

Document A: Molly Elliot Seawell (Modified)

It has often been pointed out that women should not pass laws on matters of war and peace, since no woman can do military duty. But this point applies to other issues, too. No woman can have any practical knowledge of shipping and navigation, of the work of train-men on railways, of mining, or of many other subjects of the highest importance. Their legislation, therefore, would not be intelligent, and the laws they devised to help sailors, trainmen, miners, etc., might be highly offensive to the very people they tried to help. If sailors and miners refused to obey the laws, who would have to enforce them? The men!

The entire execution of the law would be in the hands of men, backed up by irresponsible voters (women) who could not lift a finger to catch or punish a criminal. And if all the dangers and difficulties of executing the law lay upon men, what right have women to make the law?

Also, there seems to be a close relationship between suffrage and divorce. Political differences in families, between brothers, for example, who vote on differing sides, do not promote harmony. How much more inharmonious must be political differences between a husband and wife, each of whom has a vote which may be used as a weapon against the other? What is likely to be the state of that family, when the husband votes one ticket, and the wife votes another?

Vocabulary

Devised: designed
Executing: carrying out
Inharmonious: unpleasant

Source: Excerpt from Molly Elliot Seawell, an anti-suffragist from Virginia who published the anti-suffrage book, The Ladies' Battle, in 1911.

Document B: Anti-Suffrage Newspaper in New York (Modified)

The Suffragists' ideal is a kitchen-less house. The Suffragist keeps writing and speaking about pots and pans, and denounces housekeeping as degrading. The Suffragists teach women to revolt against the daily task of tending child and house, and we sadly see the results in the nation's poor health and lowered physique. It is the Suffragist theory that women's sphere in life should be the same as the man's. Is it not clear how this hideous feminism is sapping our vitality as a nation? Is it too much to say that it lies at the root of half the sickness and disease in our country?

There are many wealthy women who support Suffragism, and who do a very dangerous thing in preaching to working women that housework is degrading. As long as a working woman keeps her home clean and well tended, she enjoys the high regard of her neighbors. Yet, now the more weak-minded have been influenced by the Suffragists' snobbish preaching. Such feminism is destroying our national character and warping the natural impulses and beliefs that make a woman's life such a beautiful work of art.

Vocabulary

Degrading: lowering one's character
Sphere: area of influence
Sapping: draining
Vitality: energy
Warping: twisting out of shape

Source: Article from an anti-suffrage newspaper, The Woman's Protest Against Woman's Suffrage, published in New York by the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, in October 1912.

Document C: Tennessee Representative John A. Moon (Modified)

It has been insisted that the real purpose of this amendment is to deprive the Southern States of representation in part in Congress....

In those Southern States where the colored population outnumbers the white, to double the number of ignorant voters by giving the colored woman the right to vote would produce a condition that would be absolutely intolerable. We owe something to the wishes and the sentiments of the people of our sister States struggling to maintain law and order and white supremacy....

We are engaged now in a great foreign war. It is not the proper time to change the whole electoral system... Patriotism, in my judgment, forbids the injection of this issue into national politics at this time.

Source: Representative John A. Moon of Tennessee, speech in House of Representatives, January 10, 1918, on the issue of the woman suffrage amendment.