

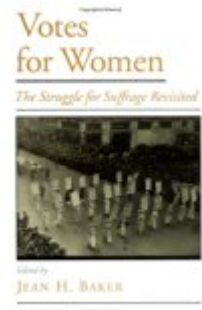
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jean H. Baker, ed. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. viii + 199 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-513017-1; \$98.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-513016-4.

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The Politics of Suffrage

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Jean Baker, professor of history at Goucher College, has put together eleven articles that represent recent scholarship on the suffrage movement in the United States. Baker's introduction is a thorough, lengthy one made up of three parts. First she provides an overview of the fight for suffrage, giving the basic chronology and identifying the major figures and organizations. This is followed by a discussion of the new historical approaches to suffrage represented in this volume: "The authors have taken suffrage history beyond the place where it is often cloistered with associational histories such as antislavery societies. Instead, they have connected it to larger themes not only of democracy, but also of slavery, constitutionalism, modernization, and racism. Thus, suffrage becomes the story of nation-building and citizen-making" (p. 8). Finally, Baker provides clear summaries of the arguments of each article.

Alison Parker's opening essay, "The Case for Reform Antecedents for the Woman's Rights Movement," explores the link between reform and politics to reveal the origins of the suffrage movement. Her purpose is to show that the foundation of the woman's rights movement was made up of more than abolition. All of the selections have politics in common as the authors explore the strategies devised by women to use the existing political system to secure voting rights. Two of the articles, for example, "Woman Suffrage in Congress: American

Expansion and the Politics of Federalism, 1870-1890" by Allison Sneider and "Pioneers at the Polls: Woman Suffrage in the West" by Rebecca Edwards, tie woman suffrage to the political growing pains of an enlarging nation and to the challenges of third parties in a traditional two-party political system.

Other articles by Faye Dudden, Robert Booth Fowler and Spencer Jones, Ellen Carol DuBois, and Linda Ford focus on specific tactics used by suffragists, including the "New York" strategy during the Civil War, Carrie Chapman Catt's "Winning Plan," the grassroots activism of Harriot Stanton Blatch, and Alice Paul's nonviolent protest. Christine Bolt's article about the Pankhursts introduces an internationalist perspective as it chronicles how American suffragists borrowed tactics from their British counterparts.

What is especially striking about the collection is how it reinforces suffrage as a movement dominated by white women and by racial beliefs. Nell Painter's article, "Voices of Suffrage: Sojourner Truth, Frances Watkins Harper, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage," is the only piece that focuses on the role of African-American women. Painter uses these two women to explore the controversy over equal suffrage in the post-Civil War period and whether or not race should be privileged over gender. (And Thomas Jablonsky's article about the anti shows how gender could not unite all women in support of suffrage.) In "Race, Reform, and Reaction at the

Turn of the Century: Southern Suffragists, the NAWSA, and the 'Southern Strategy' in Context," Marjorie Spruill addresses racial issues as well, highlighting the ways in which racism was used to further the cause of suffrage.

The epilogue, written by Anne Firor Scott, neatly ties up the articles by explaining suffrage historiography. She also points to the major strength of this collection: that it "is designed to introduce undergraduates to some of the current work on the subject" (p. 191). This is, in fact, a fine volume for that purpose. The essays have been written with an eye on a general audience: the writing

is clear and uniform, there is little jargon, and, in some cases, few citations. The brief bibliography, which lists many of the very best recent monographs on suffrage, would also be beneficial to students interested in delving more deeply into these issues. For American women's historians who do not specialize in women's rights and suffrage, the book serves a similar purpose. The Viewpoints on American Culture Series is billed as a "sensible guide to knowledge in a scholarly field," and this volume certainly lives up to that. But for those who are specialists and keep up with the secondary literature, there is little new or surprising here, beyond a useful refresher.

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