

MABEL VERNON, "THE PICKETING CAMPAIGN NEARS VICTORY,"  
NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL CONFERENCE  
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Abstract: Mabel Vernon's "The Picketing Campaign Nears Victory" reveals how collective memory is marshaled in support of innovative action. Vernon used a three-pronged approach: sharing a recent common memory with her audience, utilizing that memory to forge a new collective identity, and arguing for forms of protest suitable to that new identity. The rhetorical campaign for woman suffrage by the National Woman's Party provides insight into the tensions between patriotism in wartime and freedom of speech.

Key Words: Women—Suffrage—United States; National Woman's Party; Freedom of Speech—United States; Dissent; Social Movements; Persuasion (Rhetoric); Symbolism in Communication; Vernon, Mabel

On August 14, 1917, a small group of women from the National Woman's Party left their headquarters in Cameron House, across from the White House. Armed with a number of banners, they marched across Lafayette Square to take their usual posts at the White House gates. This was not a new tactic in the drive for woman suffrage.<sup>1</sup> Since January 10, 1917, contingents of NWP members had stood almost daily in rain, snow, and heat at the White House gates bearing banners with such messages to President Wilson as: "Mr. President What Will You Do For Woman Suffrage?" Even after the entry of the United States into World War I on April 7, 1917, the pickets still arrived to take up their silent vigil. With their purple, white, and gold color banners and the ever-changing messages to the President, the women were the talk of Washington, D.C. and competed with the war news for public interest.<sup>2</sup> They also were historically noteworthy as the first group to picket the White House, bringing their grievances directly to the door of the executive branch.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, a new banner on this August day would be different. During the four o'clock "shift" of pickets, Elizabeth Stuyvesant carried over and unfurled what would come to be known as the "Kaiser" banner. It read:

KAISER WILSON, HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR  
SYMPATHY WITH THE POOR GERMANS BECAUSE  
THEY WERE NOT SELF-GOVERNING? TWENTY

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MILLION AMERICAN WOMEN ARE NOT SELF-GOVERNING. TAKE THE BEAM OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE.<sup>4</sup>

For thirty minutes a restless crowd grew around the banner until one man ran forward and ripped the banner down. Following this first attack, all the other banners were ripped away. The pickets responded by returning to Cameron House bringing over more banners that would be torn down by the crowd immediately upon display. When the bannerless pickets returned to Cameron House, the crowd—now clearly a mob—followed to tear new banners from their hands as they emerged. Soon, Cameron House itself was under attack with the NWP members locked inside. Undaunted, Lucy Burns and Virginia Arnold appeared on the balcony with a Kaiser banner and the tri-color of the NWP to brave an assault of eggs and tomatoes. The mob attack became open warfare as three yeomen climbed to the balcony to attack those holding the banners, and a shot was fired through the second floor window of the house just above the heads of two women. Although police reserves finally cleared the mob from the streets, the pickets on the next three days met much the same mob violence, with the police themselves finally attacking and ultimately arresting the women on charges of "blocking traffic."<sup>5</sup>

The attacks on the "Kaiser" banner were perhaps the most iconic events of a year that saw an inventional flurry of new protest strategies by the NWP in the drive for woman's suffrage. Near the end of that same year, on December 7, 1917, NWP organizer Mabel Vernon addressed the Advisory Council Conference of the NWP, reporting on the events of the past memorable 12 months. Through a calm recitation of silent demonstrations met with violence, unjust arrests and grueling imprisonments, and tortuous rounds of hunger strikes answered by forcible feedings, Vernon presented a narrative of both struggle and opportunity. Yet, Vernon's speech to the Advisory Council also is notable for what is *not* included. A reader seeking a taste of the great arguments for suffrage will find this speech thin gruel indeed. Suffragists had presented rationales for woman's suffrage repeatedly during the seventy long years of activism leading to this moment. In the view of the NWP, the time for talk was past; the time for action had come. The very form that Vernon's address took supported this view. More than most suffrage speeches, Vernon's address was temporal rather than thematic in its structure. Hers was a simple detailing of events across the course of a year, an unfolding of a movement strategy that contained its own implicit justification. Her very choice of a chronological pattern grounded in fact heightened the sense of cause and effect rationality. Thus, the speech's very form was a refutation to charges of both female hysteria and the apparent irrationality of new techniques of protest.

Mabel Vernon grounds her speech to the Advisory Council in commemoration. The events she recounted begin with the memorial delegation sent to the White House following the death of NWP member, Inez Milholland. Such eulogistic commemoration is considered a form of epideictic (ceremonial) rhetoric. This type of discourse, Aristotle stated, is directed toward "praise or blame" of events or persons, and, thus, is directed more toward contemplation than action. Yet, Aristotle granted that epideictic rhetoric

may exhibit purposes beyond the ceremonial moment by "reminding [the audience] of the past and projecting the course of the future."<sup>6</sup> Recent studies of commemoration and the uses of public memory have emphasized this deliberative aspect, where the past is used to advocate for the realization of a particular future.<sup>7</sup> John Gillis argues that "Commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories."<sup>8</sup> Out of this coordination of memories emerges a new sense of group identity and an impulse toward actions that project that identity to the world. By tapping the memory of their common grievances, Mabel Vernon leads her suffragist audience to a new self-understanding and toward inventive methods of protest.

*"The Young Are At the Gates"<sup>9</sup>: The Context of the Speech*

By the opening of the twentieth century, the British and American movements for woman's suffrage were mired in what some called the "period of the doldrums."<sup>10</sup> Certainly, for the American movement the first decade of this bright new century brought not hope but a sense of being lost in the "Great Desert" of woman's suffrage.<sup>11</sup> The old guard was passing. The deaths of Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1902 and Susan B. Anthony in 1906 simply highlighted the number of women who had spent their lives dedicated to "the Cause," only to die with their goal unattained.<sup>12</sup> After so many decades, the arguments had all been made, the petitions had been sent up again and again, and the suffragists seemed less a curiosity than a staid old band of reformers who could safely be ignored. Time alone had reduced the luster of a movement that had first emerged over fifty years earlier at the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention in 1848. Although one of the resolutions of that convention urged the securing of the "sacred right to the elective franchise,"<sup>13</sup> it would take until the post-Civil War period for the movement for woman suffrage to crystallize.<sup>14</sup> Suffragists had expected support from the Republican Party for the enfranchisement of women at the same time as African American males and formed the American Equal Rights Association to advocate for both black and female suffrage.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the Republican Party, claiming "this is the Negro's hour," not only excluded women in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments but also codified Constitutional gender discrimination by inserting the word "male" into the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>16</sup>

