrial societies, values that stressed that individuals should place the well-being of the family over personal advancement. Immigrant family survival often rested upon family cooperation, and the person who taught, managed, and encouraged cooperation was the immigrant mother. These women were strong, intelligent, resourceful, in command of family resources, and integrated into their communities. This reality contrasted sharply with the view of Gibson and other Americanization advocates who saw immigrant women as isolated, unable to control their children, and a potential "menace" to American society. . . .

Gibson and her colleagues believed that immigrant mothers who became inculcated with American values would be crucial in the assimilation of their families, especially as they were persuaded to de-emphasize group cooperation in favor of individual ambition. To reformers the development of individualism was at the heart of the Americanization education program, for they believed that once immigrants began pursuing their own individual material interests, the economy of the country would be strengthened and the immigrant standard of living would improve. "One cannot transform a hopeless ignoramus into a good citizen," Gibson announced in a 1915 speech; "he must first be instilled with ambition." . . .

For "the making" of ambitious people, Americanization proponents stressed domestic science, a required subject in the home teacher program. Domestic science . . . emphasized teaching the immigrant mothers "restlessness and dissatisfaction" with shoddy workmanship and poor living conditions. They should not "accept the fallen plaster, the dish-water that leaks through from the flat above and the dirty and dark hall." . . .

Another goal of domestic science was to provide immigrant wives with vocational skills, transforming them from unskilled peasant women into scientific household managers. A by-product would be relief for the chronic shortage of skilled, inexpensive household help. While reformers felt immigrant wives needed ambition, they sought to instill only the kind of ambition that would leave the newcomers in the working class, moving from unskilled to semiskilled or, at best, skilled work. . . .

Thus, the assumption undergirding the Americanization program was that only elite, native-born women could resolve the menace presented to the American social order by immigrant, working-class women. "Upon the women, brave enough and strong enough to win their own political emancipation," stated Gibson, "rests the responsibility of the education and

protection of these alien women; and to so establish and sustain the mother in her own domain, is to protect the state from delinquent children and an ignorant vote." . . .

As for the Americanization campaign itself, immigrants voted with their feet overwhelmingly against it. . . . [F]ew immigrants attended night schools, an early and crucial innovation by Americanization reformers that provided lessons in English and American civics for adults. . . . [E]ven during World War I, a period of intense Americanization activities, night schools "enrolled only a quarter of a million out of a possible thirteen and three quarters million immigrants . . . [and] women constituted less than a third of this already small number." Gibson and other California reformers established the home teacher program to overcome the reluctance of immigrant women to come to night classes but the drop-out rate for the home teacher program was, at eighty percent, very high. . . . "Consistently low registrations and high drop-out rates" characterize the response of immigrant women to all Americanization programs, from night schools to settlement programs. A 1920 survey of Americanization programs in Los Angeles [showed that] 3,448 people (in a city with 122,131 foreign-born) started the program and only 322 finished it.

Immigrant women often wanted the skills—for example, facility in the English language—taught in Americanization classes but they could gain these through their ethnic communities, churches, and labor organizations. Since they utilized the services of other social welfare agencies, bringing their infants to well-baby clinics and asking social workers to intervene in cases of family violence, one wonders why they rejected Americanization efforts. Perhaps they did so because the impulse behind the efforts was a fear of immigrant culture, a fear that meant that the programs, no matter how humanely conceived, were permeated with the idea that immigrant culture was basically illegitimate and something that would and should eventually disappear in the United States.

This negativity toward immigrant culture became especially pronounced during the years following the war when the Red Scare heightened fears of foreign ideas. For Americanization advocates it surfaced in the way they established themselves as arbiters or "gatekeepers" over what aspects of immigrant culture were socially acceptable. A dramatic example was the concept of immigrant cultural "gifts" which Gibson vigorously promoted after the war, although the concept was popular among Americanization reformers since the beginning of the century. In 1921 Gibson persuaded clubwomen to hold a "Homeland Exhibit of Art and Crafts" in southern California that featured the arts, songs, and dances of the foreign-born. Such an exhibit, she explained, would teach both immigrants and native-born the value of creating a new national consensus shared by all citizens.

The pageant at the Homeland Exhibit, however, like similar events presented by settlement workers and teachers in neighborhood schools, failed to offer a message of pluralism. Instead, these pageants functioned as Americanization rituals in which immigrants presented themselves in native costume to native-born officials who symbolically decided whether to accept them and their arts into American society. . . . They decided which

immigrant gifts to accept and the meaning of those gifts for the larger society.

Also contributing to immigrant disenchantment with Americanization programs was an increasing element of coercion in their implementation. During and immediately after the Red Scare many states passed coercive Americanization legislation. California, along with Idaho and Utah, made attendance at Americanization classes compulsory for immigrants. Neither Lubin nor Gibson favored such forced indoctrination, yet both participated in its implementation as members of the California State Americanization Committee. Lubin openly expressed misgivings about his participation but Gibson did not. She looked upon the mandatory programs as an opportunity for "constructive publicity" of the Commission's Americanization efforts.

Some native-born citizens responded to the Red Scare by declaring that the foreign-born could never become "100 percent" Americans, a nativist sentiment that no doubt encouraged many immigrants to avoid Americanization programs. In California, the Red Scare and the 100 percent campaign fostered an anti-Japanese hysteria that swelled into a movement that demanded the expulsion of the Japanese from the state for racial as well as cultural reasons. Before the war, women reformers expressed more toleration or, at least, less active hostility toward Japanese immigrants. In 1913 most of the women's civic organizations had remained silent and officially uncommitted when the Progressives waged a campaign against Japanese land ownership; some women defended the rights of the Japanese. Japanese women attended home teacher programs where they received high marks.

But in 1919 several women's organizations backed the exclusion of Japanese from the state; these included groups with a long history of support for Americanization. The California Federation of Women's Clubs passed a resolution for Japanese exclusion in 1920, and its president, Adella Tuttle Schloss, became one of the vice-presidents of the Japanese Exclusion League of California. The willingness of the state's organized women to join the Japanese Exclusion League was linked to the women's participation in the Americanization campaign. That campaign had made them more politically active and more receptive to racial nationalism than they had been previously. . . .

The California women who supported Americanization did so because they perceived their primary political task as maintaining "interdependence"—social order, unity and peace. They would gain full citizenship; all Americans would accept their proper place and responsibilities; and the result would be social harmony. Americanization, they thought, provided a means to transform America: housekeepers would become patriots, and immigrants, citizens.



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