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ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Critical Issues in Comparative Perspective

Edited by

Kendall E. Bailes

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THE WOMEN OF THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATION CRUSADE: 1900-1915

Carolyn Merchant
University of California, Berkeley

In his book The Fight For Conservation (1910), Gifford Pinchot praised the women of the progressive era for their substantial contributions to conservation. He cited the conservation committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution (chaired by his mother), the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, "founded by ladies," which carried out some of the earliest work done in that state, the National Forests preserved by Minnesota women, and the Calaveras Big Trees set aside by the women of California after a nine year fight.[1]

Writing his definitive history of the progressive conservation campaign in 1959, Samuel Hays also acknowledged the enthusiasm of women's organizations for conservation and their staunch support, until 1913, for Pinchot as leader of the movement. Historians Robert Welker (1955) and Stephen Fox (1981) amplify other female contributions, especially to the Audubon movement and the hiking clubs, while admitting that much remains to be learned regarding women's role in conservation.[2]

In the nineteenth century, women had developed interests and organizations that paved the way for their work in the conservation and reform movements of the progressive era. Literary clubs oriented toward culture drew women together for mutual improvement and shared experiences, while the women's rights and abolition movements exposed them to the political process and the public arena. Leisure time had afforded middle and upper-class women opportunities for botanizing, gardening, birdlore, and camping. Women visited the National Parks and scenic wonderlands of the West or, sometimes casting off skirts and donning Turkish pants, joined the Appalachian Mountain Club (founded in 1876) or the Sierra Club (founded in 1892).[3]

Propelled by a growing consciousness of the panacea of bucolic scenery and wilderness, coupled

with the need for reform of the slums and squalor of the cities, women burst vividly into the public arena in the early twentieth century as a force in the progressive conservation crusade. Behind the brief tributes by historians to their substantial contributions lies an untold story of immense energy, achievement, and dedication by thousands of women to the cause of conservation. Although only the most prominent women appear in the archives of history, without the input of women in nearly every locale in the country, conservation gains in the early decades of the century would have been fewer and far less spectacular.

Who were these women of the conservation crusade? What were their accomplishments, objectives, and ideals? How did they interact with the men who promoted conservation? What ideological framework did they bring to the crusade and to the conflicts that developed within it?

I. Feminist Conservation: The General Federation of Women's Clubs

In 1900, Mrs. Lovell White of San Francisco, the brilliant, dynamic, and resourceful founder and president of the California Club, took up the cause of forestry. Founded at the home of Mrs. White on a cold rainy evening in 1897 in the wake of the first and abortive California suffrage campaign--a campaign "brilliant, rich in experiences" with "a spirit of wholesome comradeship,"--the California Club merged in January of 1900 with women's clubs throughout the state to form the California Federation of Women's Clubs. With Mrs. Robert Burdette of Pasadena as president and Mrs. White as vice-president at large, the first meeting was steeped in conservation ideals.[4]

"The preservation of the forests of this state is a matter that should appeal to women," declared Mrs. Burdette in her opening address. "While the women of New Jersey are saving the Palisades of the Hudson from utter destruction by men to whose greedy souls Mount Sinai is only a stone quarry, and the women of Colorado are saving the cliff dwellings and pueblo ruins of their state from vandal destruction, the word comes to the women of California that men whose souls are gang-saws are meditating the turning of our world-famous Sequoias into planks and fencing

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worth so many dollars." The forests of the state, she went on, were the source of the state's waters and together they made possible the homes and health of the people of California. "Better one living tree in California, than fifty acres of lumberyard. Preserve and replant them and the State will be blessed a thousandfold in the development of its natural resources . . . ."[5]

Nationally, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, (G.F.W.C.) founded in 1890, had been active in forestry since the turn of the century as part of women's civic obligation to become informed on the most urgent political, economic, and social issues of the day. Selecting women in each state who were familiar with the principles of forestry to head the clubs' forestry committees, local members first conducted cosmetic campaigns to save waste paper and clean up their towns and cities. They formed coalitions with civic organizations which engaged in the beautification of yards, vacant lots, school yards, and public buildings through planting trees and shrubs. Following the example of German women, with whom they corresponded, they planted long avenues of shade trees. They also worked toward the acquisition and preservation of wooded tracts of land wherein "Nature should be left unrestrained."[6]

Local forestry committees formed study groups that emphasized both the aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of forestry and the conservation of wood and water. The Forest Service provided literature and sent guest lecturers on trees and forestry to club meetings. Century magazine supplied them with articles on conservation, while local libraries were encouraged to acquire books on the principles of forestry.