Disagreement over a response to these amendments split the woman suffrage movement. Those who felt resentment over the amendments joined the National Woman Suffrage Association, established in 1869 and headed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The NWSA, as the term National implies, sought a federal amendment for women much as had been granted to African American men. In the same year of 1869, the American Woman Suffrage Association was founded, headed by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. The AWSA pursued a state-by-state approach to suffrage, coupling that effort with attempts to expand women's right to vote on referenda at the state level.<sup>17</sup>

Not only did suffragists from the two organizations favor different tactical approaches, but they also favored different types of arguments. Two primary arguments

emerged in the campaign for woman suffrage. The natural rights (or justice) argument was based on the similarities between men and women as human beings. Because of their "common humanity," men and women also possessed a right to the universal principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This form of argument, based in woman's individuality, humanity, and equality, was favored by the NWSA. Yet, the natural rights argument was not the only rhetorical game in town. Although developing slightly later than the natural rights argument, the "expediency" argument gained in strength throughout the suffrage movement. This argument was based in presumed differences between men and women, emphasizing the complementary nature of the two genders. Women, according to this view, had a higher sense of morality, a more peace-loving nature, and a natural steadiness and responsibility. The qualities that they possessed as mothers in their families could be brought into the political sphere where they would serve as mothers to the nation. This argument was useful to the AWSA in their state-by-state approach because it came closer to the common views of women. Especially when it came to seeking suffrage in such small venues as school board elections and town referenda, women's expertise with children and moral concerns for the community turned domesticity into an effective argument for suffrage.<sup>18</sup>

Both of these arguments actually ran through the speeches of most suffragists; however, as the new century approached, arguments of expediency began to take precedence. In 1890, the NWSA and AWSA merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The increasing strength of the South (and its strong opposition to woman suffrage) made the success of a national amendment appear more difficult. Ties between the suffrage and Temperance movements also increased the appeal of expediency arguments and the moral influence women could bring to government through the vote. Thus, NAWSA initially took on much of the tone and direction of the AWSA, concentrating its efforts on a state-by-state campaign and emphasizing conciliatory arguments from expediency. Change, however, was coming to the suffrage movement.<sup>19</sup>

There were several factors that influenced a transformation in the twentieth century American suffrage movement. First, as the new century neared its teens, the Progressive Era would bring a new interest in reform. Issues of poverty, child labor, sanitation, and industrial safety had heightened concerns about society and led many women to seek a means to effect change.<sup>20</sup> Second, a new generation of suffragists, inspired by the militancy of the agitation for the vote in Great Britain, would energize the movement and take the struggle for suffrage in new directions. The leaders of this new approach were two young American women, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, both of whom had been active in the British suffrage movement. Following her graduation from Swarthmore in 1905, Alice Paul, a slight, pale Quaker, had traveled to England on a fellowship to study social work. Before long, she was attracted to the work of the Women's Social and Political Union, the militant wing of the British suffrage movement. Founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, the WSPU called themselves "suffragettes," a term originally coined by the *Daily Mail* as a derisive diminutive of the word suffragist. Far from being insulted, the WSPU liked the

lively modern sound of the word and even named their newspaper *The Suffragette*. Even today, the term suffragette refers only to the British militants of the WSPU.<sup>21</sup>

The WSPU used new forms of activism to bring the suffrage movement out of the same quiescence that the American cause had experienced. Parades and processions added color and excitement to the suffrage issue and deputations to Parliament brought the request for suffrage to the very gates of power. Early militancy for the WSPU consisted of colorful attempts to generate publicity: "picketing" the Parliament from a boat on the Thames, speaking in novel and inconvenient places, and interrupting government speakers with questions about their support for women's suffrage. The WSPU found that legal deputations to Parliament and heckling of speakers (a tradition in British politics) met with extenuated violence by police and arrest on flimsy charges. The suffragettes found that throwing a stone to break a window or simulating spitting or slapping a police officer led to a quicker, less punishing arrest. Once in prison, WSPU members were denied "first division" privileges as political prisoners and were consigned to the criminal "third division." In protest, the suffragettes would go on hunger strike and be forcibly fed.<sup>22</sup>

Appropriately enough, Alice Paul met Lucy Burns, a redheaded Irish American, in a London police station following their arrest at a demonstration. Both women took part in the questioning of government officials, demonstrations, prison hunger strikes, and forcible feeding that formed part of the British movement. Although Burns stayed on to organize in England, Paul would return home in 1910 to complete her doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania. The two women were reunited in 1912 in their efforts to convince NAWSA to establish a permanent lobbying committee in Washington, D.C. to work for a federal suffrage amendment.<sup>23</sup> Feelings in NAWSA about a federal amendment had softened because of the decidedly mixed outcome of the state-by-state approach. Between 1890 and 1896, four western states granted the vote to women (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho); however, between 1896 and 1910, no new suffrage states were added to the total. This fourteen year drought made some suffragists realize the slow and uncertain nature of state suffrage and to think again about a federal amendment. In 1910, Washington State gave the franchise to women and California did the same in 1911. Despite their pleasure over these victories, some suffragists realized that the western states might be easier to win for woman's suffrage than their eastern (and certainly their southern) counterparts. Also, with new women voters in the western states to help elect pro-suffrage senators and congressmen, a federal amendment began to appear as a possibility.<sup>24</sup>

Alice Paul was quick to seize this opening. She appeared at the November 1912 NAWSA annual convention with plans for a suffrage parade in the nation's capital to correspond with Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. She was granted the title of chairman of the Congressional Committee (NAWSA's lobbying wing, which had been in half-hearted existence for some time) and given the responsibility to raise any funds needed.<sup>25</sup> The resulting March 3, 1913, parade was quite incredible. The cost of the event was just under \$15,000, and it echoed the grand processions of the British suffrage parades. Over 8,000 marchers participated with floats and banners in the march down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House. At the front of

the parade rode a beautiful young lawyer, Inez Milholland, as a Joan of Arc figure draped in a white cape and mounted upon a white horse. The sidewalks were packed with crowds, mainly composed of men in Washington for Wilson's inaugural the following day.<sup>26</sup> In fact, when President Wilson arrived by train at Union Station that afternoon, the expected crowds were not there to greet him. "Where are the people?" Wilson is reported to have asked on the drive to his hotel. "Over on the avenue watching the suffrage parade," came the response.<sup>27</sup> More than anyone could know, that exchange was a portent of the years to come.

Equally prophetic was the response by men in the crowds that lined the suffrage parade route. The procession had only gone a few blocks when men poured into the streets. Jeering and grabbing at the marchers, the men tore at their banners, overturned their floats, and closed the avenue down so that the women were threading their way through a gauntlet of abuse. Rather than protect the procession, the police seemed to enjoy the resulting melee and allowed it to continue. By the end of the day, one hundred marchers were treated at a local Emergency Hospital and cavalry had to be brought in to restore order.<sup>28</sup> As they were mauled, spat upon, and groped by middle-class men, many of the marchers had their first glimpse at the brutality and male privilege that hid beneath the thin veneer of chivalry.

