

Nellie McClung and the “Famous Five”

History 103

Main Themes

- Urbanization and industrialization
- “First-wave” (maternal) feminism
- Social reform
- Temperance / prohibition
- Suffrage (vote)
- Women’s rights: “Persons”

Nellie Letitia Mooney

Born 1873, Ontario; Moved to Manitoba, age 7 -- “Homesteading”

Family Life and Career

“First-Wave” Feminism

- “Maternal” feminism – primary task is to guard the home
- But as society changed, women needed to move beyond the “domestic sphere” to protect their families by “cleaning up” society

Urbanization and Industrialization

Impacts on the Family

Women’s roles and responsibilities

Social Reform

- Social Gospel (1890s-1930s): applying Christian principles to society – create heaven on earth

- Source for various movements:
 - Temperance and prohibition
 - Female suffrage
 - Social purity (anti-prostitution)
 - Defence of marriage and family
 - Health, housing and education reform
 - Church reform

McClung’s move to Winnipeg (1911)

Personality: sense of humour, fearless, bold and direct

“Progressive” Social Reformers: Need to change society; Search for order

The “Demon Drink”

- “Evils” of alcohol:
 - Neglect of one’s work
 - Widespread poverty in Canada’s fast-growing cities
 - Immorality and the spread of disease
 - Neglect of families, as husbands spent money on alcohol rather than feeding and clothing their

- wives and children
- Abuse and battery of women and children
- Crime

- Temperance: movement to control alcohol consumption through self-discipline
- Prohibition: attempt to legally forbid the sale of alcohol entirely

Movement led by women: Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

Woman's Suffrage

- Suffrage = right to vote
- Two grounds: (1) maternal role; (2) natural justice

Mocking Rodmond Roblin (Conservative Premier of Manitoba)
"The Women's Parliament"

McClung campaigns for Liberals in 1914 provincial election

McClung in Edmonton

- Friendship with Emily Murphy ("Janey Canuck")

Women Get the Vote: Western Provinces Take the Lead!

- Manitoba – Jan. 1916
- Saskatchewan – Mar. 1916
- Alberta – Apr. 1916
- British Columbia – Apr. 1917
- Ontario – Apr. 1917
- Federal – 1917 (limited); 1918 (nearly all)
- N.S. and N.B. (1918)
- PEI (1922)
- Quebec (**1940!**)

Prohibition Successful

- Alberta (1916-1923)
- By 1917: all provs (except Quebec) and national prohibition

Female MLAs / MPs

- 1917 – Albertans Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams
 - First female legislators in British Empire
- 1921 – Irene Parlby (United Farmers of Alberta) as first female Cabinet minister
 - **Nellie McClung elected** (Alberta, Liberal)
- 1921 – Agnes MacPhail (Ontario) first woman elected to House of Commons in Ottawa

McClung in Alberta Legislature

- Education and health
- Divorce/property laws for women
- Equal pay for equal work: Minimum Wage for Women Act (Alberta, 1925)
- Liquor Laws

1925 – McClung defeated

The Senate: Women as “Persons”?

Emily Murphy – first woman judge in Empire (1916) – legal issues raised

- Woman as "*persons only in terms of pains and penalties, and not rights and privileges*"?
- Murphy wants to sit in Senate, but women not allowed: not “qualified persons”? Not “persons”?

“The Famous Five”

- Nellie McClung
- Emily Murphy
- Irene Parlby
- Henrietta Muir Edwards
- Louise McKinney

1928 – Supreme Court of Canada said “NO”

The Person’s Case (1929) to Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (London)

- "yes, women are persons . . . and eligible to be summoned and may become Members of the Senate of Canada."

First woman senator: Cairine Wilson (Ontario)

- None of Famous 5 elected to the Senate

McClung’s Great Achievements

- Prohibition
- Social Reform
- Woman’s Suffrage
- “Persons” Case

“Dual Life”: Family and Career

Later Years (1930-51)

- Church Reform
 - United Church of Canada
- Writing
- Peace and Freedom
 - 1938 delegation to League of Nations
- Died 1951

Legacies of First-Wave Feminism

- Conservative?
 - Focus on maternal role; middle-class values
 - not “real” feminists?
- Radical (according to standards of their day)
 - transformation of roles
 - equal rights as citizens
 - Not revolutionaries; progressive social change