In addition to keeping 800,000 members informed of the conservation policies and achievements of Roosevelt and Pinchot, the General Federation's Forestry Committee played an influential role in the passage of legislation to protect forests, waters, and birdlife. Under the direction of Mrs. Lydia Phillips Williams (for 1904-6), an enthusiastic conservationist who had learned forestry at the family's Peterson Nursery in Chicago and on her numerous excursions to forests in Norway, Sweden, and Germany; Mrs. F. W. Gerard (1908-10) from Connecticut, and Mrs. Lovell White (1910-1912), who

had established a national reputation in saving the Calaveras Big Trees of California, the committee coordinated efforts to support such projects as the creation of national forest reserves in New Hampshire and the Southern Appalachians and passage of the Weeks Bill for protection of the watersheds of navigable streams. In 1910, 233 clubs reported that they had sent letters and petitions for state and national legislation on forest fire laws, tax remission for reforestation, and the appropriation of demonstration forests, while 250 were active in the movement for bird and plant protection.[7]

In 1909, under the leadership of Mrs. John Wilkinson of Louisiana the Federation formed a Waterways Committee to promote the development of water power, clean water, and cheaper, higher volume transportation. The rationale for women's involvement lay in the effect of waterways on every American home: Pure water meant health; impure meant disease and death. Additionally, beautification of waterfronts, as had occurred in the watertowns of Europe, would lead to patriotism and love of one's country.

Joseph Ransdell, chair of the National Rivers and Harbors Committee speaking to the Tenth Biennial Convention of the Federation in 1910, acknowledged the important contributions of the women's clubs to conservation. "I appeal to you as a representative of the men who need and wish the help of women. We know that nothing great or good in this world ever existed without the women. We consider our movement one of the greatest and best ever inaugurated in the union and we know that women can help us."[7a]

In 1910 the Federation reorganized its forestry and waterways committees under a Department of Conservation headed by Mrs. Emmons Crocker of Fitchburg, Massachusetts and added a birdlife representative, Mrs. Francis B. Hornbrooke, also of Massachusetts. This new Department sent representatives to the Second National Conservation Congress in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1910 and the National Irrigation Congress at Pueblo, Colorado.[8]

During the period 1907-1912, women contributed notices, news items, reports, and articles to Forestry and Irrigation, the journal of the American

Forestry Association. They pointed
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Forestry Association. They pointed out women's work to save forests in places such as Colorado, Vermont, Maine, and New York, printed lengthy summaries of progress in conservation as reported at the Federation's biennial meetings, and announced protest actions such as that taken by Mrs. D. M. Osborne of Auburn, New York who, outraged by telephone pole workers who had mercilessly trimmed her trees without permission, drove off the workmen and cut down the poles."[9]

Mrs. Lydia Adams-Williams, a self-styled feminist conservation writer and member of the Women's National Press Association was particularly vociferous in her efforts to popularize women's accomplishments. Her article "Conservation--Women's Work," (1908) in which she characterized herself as the first woman lecturer and writer on conservation, complained that "man has been too busy building railroads, constructing ships, engineering great projects, and exploiting vast commercial enterprises" to consider the future. Man the moneymaker had left it to woman the moneysaver to preserve resources. She placed women's role in conservation squarely in the context of feminist history:

> To the intuition of Isabella of Spain, to her tenacious grasp of a great idea, to her foresight and her divine sympathy the world is indebted for the discovery of a great continent, for the civilization we enjoy today and for the great wealth of resources . . . And as it was the intuitive foresight of a woman which brought the light of civilization to a great continent, so in great measure, will it fall to woman in her power to educate public sentiment to save from rapacious waste and complete exhaustion the resources upon which depend the welfare of the home, the children, and the children's children.[10]

In "A Million Women for Conservation," (1908) again taking liberal notice of her own accomplishments, Mrs. Adams-Williams discussed the resolutions passed by the women's clubs in support of the conservation efforts of Roosevelt, Pinchot, the Inland Waterways Commission, the Forest Service, the Geological Survey, and the American Mining Congress.