Because of disagreements with NAWSA over fund-raising and the wisdom of dramatic processions, Paul and Burns established a shadow organization in April 1913 and called it the Congressional Union. The CU produced its own weekly journal *The Suffragist* and chose as their colors purple, white, and gold (signifying loyalty, purity, and life).<sup>29</sup> They also promoted a policy of holding the party in power responsible for the failure to bring a suffrage amendment. This party policy was the same one held by the WSPU in England, and it meant that the Democrats (with Wilson as their head) would be blamed for the continued failure to enfranchise women. This policy was bound to clash with the more conciliatory and diplomatic NAWSA approach, and in February 1914, NAWSA and the CU split permanently. In June 1916, at a CU convention in Chicago held for women in the western suffrage states, the National Woman's Party was born. The NWP was meant to organize voting women in the west under their own political party, while the CU continued to organize non-voting eastern women. Yet, it is difficult to separate the activities and members of the two organizations and, by March 1917, they had combined under the NWP name.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, through a convoluted path of organizations, policies, and divisions, the way was prepared for the rise of militancy in the American suffrage movement. Alice Paul did not like the term militancy, believing (and rightfully so) that it was easily confused with violence. The militant WSPU in England had, by 1913, turned to a program of "guerilla" militancy that involved arson of letterboxes, bombings of buildings (including churches and the summer home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer), and widespread destruction of private and public property. Paul could see the negative impact of this violent campaign and, true to her Quaker roots, eschewed all violence. As it had for the earlier nonviolent British movement, the term militant meant activism and a defiant, uncompromising spirit in the pursuit of truth. It was a use of the term that resonated with the Christian concept of the "church militant."<sup>31</sup> Remaining unflinchingly nonviolent

throughout its history, the NWP only referred to themselves as militant after June 1917 when they faced imprisonment for the civil disobedience of the picketing campaign.<sup>32</sup>

### *Mabel Vernon: The Speaker*

It is appropriate that one of Mabel Vernon's speeches should represent the National Woman's Party and the militant voice of protest in the American suffrage movement. Alice Paul and Lucy Burns are far better known and revered as the leaders of the NWP. The single-minded Paul functioned very much as the General and main tactician of her organization. The lively and academically brilliant Lucy Burns was more of a field commander, often found in the thick of a protest.<sup>33</sup> As a talented organizer and speaker, Mabel Vernon was part of the inner circle of leadership just one rung below Paul and Burns. Yet, in many ways, she operated as a soldier in the field. She represents well the many talented women who spent their lives working in the suffrage cause.

Although Mabel Vernon attended Swarthmore at the same time as Alice Paul, graduating a year prior to Paul, the two women did not really know each other until the time of the suffrage campaign. Vernon, a Delaware native, had won awards as a debater at Swarthmore and, following graduation taught high school Latin and German in Pennsylvania. In 1912, she attended a NAWSA conference in Philadelphia, and when Alice Paul was organizing the CU in 1913, a mutual acquaintance recommended Vernon for a position in the organization. Vernon came to Washington for an interview and Paul immediately promised to match her schoolteacher salary of \$70 a month. Thus, Vernon became Alice Paul's first paid organizer.<sup>34</sup> Vernon was extremely talented as the advance person for CU campaigns across the country, and *The Suffragist* contained many articles from her adventures cross-country.<sup>35</sup> With the founding of the NWP, she was named secretary of the new organization. During the fall of 1916, she served as a regional organizer in the presidential election campaign, speaking on street corners and organizing rallies against the re-election of Wilson and those legislators blocking the suffrage amendment.<sup>36</sup>

For all of her skills as an organizer and speaker, Mabel Vernon was more valuable to the NWP as the advance guard of militant action. It seems that whenever a new technique was introduced into the NWP repertoire, Vernon was the one to carry it out. At the 1916 dedication of the new labor temple in Washington, D. C., President Wilson addressed participants in a labor parade from the reviewing stand. Seated on the platform, only steps away from the President, were Alice Paul and Mabel Vernon. As the President proclaimed his support for every class, Vernon took the opportunity for a pre-planned interruption. In the ringing tones for which she was known, Vernon asked, "Mr. President, if you sincerely desire to forward the interests of all the people, why do you oppose the national enfranchisement of women?" Startled into a response, Wilson replied, "That is one of the things which we will have to take council over later." Toward the close of the speech, with the subject of woman suffrage still unaddressed, Vernon spoke up again, "Answer, Mr. President, why do you oppose the national enfranchisement of women?" At this point, Vernon was peacefully escorted from the platform by the police.<sup>37</sup>

President Wilson would again hear from Vernon in a more symbolic way during his December 5, 1916, message to Congress. A small group of women had attained seats in the front row of the visitors' gallery facing the speaker's desk. When President Wilson spoke for the rights and privileges of the people of Puerto Rico, Mabel Vernon unfurled the banner she had smuggled in under her coat and flung it over the rail of the gallery. With a swish of silk, the bright yellow banner displayed its message in black lettering: "Mr. President What Will You Do For Woman Suffrage?" Although the banner was removed within five minutes, the women had effectively put their question before Congress and, through the newspapers, before the country.<sup>38</sup> It is not surprising that, six months later, Mabel Vernon would be one of six women who were first to be imprisoned in the fight for woman suffrage in America.<sup>39</sup>

Mabel Vernon presented the speech analyzed in this essay before the Advisory Council Conference of the National Woman's Party, held in Washington, D.C. from December 6 through December 9, 1917. This was the fourth Advisory Council Conference of the NWP and these conferences proved to be the major strategizing meetings for the organization.<sup>40</sup> Generally, in understanding a speech, an examination of context takes us right up to the speaking moment. To follow standard form, I should detail the events of 1917 as providing the "rhetorical situation"<sup>41</sup> (a situation inviting a rhetorical response) for Mabel Vernon's December speech. An examination of the speech text would then follow. Yet, this is a retrospective presented to an audience that already has endorsed a groundbreaking policy and put it into effect. This speech is best understood by following the chronological unfolding of events as detailed by Vernon during the speech itself. It is a discussion of the events themselves, coupled with an examination of Vernon's specific rhetorical techniques, which provides understanding of an inventional process: the development of a nonverbal rhetoric of protest. This speech offers insight into a new symbolic warfare conducted by women, one that embodied an appeal to physical presence as opposed to physical force.

