



Dawn Langan Teele. *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. xiv + 222 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-18026-7.

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In *Forging the Franchise*, Dawn Langan Teele critiques scholars for treating woman suffrage as separate from other democratic reforms. She takes issue with the fact that “it is common for scholars to label a country democratic if 50 percent of its male citizens have the right to vote, implying that countries can completely exclude women but nevertheless be considered fully democratic” (p. 16). Teele argues that the processes by which both men and women obtained voting rights are “fundamentally intertwined” (p. 186). She stresses three main issues: that “women’s inclusion was not an apolitical gift from elected leaders who knew its time had come;” that enfranchising women and other reforms like the secret ballot should be thought of as “substitute strategies for stacking the state;” and that scholars should ask how suffrage coalitions and victories “impacted different groups of women systematically” (pp. xi-xii).

Teele’s first chapter explains her larger arguments on democratization and women and is followed by three chapters where she “investigates the relationship between competition, mobilization, and suffrage” in Great Britain, the United States, and France respectively (p. 44). Teele concludes that politicians enacted suffrage “when politics was highly competitive and when a political

group with enough power to change the laws believed it could capture the majority of women’s votes” (p. 7). She argues that competitive politics were required as parties would not enfranchise women if they did not need new voters to maintain power or if they believed future female voters would support their opponents. Teele rejects the idea that wars directly led to woman suffrage, instead arguing that wars created more competitive politics, which allowed politicians to enfranchise women to retain power.

Teele takes issue with Corinne McConnaughy’s arguments concerning expectations of how women would vote. Teele summarizes McConnaughy as arguing that “many politicians expected women to replicate their husband’s votes” and that therefore “suffrage would not have mattered for electoral politics and hence suffrage extension could not have been ‘strategic’” (pp. 36-7). Teele argues that the fact that periods of political competition coincided with women’s enfranchisement undermines McConnaughy’s thesis. She argues instead that politicians’ beliefs or assumptions about how women would vote, regardless of whether they turned out to be true, determined their support for suffrage in competitive political environments. According to Teele, “It follows that *in places where a*

common view is that women are more conservative, parties on the right that are vulnerable to competition should promote women's inclusion, while in places where women are deemed more progressive should produce support for reform by groups on the left when competition is high (p. 38, ital. original).

The British chapter details the suffrage movement's choice to ally with the Labour Party in a successful effort to get suffrage, while the US chapter emphasizes the importance of political competition, noting the lack of success in the South, where Democrats largely controlled political power. In each case, Teele details quid pro quo arrangements between suffragists and politicians who agreed to support reform. She also discusses several forms of partial suffrage, like the right of women to vote in schoolboard elections only, which often occurred before legislators granted full suffrage. The French chapter argues that politically weak incumbents stood against enfranchising women, whom they assumed would support their political opposition.

Some of the state details in the US chapter are inaccurate, although it is easy to see how this could occur in a work focused on suffrage in multiple nations. For example, figure 4.1 appears to show Texas having presidential suffrage in 1917, which is inaccurate (pp. 85-6). Arkansas and Texas both enacted primary woman suffrage, yet Teele describes them as "states that allowed for the presidential franchise but nothing else" (p. 86). In one-party states, primary suffrage was a crucial precursor to full suffrage.

In her conclusion, Teele reiterates her call for scholars of democracy to include woman suffrage in their analyses. She also asks scholars to rethink how effective woman suffrage was at winning further reforms and argues for including "policy concessions" suffragists forced from politicians even before achieving suffrage (p. 191). Teele's work is an informative read that will help scholars of local, state, or national suffrage movements place

the strategies and movements they research into context and explain their successes and failures.

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