The Federation in Washington, D.C., of which she was a member, was the first to pass these resolutions followed by four other national women's organizations the combined membership of which totalled one million.[11]

By 1908, the General Federation had begun to play an important role in the national conservation movement. Mrs. Philip N. Moore, president of the Federation fom 1908-1910, was a member of the executive committee of the National Conservation Congress during its first four years, was a presiding officer in 1912, and became its vice-president in 1913. Tribute was paid by the president of the Congress to her "rare ability" to organize and preside over large numbers of enthusiastic women. Mrs. Moore of St. Louis, Missouri, a leader in educational and philanthropic work, was born in Rockford, Illinois, graduated from Vassar College, and later became one of its trustees. She had been active for many years at the local, state, and national levels of the Federation. The voice of Mrs. Moore and dozens of other women were heard loudly and forcefully at the National Conservation Congresses held from 1909-1912.[12]

Woman's National Rivers and Harbors Congress

In 1908, seven women in Shreveport, Louisiana banded together to form the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress that would cooperate with the National Rivers and Harbors Congress then headed by Joseph E. Ransdell. Within fourteen months, under the leadership of its president, Mrs. Hoyle Tomkies, it had grown to 20,000 members and had held a national congress in Washington, D.C. at which twenty states were represented. As Mrs. Tomkies expressed it, "Our work is mainly to educate upon the subject . . . We are putting forth all the energy and influence we can muster for the cause, lest the enemy come while we are sleeping and sow in the peoples' minds the tares of 'individualism' and non-conservation."[13]

The Daughters of the American Revolution

In 1909 Mrs. Matthew T. Scott was elected President General of the 77,000 member Daughters of the American Revolution. A representative of the more liberal wing of the D.A.R. who had recently

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The Audubon Movement

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defeated the conservatives in a national election, Mrs. Scott was an enthusiastic conservationist who encouraged the maintenance of a conservation committee consisting of 100 members representing every state. The chair of this committee was Mrs. James Pinchot, mother of Gifford Pinchot, who by that token as well as her conservation efforts was said to have "done more for the cause of conservation than any other woman."[14]

Pinchot himself addressed the 18th D.A.R. Congress in Washington in 1909 praising the members for their efforts against "land grabbers" and suggesting certain conservation projects for further action. At the 1912 convention Pinchot thanked the women for their efforts in aiding the passage of the Alaska coal bill and the LaFollette legislation regulating grazing, and invited them to take up the cause of water power. The D.A.R., Pinchot said on another occasion, "spells only another name for the highest form of conservation, that of vital force and intellectual energy."[15]

Other conservation efforts of the D.A.R. were directed toward the preservation of the Appalachian watersheds, the Palisades, and Niagara Falls (then threatened by over usage of water by power companies). In fact, as Mrs. Carl Vrooman pointed out to the National Conservation Congress of 1911, "these 77,000 women do indeed represent a perfect Niagara of splendid ability and force--enough, if intelligently directed, to furnish the motive power to keep revolving all the wheels of progress in this country." In 1905-6 women nationwide had responded to Horace MacFarland of the American Civic Association whose editorials in the Ladies' Home Journal on the preservation of Niagara Falls had produced tens of thousands of letters to Congress.[16]

The Audubon Movement

The post-civil War resurgence of high fashion for ladies had, by the end of the century, taken an immense toll on American bird-life in the creation of exotic styles in millinery. Bird feathers and whole birds nestled atop the heads of society's upper and middle-class women. The first Audubon societies, organized in 1886, protested the "abominable" habit of wearing feather fashions. Women who sought to

educate their sisters to the peril of birds formed Audubon clubs, such as the one at Smith College where two young female students developed a plan to protect plume birds.