*"The Picketing Campaign Nears Victory"<sup>42</sup>: The Speech*

In her speech to the Advisory Council, Mabel Vernon took full advantage of what Stephen Browne calls "tactical representations of the past."<sup>43</sup> Unlike most commemorative rhetoric, Vernon dealt not in the distant past of history but in the recent collective past she shared with her NWP audience. Throughout her speech, Vernon tapped the recent memories of her Advisory Council audience for deliberative more so than epideictic purposes. As John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton state, such appeals to collective memory summon "the past glories and/or past suffering of the group" and thus form a "discursive practice . . . central to a group's sense of identity and belonging."<sup>44</sup> For Vernon, this process cannot stop at identity but must be "transformed for strategic purposes"<sup>45</sup> into new forms of action for the suffrage cause. In this speech, Mabel Vernon repeatedly used a three-pronged approach, wherein she shared a recent common memory with her audience, utilized that memory to forge a new collective identity, and argued for new forms of protest suitable to that new identity. An



examination of "The Picketing Campaign Nears Victory" reveals a process by which collective memory can be marshaled in support of innovative action.

In establishing the commemorative moment, Mabel Vernon began her speech to the Advisory Council by taking her audience "back to the 9th of last January"<sup>46</sup> (1) when many of them appeared before President Wilson to present a series of memorial resolutions. Yet, for Vernon's audience, this opening would take them back even farther: to the fall of the previous year, the 1916 campaign in the West, and the death of an iconic figure of the suffrage movement.

The NWP organized women voters in the western states to vote against Wilson and legislators opposed to woman suffrage, countering Wilson's campaign slogan, "He kept us out of war" with their own version, "He kept us out of suffrage."<sup>47</sup> Among the hundreds of women involved in the western campaign, one of the fieriest speakers was Inez Milholland (Boissevain), the woman celebrated as the stunning figurehead of the 1913 parade. Despite indications of ill health, she took on a campaign of eight states. In a Los Angeles rally in September, she had just quoted Wilson's words, "The tide is rising to meet the moon; you will not have long to wait." "How long," Milholland continued, "must women wait for liberty?" As she said the word "liberty," Milholland collapsed in a faint, and only weeks later she was dead, whether of leukemia or pernicious anemia is unclear.<sup>48</sup> In Milholland's death, the NWP lost not simply a brilliant speaker but the ideal symbol of the New Woman, the sporty and emancipated image of young women that appeared in advertisements and writing in the early years of the new century. Because she was beautiful, married, and naturally elegant, her presence in the movement challenged the common stereotype of suffragists. In her death, however, the NWP gained an unsought martyr, and her loss became a point of movement coalescence. The international suffrage movement had earlier been shocked by the violent death of British militant, Emily Wilding Davison, killed in her attempt to stop the King's horse during the 1913 Derby, Milholland's non-violent death appeared more symbolic of the grinding hard work that had already consumed the lives of generations of suffragists.

Still, Gary Alan Fine tells us that every martyr leaves behind "a dead body with powerful cultural resonance," and the NWP sought ways to honor a friend and draw the symbolic lesson of her death.<sup>49</sup> A dramatic service was conducted in Statuary Hall in Milholland's memory, the first memorial ever held in the Capitol to honor a woman.<sup>50</sup> In the Advisory Council speech one year later, Mabel Vernon spoke of Milholland's death in two ways. First, she presented Milholland as the symbol of "the undaunted kind of spirit that never recognizes defeat," (2) the exemplar of the NWP's view that action is the vital thing: "to go on and do more, do the thing which will win" (2). Second, Milholland's death was presented as a "hinge" event that would directly lead to a new protest strategy.<sup>51</sup> Ron Aminzade and Doug McAdam argue that "the collective mobilization of heightened emotion" is a necessary prelude to a new round of contentious politics. By saying this, they do not mean that political activists are responding out of irrational feelings; in fact, they believe that heightened emotions lead both to rational thought and the discovery of new instrumental ways to achieve a goal.<sup>52</sup> The loss of a friend and colleague, a woman who was admired as the living embodiment of their movement, generated new determination within the NWP and an increased

sense of engagement. Vernon reminded her audience of their common loss, of "that beautiful service that many of us remember; it made an impression, I think, that we will never allow to escape from our memories" (2). Building on this collective memory, Vernon structured her speech around three distinct events that formed the recent history of the National Woman's Party. She thus set the stage for a process of invention, for the transformation of the suffragist identity, and for the discovery of new tactics to bring that identity into action.

*Silent Sentinels at the Gates of Power*

For her first structuring memory, Vernon took her audience forward to the details of the January 9, 1917, memorial delegation of 300 women dispatched to the White House to see the President. As part of a series of presentations to Wilson, Sara Bard Field asked, "in the name of this gallant girl who died with the word 'Liberty' on her lips," that Wilson "speak some favorable word . . . that we may know that you will use your good and great office to end this wasteful struggle of women."<sup>53</sup> Vernon reminded her audience of the President's response, "words," she said, "that amazed us" (8):

Ladies, I think you make a mistake in coming to me. I cannot speak for my party, I must wait until my party speaks to me. I am not the leader of my party, I am only the servant of my party. (7)

Here, Vernon uses the President's own words to introduce the language devices that will dominate her speech and movement rhetoric in the years to come: parallel structure and antithesis. Antithesis, or the use of paired opposites, generally provides a pleasing sense of balance to a speech. Vernon (and the NWP) took this device and applied it to Wilson's words and actions as the underlying rhetorical basis for charges of hypocrisy against the administration.

Vernon described how Wilson ended the memorial delegation with a piece of sage advice, "You must concert public opinion in this country in behalf of woman suffrage" (9). Wilson stopped speaking and there came a moment that suffragist Doris Stevens described in her memoirs: "Dead silence. The President stood for a brief instant as if waiting for some faint stir of approval which did not come. He had the baffled air of a disappointed actor who has failed to reach his audience."<sup>54</sup> Vernon described this same moment for the Advisory Council:

The group of women simply stood in the East Room of the White House, never moved, never turned for a little while. The secret service men came and pushed us back a little. Then the doors opened behind the President and he went out. The doors were shut in our faces; and those were the last words left with us: "Ladies, concert public opinion in behalf of woman suffrage." (9)

Here, in actuality, was what the suffragists had experienced figuratively for all those decades of effort, the doors of government shut in their faces.

Vernon picks up her narrative, providing a visual image, not of three hundred delegates but of the little band of leaders: "We went across the square very slowly, and when we came to our headquarters we sat down there in the drawing-room. Everyone was thinking, considering what the President had said to us, and questioning, 'What are we going to do now'" (10)? This is a David versus Goliath image, here domesticated to the homey confines of a drawing room. It provided a visual antithesis, an image of paired opposites that complemented the verbal antithesis found in so much of Vernon's speech. In Vernon's account, it was Harriet Stanton Blatch who spoke to propose the new strategy with the same parallelism and antithesis that marked Wilson's denial of responsibility:

We may not be admitted within the doors, but we at least can stand at the gates. We may not be allowed to raise our voices and speak to the President, but we can address him just the same, because our message to him will be inscribed upon the banners which we will carry in our hands. Let us post our silent sentinels at the gates of the White House. (13)

Vernon's account moved the new strategy from revelation through inspiration to execution as she described in jaunty language, the "straight, steady, line" of women that set off the next day from headquarters, "marched down Madison Place, swung up the Avenue and took their places at the gates of the White House" (15).

