



Sex, Work and Politics: Women in Britain, 1780-1945

Richard Brown

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Producing a second edition of *Sex, Work and Politics* has allowed me to extend its chronological limits back to the 1780s and forward to the end of the Second World War in 1945. The original structure of the book remains unaltered though each chapter has been remodelled to take account of this change and of research published since early 2012. In particular, I have made wider use of contemporary newspapers to position women more firmly within their varied milieus. I have also added two new chapters that consider the role played by women after they received the vote in 1918 and 1928 and the place of women in Britain's imperial project after 1780. The first chapter considers the relationship between different approaches that have evolved to explain the role of women in history. This is followed by a chapter that looks at the ways in which women were represented in the nineteenth century in terms of the female body, sexuality and the notion of 'separate spheres'. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between women and work and how that relationship developed. Although women's suffrage has had a symbolic importance for generations of feminists, the campaign for the vote has obscured the broader agitations for women's rights during the nineteenth century and was, in terms of its impact before 1914, far less significant. Before the 1880s, the focus was not on winning the vote and the demand for parliamentary suffrage was only one of a range of campaigns. Between 1850 and 1880, a number of significant battles were fought and won. This was particularly evident in the successful campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts from the mid-1860s and in the growing significance of girls' schooling and the campaign for higher education, issues are examined in Chapter 4. The following two chapters look at the ways in which women actively sought access to the public sphere through political activity and demands for suffrage reform. It was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the suffrage movement achieved widespread national recognition largely through the activities of the militant Suffragettes led by the controlling Pankhursts and the non-militant campaigning of the Suffragists. These wings of the suffrage movement agreed about ends but disagreed about some of the means used to achieve those ends: it was a question of deeds or words. The nature of the suffrage campaign is considered in Chapter 7 while reactions to this from anti-suffragists and political parties form the core of Chapter 8. The impact of the First World War on women generally and the suffrage campaign in particular is discussed in Chapter 9. The critical question is whether women gained the vote in 1918 as a reward for their services during the war or whether it was a political imperative that could no longer be reasonably resisted. Chapter 10 considers the role played by women after they gained the vote in 1918 through to the end of the Second World War. Many women emigrated, either on their own or as part of families, to Britain's growing colonial possessions after 1780. Chapter 11 examines the nature of their role in the development of these colonies. The book ends with an examination of the notion of 'borderlands' as a conceptual framework for discussing women in Britain between 1780 and 1945 and the ways in which their personal, ideological, economic, legal and political status developed and changed.

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