In 1898 "a score of ladies met in Fairfield," Connecticut to form the Audubon society of the State of Connecticut, electing as president Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright. With the publication in 1899, of the first issue of the Audubon Societies' official journal, Bird Lore, Mrs. Wright took on the task of editing the magazine's Audubon section and of reporting the latest developments in the politics of bird preservation. She requested that the secretaries of the initial nineteen state societies, all but one of whom were women, send news and notes to broaden and strengthen the movement.

In 1905 the Audubon Society appealed to the National Federation of Women's Clubs for help: "The club women of America with their powerful influence should take a strong stand against the use of wild birds' plumage, and especially against the use of the Aigrette . . . . A close affiliation between this Association and the National Federation of Women's clubs would be mutually helpful."[17]

At the Conservation Congress of 1909, William Finley of the national Audubon Societies addressed the assemblage on the agricultural benefits of birds and urged that the vandalism of the plume hunters be halted. "As long as women demand these plumes, he said, men will be found to supply them."

In cooperation with the request made by the Audubon Society, Mrs. Gerard, Chair of the General Federation of Women's Clubs' Forestry Committee appealed to women at the Federation's 1910 Biennial Convention: "Our work for the Audubon Society is not as active as it should be. Can we logically work for conservation and expect to be listened to, while we still continue to encourage the destruction of the song birds by following the hideous fashion of wearing song birds and egrets upon our hats?"

And speaking to the 1912 Conservation Congress, Mrs. Crocker of the GFWC's Conservation Committee asked a personal favor of the women present: "This fall when you choose your fall millinery . . . I beg you to choose some other decoration for your hats . .

." After a long campaign, in O Tariff Act was passed that outlawe wild bird feathers into the United vigorously enforced that newspaper accounts of "the words and acti ladies who found it necessary t aigrettes, paradise plumes, and o arriving from Europe. Two days went into effect, Audubon Save t being advertised in New York for $ Congratulations poured in from all the Audubon Society's great victory.

So rare as to be on the verge few years before, by 1915 egrets in in the southern United States, num with 50,000 Little Blue Herons, a of Ibis. Owing to the combined Audubon Societies and the women opinion had shifted so far towa that far fewer "bad bird-laws" wer into state legislatures. The work half had begun to show results.

Conservation and the Countr Organizations

Women of the rural U.S. w affected by the implications agriculture and the conservat resources. Their interests were Conservation Congress of 1911 by Mr Ashby of Des Moines, Iowa and Mis Kansas.

Mrs. Ashby was actively engag and promotion of country women's c wife, often her husband's busi assistant manager, played an impo efficiency and hence in soil con both "wife and mother of the soil."

To achieve their objectiv organized clubs for discussion, st Improving children's schools and resources--libraries, churches, centers--meant improvement of th life, thus conserving the famil the interest of the sons in farming

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." After a long campaign, in October 1913, a new Tariff Act was passed that outlawed the importing of wild bird feathers into the United States. It was so vigorously enforced that newspapers were filled with accounts of "the words and actions of indignant ladies who found it necessary to give up their aigrettes, paradise plumes, and other feathers upon arriving from Europe. Two days after the new law went into effect, Audubon Save the Birds Hats were being advertised in New York for $45 to $15 apiece. Congratulations poured in from all over the world for the Audubon Society's great victory.[18]

So rare as to be on the verge of extermination a few years before, by 1915 egrets in guarded rookeries in the southern United States, numbered 10,580 along with 50,000 Little Blue Herons, and an equal number of Ibis. Owing to the combined efforts of the Audubon Societies and the women's clubs, public opinion had shifted so far toward bird protection that far fewer "bad bird-laws" were being introduced into state legislatures. The work of a decade and a half had begun to show results.

Conservation and the Country Woman: Farm Organizations

Women of the rural U.S. were also vitally affected by the implications of scientific agriculture and the conservation of natural resources. Their interests were represented at the Conservation Congress of 1911 by Mrs. Harriet Wallace Ashby of Des Moines, Iowa and Miss Frances Brown of Kansas.

Mrs. Ashby was actively engaged in the formation and promotion of country women's clubs. The farmer's wife, often her husband's business partner and assistant manager, played an important role in farm efficiency and hence in soil conservation. She was both "wife and mother of the soil."