As Mabel Vernon put it, the NWP was "giving right here in Washington the visualization of all this sentiment which does exist, we know it exists, in all parts of our country" (41). If, as John Berger maintains, our culture is one where "men *act* and women *appear*,"<sup>55</sup> then the NWP initiated a strategy where women acted through their appearance, providing an argument through visualization. True to their beliefs that all the arguments had already been made, the banners carried by this first group of picketers were questions already asked through Mabel Vernon's banner at Wilson's State of the Union and Inez Milholland's final public words: "Mr. President, what will you do for woman suffrage?" "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty" (16)? Here they appeared as dialectical questions directed to Woodrow Wilson, indications of a conversation that was as yet incomplete, of questions that had received no answers. The sentinels themselves remained silent. Silence, Peter Ehrenhaus tells us, is an "encounter," one that "issues a call of conscience."<sup>56</sup> By appearing at his gate, the picketers hoped to appeal to Wilson's conscience, to stimulate a soul searching that might yield a new awareness and action. The suffragists utilized a strategic silence that is both mystifying and disturbing to those against whom it is directed. As Barry Brummett maintains, "If talk is the substance of political relationships, then strategic silence is taken to mean the temporary denial of relationship."<sup>57</sup> By their silent vigil, the suffragists declared the breakdown of their relationship with the administration and their distrust of Wilson's words and goodwill.

The instituting of the NWP's silent picket line was rhetorically brilliant. In some ways the use of silence is inherently feminine, projecting a "passive persona,"<sup>58</sup> reflective of the public silence that had in the past been imposed on women by their culture. Yet, here, women have stepped right to the gates of power, symbolically seizing their rights as citizens under the first amendment to petition the government and have their grievances met. Their argument that they were full citizens (entitled to the political rights and subject to the responsibilities of the same) was made in their actions. Their appearance at the White House was a form of "enactment," wherein "a rhetor illustrates by embodying the point she or he is making."<sup>59</sup> "Implicit enactment," as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes it, is often performative, putting forth a non-verbal rather than a verbal claim.<sup>60</sup> In describing the actions of the National Woman's Party as opposed to more conventional suffragists, George Lakey states that the militants continued "the *freedom motif* to the very mode of action itself. Nonviolent direct action is a means which is itself experienced as releasing. . . they *enacted* their freedom and experienced the elation which went with it." And, Lakey argues, such actions transformed the militant's self-image. No longer would they place themselves in the position of begging; they now had moved to a stance of demanding.<sup>61</sup>

Vernon in her first description reminded her audience of their shared experience of the closed door. From there, she moved to the NWP's adoption of an antithetical identity as silent sentinels, quietly eloquent in their condemnation of injustice. By an innovative action that visualized their arguments, the NWP pickets stepped to the doors of power and opened a silent conversation with the President and the nation about the rights of women. It was, as Vernon soon would relate, a conversation destined to become more heated with the advent of war.

### *The Wartime Policy*

Vernon continued the narrative in her speech with the Presidential interview granted to one representative of each of the five political parties (including the Woman's Party) on May 14, 1917. This interview with Wilson followed the American entrance on April 7, 1917, into what was then called "The Great War." Intriguingly, Vernon (the official coordinator of the picket campaign) was chosen to be the NWP representative. After hearing appeals for woman suffrage as a war measure, Wilson (apparently dropping the fiction of his own lack of power) said, "I am free to tell you that this is a matter which is daily pressing upon my mind for reconsideration" (20). Vernon's series of rhetorical questions provided a knowing wink to her audience: "Do you wonder that I smiled? How could I help it? Had we not been standing at his gates every day for four whole months" (21)? She drew the conclusion for her audience that visualization, women placing themselves where they must be seen and not ignored, was effective. The pickets' banners "had been the chief sight which met the President's eyes every time he went out and every time he came in" (21). It was the silent call to conscience that caused the daily "pressing" upon the President's mind.

With that assurance to her audience of the success of the picket campaign, Vernon was ready to present her second collective memory: the darkening of public

mood against the suffragists following the advent of war. Response in the press and public to the initial days of picketing had been benign; it was widely viewed as a colorful stunt. As the women continued to appear day after day, their persistence was increasingly attacked in the press as "unwomanly," and viewed, in the words of an Ohio representative on the floor of Congress, as "an insult to the President."<sup>62</sup> Passersby were only occasionally negative. As for Wilson, himself, he responded initially with confident good humor, walking straight by the pickets, often raising his hat or smiling politely. During a particularly brutal stint of winter weather, he ordered the guards to invite the picketers in for hot coffee; the women refused the offer.<sup>63</sup> The women varied the spectacle with College Day (and sashes from their respective alma maters), teachers' day, Susan B. Anthony day; but they carried on in every type of weather. On Inaugural Day, one thousand women marched for two hours in a gale and driving rain, requesting a brief audience with the President, but found the gates of the White House locked against them and no audience granted.

Then came the declaration of war on April 7, 1917, and the NWP was pressured to end their drive for suffrage (as had the British militants) for the duration. The NWP refused. In her Advisory Council speech, Vernon recalled for her audience the instituting of the wartime policy of the NWP: confronting the President with his own stirring words on democracy and with banners that pointed out the irony of the situation. Vernon described the change in administration and public response to this policy that came with the large banner displayed on the 20th of June, during the Russian envoys' meeting at the White House. The banner read:

WE WOMEN OF AMERICA TELL YOU THAT AMERICA  
IS NOT A DEMOCRACY. TWENTY MILLION AMERICAN  
WOMEN ARE DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE. PRESIDENT  
WILSON IS THE CHIEF OPPONENT OF THEIR NATIONAL  
ENFRANCHISEMENT.<sup>64</sup>

Vernon recounted in her speech that a passerby "tore it down because he did not like the truth told upon it" (25). As Vernon continued the story, the NWP were warned to refrain from carrying banners. On the 21st of June, six women were arrested as they displayed Wilson's words from the declaration of war speech.<sup>65</sup> Because carrying a banner was legal, the charge against the suffragists was "obstructing traffic" (28). Although she does not mention it here, Mabel Vernon was one of the six women arrested.