To achieve their objectives, country women organized clubs for discussion, study, and comradery. Improving children's schools and the communities' resources--libraries, churches, and social centers--meant improvement of the country way of life, thus conserving the family farm by retaining the interest of the sons in farming.

Mrs. Frances Brown of the Kansas Agricultural College was active in creating auxiliaries to Farmer's Institutes addressing efficiency and improvement of the farm home. Women studied the cost of installing lighting, heating, plumbing, and water facilities to correct the inconveniences that fostered the exodus from farm to city. Mrs. Brown also helped the public schools to form girls' home economics clubs to teach domestic science to young farm women. The underlying objective was to create under "every roof in Kansas a harmonious home where we will find every single thing that will tend to the highest efficiency and the needs of every member of the family . . . ."[19]

II. Conservation Ideology

The Conservation Trilogy

Although the women of the organizations represented at the National Conservation Congresses were public activists in their local communities, they nevertheless accepted the traditional sex roles assigned to them by late nineteenth century American society as caretakers of the nation's homes, husbands, and offspring, supporting rather than challenging the two spheres ideology of the nineteenth century.

At the National Congresses, women repeatedly called on the traditions assigned them by society in justifying the public demands they were making. Unwilling and unable to break out of these social roles, and supported by the men of the Congresses, they drew on a trilogy of slogans--conservation of womanhood, the home, and the child.

The Conservation of True Womanhood

The "conservation of true womanhood" was a subject repeatedly stressed by women at the Conservation Congresses. Mrs. Scott of the D.A.R. pleaded "as the representative of a great National organization of the women of the land, for the exalting, for the lifting up in special honor, of the Holy Grail of Womanhood." Just as the agricultural college prepared prospective farmers, so schools of domestic science would produce prospective housewives.

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Speaking to the Conservation Congress of 1909, Mrs. Overton Ellis of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, called conservation "the surest weapon with which women might win success. Centuries of turning last night's roast into hash, remaking last year's dress and controlling the home's resources had given women a heightened sense of the power of the conservation idea in creating true womanhood. "Conservation in its material and ethical sense is the basic principle in the life of woman . . ."[20]

In her presidential address to the General Federation's Tenth Biennial Meeting in 1910, Mrs. Philip N. Moore set conservation in its context for women as "no new word, no new idea," but a unifying theme for the contributions of women to society as the conservors of life. "There is a 'new woman,' the product of evolution the result of social and commercial changes. She rebels, however, when she sees woman spelled with capital letters or harnessed to the word "Career."[21]

Mrs. Carl Vrooman, also of the D.A.R., emphasized the ideal woman's subservience to the man in conservation. "We may not, it is true, formulate any new policies for you, or launch any issues, or make any very original contributions to your program, but there is one thing women can bring to a movement of this kind--an atmosphere that makes ideas sprout and grow, and ideals expand and develop and take deeper root in the subsoil of the masculine mind."[22]

The Conservation of the Home

The home as the domain of true womanhood became the second theme in the conservation trilogy. The National Congress of Mothers, represented by Mrs. Orville Bright of Chicago, dedicated itself to the conservation of natural resources for "the use, comfort, and benefit of the homes of the people." "Life, health and character all depend on the home and its efficiency." Mrs. Bright adopted the utilitarian philosophy of the progressives in stressing that conservation primarily benefitted human life rather than that of other organisms, since the fate of forests, land, waters, minerals, or food would be of little consequence were there "no men, women, and children to use and enjoy them."

Margaret Russell Knudsen of Hawaii, of the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress argued (at the 1909 Conservation Congress) that the conservation of the home was the special mission of woman. The "mark of civilization was the arrival of woman on the scene . . . . In no national movement has there been such a spontaneous and universal response from women as in this great question of conservation. Women from Maine to the most Western shore of the Hawaiian Islands are alive to the situation, because the home is woman's domain. She is the conserver of the race."[23]

Conservation of the Child

Third in the trilogy was the link between the conservation of natural resources and the conservation of the children and future generations of the United States. According to Mrs. John Walker, a member of the Kansas City chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, woman's role in conservation was dedicated to the preservation of life, while man's role was the conservation of material needs. "Woman, the transmitter of life" must therefore care for the product of life--future generations. The children of the nation should not be sacrificed to "factories, mills, and mines," but must be allowed "to enjoy the freedom of the bird and the butterfly . . . and all that the sweet breast of Nature offers so freely."[24]