By moving to the gates of the White House, the NWP—like the British militants before them—had "encroached upon male space."<sup>66</sup> The physical attacks on the marchers in the 1913 parade provided a foretaste of the steps that men would take to maintain that space. The entry into war then served as the patriotic justification for physical attacks and arrests that might have come in any event. But, George Lakey maintains, the war was also a "releasing event" for women, heightening a sense that they were in a parallel war for democracy at home.<sup>67</sup> It is her audience's memory of events in this shadow war at home to which Vernon now turned in her speech. In

recounting these events, she relied upon parallelism as a device to heighten the irony of each situation and to strengthen a new identity within her audience. Vernon described Speaker Clark on the Ellipse at the back of the White House quoting the Declaration of Independence in a 4th of July speech. Simultaneously, women displaying words from the Declaration were being arrested at the front of the White House. She described the Bastille Day celebrations and the sentencing of 16 women to 60 days in the Occoquan workhouse for displaying the slogan of the French revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" (30). The juxtaposition of these events, the lauding of fine sentiments and the revolutions that brought men their rights even while arresting women using the same words in seeking their own rights, provided proof of a hollow political culture.

Through the recounting of these events, Vernon strengthened the suffragists' new identity as warriors for democracy. By this reasoning, the suffragists' willingness to suffer physical attack and arrest for a democratic ideal at home made them analogous to the men fighting for democracy overseas. The importance of this analogy to the identity of NWP members may be seen in the popularity of banners displaying Wilson's own words from the war message, "We shall fight for the things nearest our hearts, for democracy"<sup>68</sup> (7). The depth of this feeling escaped an administration operation out of the belief that arresting the "ringleaders" (36), and subjecting middle-class women to physical punishment, would send them scurrying back to the comforts of home. "Such a stupid government!" (35) expostulated Mabel Vernon as she described the arrest of Alice Paul and her seven month sentence for displaying the President's own words. It would be 73-year-old Mrs. Nolan's words to the judge, as he sentenced her to 6 months for protesting Paul's arrest, which best characterized the rationale based on parallelism: "Your honor, I have a nephew fighting for democracy in France. He is offering his life for his country. I should be ashamed if I did not join these brave women in their fight for democracy in America. I should be proud of the honor to die in prison for the liberty of American women."<sup>69</sup>

In her speech, Vernon implied the actions inherent to this new warrior identity: to accept the physical punishment necessitated by a fight for democracy and never to sound retreat. As with her support for the initial picketing, she justified these actions through a second series of rhetorical questions for her audience:

Was it not worth standing there through the cold weather and on the hot days which began to come early in the summer? Was it not worth even going to prison for, to have national woman suffrage daily in the mind of the President? . . . Truly, I do not know how we could have kept alive the woman suffrage question in the war session of Congress if it had not been for the banners that we held, not only at the White House, but also on Capitol Hill. (22 – 23)

As the stakes grew higher for the suffragists, as they were subject not merely to harsh weather and boredom on the picket line but to physical attacks and arrest, there was an increased need to remain tenacious in the fight. Vernon assured her audience that theirs was a just war, that they reflected "the demand of women in all parts of the

country that this question of democracy at home should be settled at a time when we fight for democracy abroad" (24). By attiring her audience in a soldier's identity, Vernon strengthened their resolve for further action and assured them of the coming victory.

### *The Night of Terror*

Mabel Vernon was now ready to make her third progression from memory to identity to action. Here she makes an interesting rhetorical choice. Vernon cloaks the most dramatic aspects of the suffrage campaign under a simple "We know what happened . . ." (37), a simple phrase by which she called up the disturbing events that were fresh in the minds of her audience. Briefly, when the arrested pickets that had protested Alice Paul's sentence reached Occoquan, they requested to speak to Superintendent Whittaker, demanding that they be granted the rights of political prisoners. What followed was a night of wholesale abuse as the women (including Mrs. Nolan) were brutally manhandled, dragged down stairs and across hallways, and slammed against iron benches and onto the floor of cells. Dorothy Day, later the founder of the Catholic Workers, was brutally beaten and choked. When Lucy Burns called the roll to ascertain if her fellow prisoners were injured, she was suspended by her handcuffed wrists from her cell door. Unable to help, Julia Emory stood with her hands above her head in the same position until Burns was later released. This "Night of Terror,"<sup>70</sup> as it became known, was as iconic for American militants as had been the British militants' 1910 "Black Friday" beating by police and male crowds. In both instances, the mask of civility had fallen and the powerlessness of women in society was highlighted.

In summoning the memory of prison abuse, Vernon draws forth the third identity of NWP members as martyrs for justice. By taking on the identity of those willing to suffer for freedom, the NWP completed a further move away from words and towards a policy of "body rhetoric."<sup>71</sup> In this speech, Vernon's passing reference to "the suffering women have shown they are willing to endure" (39), reminded her audience of the NWP policy of prison hunger strikes to protest their lack of status as political prisoners. The hunger strike is a fascinating rhetorical tool in that it is the performance of a power relationship. The hunger striker puts the prisoner in the hands of an oppressor, making those against whom s/he fasts "take responsibility for [the act of] starvation."<sup>72</sup> In terms provided by Kenneth Burke, the suffragists' self-sacrifice was an act of "mortification." Through a symbolic drama of suffering, they sought "redemption" for the guilt caused by their challenge to the "hierarchy" of governmental power.<sup>73</sup> In such acts, Jane Marcus sees a moral advantage for the hunger striker: "Like children casting themselves on the mercy of an unjust father, by inflicting pain and suffering on themselves, such protesters appeal to the patriarch's humanity."<sup>74</sup> It was not a surprising choice for the NWP in their determination to remain nonviolent. With the same silence and passivity that was displayed in the picketing campaign itself, the suffragists made their bodies into both battlegrounds and theaters.<sup>75</sup> By playing out a "spectacle of disempowerment,"<sup>76</sup> they hoped to touch the conscience of the administration and the public. They also used this tactic, much as they had in their

picketing, to make an argument of presence,<sup>77</sup> to render themselves visible, refusing to serve unjust sentences in silence and obscurity. As Eyal Naveh states, "the very term martyr means witness," and by their physical martyrdom, the NWP prisoners witnessed against an unjust power relationship.<sup>78</sup>

The suffragists' new identity as martyrs would involve them in experiences far more physically wearing than anything they had experienced in the past. The response to the NWP hunger strike was the start of a policy of forcible feeding. Forcible feeding, a process described repeatedly during the suffrage campaign in Britain and America, generally consisted of the suffragist held down in a chair or on a bed by guards. Her mouth would be pried open, often by the use of some type of wedge, and a tube forced down her throat and into her stomach. Some form of nourishing concoction would be poured in. Because of the repeated vomiting caused by the procedure, it rarely provided much in the way of nourishment. It was, instead, torture and its metaphoric resemblance to rape has been commented upon by recent researchers.<sup>79</sup> While the NWP prisoners suffered through multiple forcible feedings per day, their compatriots on the outside brought a writ of habeas corpus, forcing a trial on November 23 where the prisoners' condition (including marks from the Night of Terror to their wasted condition associated with hunger strikes and feeding) would be on display. With its hand forced, the administration folded and all suffragist prisoners were released on November 27 and 28.<sup>80</sup>

In her speech, Vernon glossed over the harrowing experiences of NWP members in order to emphasize the coming victory their suffering would surely bring. She claimed a dual effect as the government was "spurred to action" (39). First, friends that "hung back" would see the "urgency of immediate action" (39). More importantly, she offered a benefit to enemies that included a subtle threat. The foes of suffrage, she claimed, desired that an increasingly "intense" agitation leave the capital and be "scattered among the legislatures of forty-eight states" (39). The NWP was more than willing to make that deal. Women would disappear from the White House gates; the banners that publicized American hypocrisy would be folded and put away; the NWP would leave Washington, D.C. and move to the states to campaign. The offer Vernon made was an apparent return to the status quo; the only acceptable price was a federal suffrage amendment.