Mrs. Overton Ellis of the General Federation of Women's Clubs promoted the conservation of children's lives at the 1909 Congress: "Women's supreme function as mother of the race gives her special claim to protection not so much individually as for unborn generations."[25]

Males active in the movement helped to reinforce the role of woman as "guardian of the child," "consecrated utterly to conservation." Reverend Charles Goss of Cincinnati, speaking to the Federation of Women's Clubs' Biennial Convention in 1910 on "Conservation in its Broadest Sense," assured them that "woman was designed by God to be the great Conservator."

Conservation and Eugenics

Conservation was far more than an umbrella word

used to promote many different s became an ideology for the middle-class American life. T movement in America coexisted with the eugenics movement that supported the white race and its manifest d races.

To many conservationists immigration of peoples from Asi European nations diluted the pure Nordic stock that had settled the co to be as threatening to the progres of middle-class America as the dep resources. Many women, like progressive movement, revealed c biases in their rhetoric. "We, th generation--ancestresses of futur pronounced Mrs. Scott of the D.A.R. Virginia stock, "have a right to conserving not only of our soil, minerals, fishes, waterways, in th future homemakers, but also upon the supremacy of the Caucasian race . we may be destined to see our cup grow to the proportion of a gra races; but if so will it not at lea our own race dominate?" "Man's ba that had remade the planet could be superiority of the white race. "It success in this struggle for the spiritual and the intellectual differences in racial types."[26]

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used to promote many different social causes. It became an ideology for the preservation of middle-class American life. The conservation movement in America coexisted with and was linked to the eugenics movement that supported the supremacy of the white race and its manifest destiny over other races.

To many conservationists and eugenists, immigration of peoples from Asian and Southern European nations diluted the pure Anglo-Saxon and Nordic stock that had settled the country, and seemed to be as threatening to the progress of the race and of middle-class America as the depletion of natural resources. Many women, like the men of the progressive movement, revealed class and racial biases in their rhetoric. "We, the mothers of this generation--ancestresses of future generations," pronounced Mrs. Scott of the D.A.R. who came from old Virginia stock, "have a right to insist upon the conserving not only of our soil, forest, birds, minerals, fishes, waterways, in the interest of our future homemakers, but also upon the conserving of the supremacy of the Caucasian race in our land . . . . we may be destined to see our cup of liberty . . . grow to the proportion of a grand mixing-bowl of races; but if so will it not at least be wise to see our own race dominate?" "Man's battle with nature" that had remade the planet could be attributed to the superiority of the white race. "It is the degree of success in this struggle for the triumph of the spiritual and the intellectual that marks the differences in racial types."[26]

Mrs. Elmer Black of New York City, who spoke on "War the Policy of Waste--Peace, the Policy of Conservation," at the Fourth Conservation Congress, lamented the world-wide loss through militarism of "seventeen million men, the strongest and best types, whose brain and muscle should be used for the advancement of their kind." Conservation and peace on the other hand preserved life and harnessed natural resources that could benefit the "reeking human rookeries in the cities of Europe that are a menace to the human race."[27]

Woman Suffrage and the Conservation Movement

Although the women who attended the National Conservation Congresses were speaking out on public

affairs of interest to the nation's welfare, they were limited in their influence on legislation through lack of the vote. By the time of the Conservation Congresses, several states (Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah) had given women the vote and a nationwide woman suffrage campaign was underway. Although women representatives at the congresses did not have a platform that related suffrage to conservation, nevertheless, the issue was frequently mentioned.[28]

Mrs. Scott of the D.A.R. noted the possibility that women might sometime in the future "undertake, in addition to their other duties, the heavy responsibilities of the voter and political worker." Mrs. Holland Day who was introduced to the Congress as having migrated to Idaho because of the attractiveness of women's suffrage, replied that in the state she had left, Missouri, "the female suffrage movement is going straight along."[29]

Judge Ben B. Lindsey, in his address "Is the Child Worth Conserving?" argued that "one of the prime duties of the Nation--its duty to the child--is to extend to the women the same rights as the men, that they may go to the polls and vote on these measures."