### *Conclusion*

Despite her optimism, Mabel Vernon ended her speech on a cautionary note, raising the possibility that the amendment might not pass successfully through Congress. Her expectation of immediate success and her concern that the success might be incomplete were both borne out. The amendment came up for a vote in the House of Representatives on January 10, 1918. On the eve of the vote, exactly a year to the day following the Inez Milholland deputation, the President finally declared his support for the amendment and urged Democratic congressmen to vote in its favor. The amendment passed the House with a two-thirds majority and at least six congressmen's support could be credited to the President's lobby. The radical shift in Wilson's rhetoric



in a year, and following so close on the heels of capitulation in releasing the suffrage prisoners, gave a distinct impression of victory to the picketing campaign. Alice Paul had no doubt about the impact of the pickets on Wilson's decision, describing it thusly: "If a creditor stands before a man's house all day long, demanding payment of his bill, the man must either remove the creditor or pay the bill." The arrests and imprisonments having failed to remove the "creditors," the time had come for the President to pay the bill.<sup>81</sup>

Yet, the U.S. Senate would be much more difficult to win and months continued with the suffragists two votes shy of success. In her speech Vernon asked, in the case that the amendment failed, "What have we in store for us?" She answered her own question, "Why, we can simply go on doing what we have done . . ." (41). That is precisely what the NWP continued to do. The President spoke to the U.S. Senate on the amendment's behalf in September 1918, but it failed to pass in October. The NWP continued the round of demonstrations, underwent more violent attacks on their pickets, were arrested on trumped up charges of "obstructing traffic" and "loitering" at a parade, and withstood terrible prison conditions. Throughout they continued to focus their pressure on Wilson, believing that he had not done enough to bring the final senators into the fold. The NWP's final innovations included the "watchfires of freedom," which they kept burning in front of the White House and in which they burned the President's words on democracy. Wilson finally applied the necessary pressure, even summoning one Democratic senator from Italy to Paris, where Wilson met with him and attained his pledge to vote for the amendment. Finally, the Susan B. Anthony Amendment passed the Senate and was submitted to the states for ratification on June 4, 1919. Fourteen months later, the amendment was ratified by the 36th state and on August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment became law.<sup>82</sup>

There is still debate over whether the militants were most responsible for Wilson's conversion and the winning of suffrage or whether it was the slow and sober efforts of the NAWSA moderates under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt. Whatever the political effect of the militant agitation, it had a tremendous effect on the women involved. Linda Ford makes the point that the imprisoned picketers "saw life in prison as a microcosm, in extreme form, of women's situation in American society."<sup>83</sup> Many suffragists felt great disillusionment over the brutality they experienced and witnessed. Yet, suffering for a greater cause gave the NWP members a renewed spirit and a transformed sense of self. They developed a new model of womanhood that honored strength and physical courage.<sup>84</sup> Although treated as common criminals, the NWP were clearly political prisoners and, in that guise, they brought their argument before the eyes of America. Gerald Hauser describes political prisoners as being in a "unique rhetorical position," distinguished from "common felons in that their incarceration grows from the threat of their ideas."<sup>85</sup> Hauser argues that the political prisoner's body becomes a vehicle for "displays of resistance," that serve as a form of epideictic (ceremonial) rhetoric. Their "bodily resistance" becomes a means of invention, "in which 'showing' may acquire the demonstrative power of irrefutable proof."<sup>86</sup> The proof of women's oppression lay in the over-reaction of the administration and the repressive means used to regain physical control of the NWP pickets.

The NWP also developed a new model of reform agitation, pioneering an argument of presence that challenged the absence of women in the public arena. By remaining nonviolent even when on the receiving end of violence, their chosen form of civil disobedience would have a major impact on reform movements to follow in the twentieth century. Gandhi, a visitor to London in 1906, 1909, and 1914, was impressed by the early passive resistance techniques of the British militants, the same tactics that inspired the NWP. Gandhi wrote of the British militants, "Today, the whole country is laughing at them, and they have only a few people on their side. But undaunted, these women work on steadfast in their cause. They are bound to succeed . . ." <sup>87</sup> As did the NWP leadership, Gandhi voiced deep concern over the later turn to violence by the British militants, believing that they would alienate the public and lose their moral imperative. <sup>88</sup> New tactics developed in the suffrage movement, particularly the use of physical presence and the body as an instrument of protest, would be cultivated by Gandhi in his passive resistance campaigns. <sup>89</sup> The further ties between Gandhi's Indian independence movement and the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s dated from 1915 when Gandhi's followers arrived in the United States and developed a relationship with African American leaders. The desire for a "Black Gandhi" to lead the civil rights movement would be fulfilled with the rise to leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., who often acknowledged Gandhi's influence on his techniques of passive resistance. <sup>90</sup> Thus, it is easy to trace the development of a rhetoric of nonverbal protest beginning with the NWP (and the British militants that inspired them) and evolving across the twentieth century.

Today, many of the protest strategies for modern reform movements, such as picketing and marches/processions, remain consistent with those of the suffragists. In some ways, the tacticians of the National Woman's Party could have been writing the strategic playbook for reformers of the mid-twentieth century. Just as one example, it is Woodrow Wilson, the individual, who appears throughout Mabel Vernon's speech to the Advisory Council. As had the British militants with Prime Minister Asquith, the NWP pinned responsibility on Wilson for his lack of support for the Federal suffrage amendment. In this way, the NWP anticipated Saul Alinsky's advice in his 1971 *Rules for Radicals* to "pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." <sup>91</sup> For all of the NWP's strategic prescience, however, protest strategies have continued to evolve. Spectacles of protest are often geared to the reform that is being pursued. Thus, we have tree sitters in the environmental movement who occupy—sometimes for years at a time—the branches of endangered old growth trees. As with the NWP protests at the gates of government, the environmentalists use their bodies to occupy contested space. The animal rights movement has been particularly physical in their "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" marches and their symbolic attacks with ketchup or red paint on fur coats, whether in stores or worn by women in the streets.