Mr. Howard Gross, president of the National Soil Fertility League speaking to the General Federation's 1912 Biennial, supported the women's rights movement for social equality: "I am convinced that women are able to deal with twentieth century questions and conditions, and I am prepared to support any movement that has for its object the absolute equality of the sexes in every walk of life."[30]

It was the anti-suffragists, however, who self-consciously drew on conservation rhetoric--"the watchword of the hour"--in arguing against the extension of the vote to women. Suffrage was not a "natural" right bestowed on human beings at birth, proclaimed Alice Chittendon of Brooklyn. On the contrary,

> "in opposing the extension of suffrage to women, we are seeking to conserve woman's natural forces for the great work Nature has given her to do . . . . I would have woman seriously consider whether she may not better serve her day and g conserving her God-given powers great work as a Home-maker, diffuse her forces by seeking work also."[31]

Denouement

The Fifth National Conservatio in Washington, D.C. on Novembe proceeded for three days. Its vic Philip N. Moore of the General Fede Clubs did not speak. Nor did any the Federation, the D.A.R., the Coun or the Women's National Rivers and H The sole female voice heard was Mi from the American Red Cross "Conservation of Life in the Lumber C

American Forestry (the new na of the American Forestry Associatio report on the meeting in its Descriptions of the activities of accompanied by the portraits of chaired or worked on the committe taken the night of the Forestry Ba 19 showed some 160 men seated at ro a speaker's platform. Mrs. Philip among them.[33]

A brief note in the Forestry C to the Congress seems to provide th the absence of women:

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Denouement

The Fifth National Conservation Congress opened in Washington, D.C. on November 18, 1913 and proceeded for three days. Its vice-president, Mrs. Philip N. Moore of the General Federation of Women's Clubs did not speak. Nor did any other woman from the Federation, the D.A.R., the Country Women's Clubs or the Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress. The sole female voice heard was Miss Mabel Boardman from the American Red Cross who lectured on "Conservation of Life in the Lumber Camps."[32]

American Forestry (the new name of the journal of the American Forestry Association) carried a full report on the meeting in its November issue. Descriptions of the activities of the Congress were accompanied by the portraits of fifty men who had chaired or worked on the committees. A photograph taken the night of the Forestry Banquet on November 19 showed some 160 men seated at round tables before a speaker's platform. Mrs. Philip N. Moore was not among them.[33]

A brief note in the Forestry Committee's report to the Congress seems to provide the explanation for the absence of women:

> The desirability of . . . an organization [to represent the mutual forestry and lumbering interests] was emphasized by the presence at [the Fourth National Congress in] Indianapolis [1912] of a number of men who were no longer in need of the general educational propaganda relative to the conservation of natural resources, but attended the Congress for the purpose of meeting progressive men in their own and related lines and securing specific information helpful in the solution of their own problems.

Conservation and forestry had come of age as technical professions. As such they were no longer

accessible to women. After 1912 the American Forestry Association ceased to print articles or news items on the work of women in forestry. Lydia Adams-Williams disappeared from the scene.[34]

A second explanation for the disappearance of women also seems plausible. That same year the popular nationwide struggle for the preservation of Hetch Hetchy Valley, a part of California's Yosemite National Park, reached its conclusion. With the passage of the Raker Act by Congress in 1913, the City of San Francisco won its long battle for a public water supply. The women of the conservation crusade had worked hard to preserve the valley as an integral part of the park.

Gifford Pinchot, the women's early inspiration and supporter in conservation efforts had taken the opposing side, recommending at the congressional hearings that a dam be constructed across the valley to serve the interests of thousands of city people rather than accommodate the needs of the few who camped and hiked in the area.

Soon after a City of San Francisco referendum in November 1903 favored construction of the dam, John Muir had taken the Hetch Hetchy issue to the nation. Preservationists rallied to support its retention in the park through letters and telegrams to the House Committee on Public Lands which held hearings in January 1909. Among them were women who had camped in the valley, who were members of the Sierra Club or Appalachian Mountain Club, or who were opposed to the commercial use of such a scenic wonderland.[35]

By December of 1909, Muir had begun to bombard the popular magazines with articles and photographs describing the scenic wonders of the valley. The Federation Courier, official organ of the California Women's Clubs ran his "Brief Statement of the Hetch Hetchy Question" in December announcing that the bill would soon come before Congress. As president of the Society for the Preservation of National Parks (formed because the San Francisco based Sierra Club was divided 589 to 161 against the dam), Muir had collected the endorsement of the General Federations of Women's Clubs, the California Federation, and many other State Federations who all adopted resolutions protesting the scheme. On the east coast Muir's article was carried in the Federation's Woman of

Today published in Boston. By t
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Today published in Boston. By the end of 1910, 150 women's clubs throughout the country were actively engaged in the preservation of Hetch Hetchy Valley.[36]

The women's support for the Hetch Hetchy Valley was viewed dimly by the men of the opposition. Marsden Manson, San Francisco's city engineer who supervised the surveys and plans for the dam, believed that his opponents consisted largely of "short-haired women and long-haired men" who were members of the "so-called nature-loving societies like the Appalachian Club of Boston, the Saturday Evening Walking Club of Chicago, et id genus omne." He maintained a "list of names and addresses of people objecting to [the] use of Hetch Hetchy," that included numerous women and believed it was necessary to dispell fallacies perpetrated by "individuals and corporations acting behind the screen of well meaning and innocent nature lovers."[37] Manson found an ally, however, in Caroline K. Sherman of Chicago who had met him on a visit to Yosemite and told the Forestry Department of the Chicago Federation of Women's Clubs that he was not a "cold-blooded engineer, ignorant of forestry, and indifferent to beauty," and that Muir although a poet and artist "could not speak with the authority of a sanitary engineer."[38]

In 1913, the National Committee for the Preservation of Yosemite National Park headed by Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of The Century, and Charles Eliot, president of the First Conservation Congress circulated brochures on "The Hetch Hetchy Grab" and "The Invasion of Yosemite National Park" documenting oppositon from over 100 newspapers. Among the prominent citizens listed as preservationists for the park were Mrs. Emmons Crocker, chair of the Conservation Committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. On the committee, which represented most of the states of the union were twenty-five women, some of whom, like Mrs. Philip N. Moore, were General Federation leaders now openly opposed to Pinchot.

Although preservationists lost the battle over Hetch Hetchy in December 1913, they had aroused the nation. The passage of the National Parks Act in 1916 that established an administration in the Department of the Interior for the numerous parks

created since 1862, gave them some compensation for its loss.

On a national level the conservation movement slackened during the second decade of the twentieth century, with the erosion of government backing, the narrowing of support for Gifford Pinchot, and the professionalization of forestry and water-power engineering. Although women were not active in the professions or as visible on the national level as they had been at the height of the conservation crusade, their interest in the creation of parks, gardens, and bird preserves did not vanish with the decline of organized conservation. The General Federation of Women's Clubs continued to maintain a Conservation Committee, and the Audubon societies provided women with avenues for leadership as secretaries and presidents of local chapters. Constituting approximately 35% of the Audubon national membership in 1905, the number of women had risen to slightly over 50% by 1915.[38] The Sierra club afforded women expanded opportunities for wilderness and on many club trips, female members began to outnumber males. More women than men had become members of the National Parks Association by 1929.[39]

During the decade and a half that introduced the century, women's organizations had helped the nation to achieve enormous gains in the conservation of natural resources and the preservation of scenic landscapes. Yet the platform for promoting these objectives had been a mixed one. Working closely with the men of the movement, women frequently saw themselves as ideologically opposed to what they perceived as commercial and material values. Feminist and progressive in their role as activists for the public interest, they were nevertheless predominantly conservative in their desire to uphold traditional values and middle-class life styles rooted in these same material interests. These contradictions within the women's conservation movement, however, were in reality manifestations of the similar mixture of progressive and conservative tendencies that characterized the progressive era itself.

ENDNOTES

[1] Gifford Pinchot, The F (New York: Doubleday and Pag 105-6.

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