The further use of the body in such mortification techniques as hunger strikes has been far more prevalent in Great Britain. Most notably, a series of hunger strikes resulted in the 1981 deaths of Bobby Sands and nine other Irish Republican Army prisoners protesting, as had the suffragists, for political prisoner status. In 2001, British animal rights activist, Barry Horne, died while on his fourth hunger strike to try to force

the forming of a Royal Commission on vivisection.<sup>92</sup> Certainly the use of the protester's body as a tool was obvious in the lunch counter sit-ins of the civil rights movement, the "die-ins" to protest the Vietnam War, or the blockading of the entrances to abortion clinics. New laws have been developed to respond to these changes in protest strategies, such as the FACE (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances) law, that places a buffer zone for protest away from abortion clinic entrances.

Many of the techniques pioneered by the NWP were in conscious rejection of the British militants' turn to violence against property. Today, there are increased fears that protest will turn violent, and many reform movements must deal with a radical "fringe" that has taken the step either into spontaneous violence or planned acts of terrorism. Whether it has been the torching of SUV's or a Vail ski resort by the Environmental Liberation Front, arson of research laboratories or fur stores by the Animal Liberation Front, or bombings of abortion clinics, many of the violent acts in modern reform have centered around the destruction of contested items or spaces. More disturbing still has been the murder of doctors who perform abortions. These planned assassinations have, thus far, been performed by individuals, and no group has taken direct credit for the violence. Yet, a number of anti-abortion leaders—while declaring themselves personally non-violent— have described such efforts to protect fetal life as "justifiable homicide." If anything, ninety years after the NWP stood at the White House gates, the tensions within reform movements over the acceptable limits of protest have been heightened.

The legacy of the NWP may be still more important in post-9/11 America. In 1917, United States involvement in a foreign war led to onerous laws that branded protest as a form of sedition. The 1917 Espionage Act and its 1918 amendment made it a crime to utter or print "any disloyal, profane, scurrilous or abusive language" against the United States government. The imprisonment of the NWP for displaying the President's words could be considered mild compared to some of the prosecutions under this act. Still, there is little doubt that the suffragists were denied their First Amendment rights.<sup>93</sup> Today, in the volatile atmosphere following the World Trade Center attacks and the entry into wars with Afghanistan and Iraq, even simple critique of the government has been viewed as a traitor's game. A negative comment by the Dixie Chicks about President Bush led to a consumer boycott of their music and a blacklisting of the group on country music stations. Of more concern are such recent laws as the USA Patriot Act and their potential impact on protest in time of war. The negative repercussions of being labeled as not merely "unpatriotic" but somehow "in league with the terrorists" are so great as to have a chilling effect on dissent. Thus, the tension between patriotism in wartime and freedom of speech is a recurrent problem with new resonance in the twenty-first century. Perhaps in our current environment, we are in a better position to understand the risks of protest during time of war and to appreciate the bravery of the suffragists of the National Woman's Party.

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### Notes

1 The British movement referred to "women's suffrage" and the American movement used the terms "woman suffrage" or "woman's suffrage." Although I personally find the construction uncomfortable, I will use the American terminology throughout this essay.

2 Inez Haynes Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), Kraus Reprint, 1971, 196-197; Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom: American Women Win the Vote*, ed., Carol O'Hare (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 59-72; Eleanor Clift, *Founding Sisters and the Nineteenth Amendment* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 122-128.

3 George Lakey, "Technique and Ethos in Nonviolent Action: The Woman Suffrage Case," in *Dissent: Symbolic Behavior and Rhetorical Strategies*, ed., Haig Bosmajian (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 309.

4 Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party*, 230.

5 Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party*, 234-237.

6 Aristotle, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, Trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 48.

7 See, for example, Paula Wilson Youra and Heidi Koring, *Pomp & Circumstance: Ceremonial Speaking* (Greenwood, IN: Alistair Press, 2002); Stephen H. Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 169-187; A. Cheree Carlson and John E. Hocking, "Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 203-215; Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr., "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 263-288; E.T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995); Victoria J. Gallagher, "Remembering Together: Rhetorical Integration and the Case of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial," *Southern Communication Journal*, (1995): 109-119; Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp and Lori Lanzilotti, "Public Memory and Private Grief: The Construction of Shrines at the Sites of Public Tragedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 150-170.

8 John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

9 Lavinia Dock, *The Suffragist*, June 30, 1917, quoted in Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party*, 212.

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10 Alison S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890 – 1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 6; Jean H. Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 190.

11 Loretta Ellen Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1912-1920*, diss. Tulane University, 1964, 27.

12 Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party*, 28.

13 Quoted in Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party*, 7.

14 The first woman suffrage amendment was introduced by George W. Julian on March 15, 1869. Ann D. Gordon, "Woman Suffrage (Not Universal Suffrage) by Federal Amendment" in *Votes For Women: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation*, ed., Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 6.

15 Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party*, 10.

16 Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 3.

17 Gordon, "Woman Suffrage (Not Universal Suffrage) by Federal Amendment," 6.

18 For details on these two arguments see Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 43-74.

19 Gordon, "Woman Suffrage (Not Universal Suffrage) by Federal Amendment," 14-15.

20 Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party*, 30-33.

21 Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (Newton Abbot, England: Victorian & Modern History Book Club, 1974), 11.

22 For more on the various tactics of British women's suffrage groups, see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Roger Fulford, *Votes for Women: The Story of a Struggle* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957); Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp, *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes* (Cranberry, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999); Andrew Rosen, *Rise Up Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 154.

23 Clift, *Founding Sisters*, 87-88.

24 Christine A. Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1910 – 1928* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 2-5.

25 Sheridan Harvey, "Marching For the Vote: Remembering the Woman Suffrage Parade of 1913," The Library of Congress American Memory, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/aw01e/aw01e.html>.

26 Harvey, "Marching For the Vote," np.

27 Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party*, 30.

28 Harvey, "Marching For the Vote," np.

29 Zimmerman, *Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party*, 50. It did not escape notice (and comment) that these colors were very close to the purple, white, and green of the WSPU.

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30 "Historical Overview of the National Woman's Party," Library of Congress American Memory, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/suffrage/nwp/history.html>), np

31 E. Cobham Brewer, "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable," 1898, <http://www.bartleby.com/81/3559.html>.

32 Linda G. Ford, "Alice Paul and the Politics of Nonviolent Protest," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, ed., Jean H. Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 174-177, and Linda G. Ford, "Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed., Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 279-283.

33 Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party*, 14-17.

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77 Chaim Perelman describes "presence" as "bringing to mind things that are not immediately present." Chaim Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning" in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings From Classical Times to the Present*, eds., Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1990), 1088-1089.

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