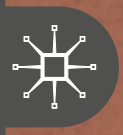

Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare

Conditional Citizenship in Historical Perspective

Edited by
Fia Cottrell-Sundevall · Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir

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ISBN 978-3-031-69863-7 ISBN 978-3-031-69864-4 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Acknowledgments

This book represents the collaborative effort of its authors, and we, as editors, are immensely grateful for their invaluable contributions and the enriching discussions that have shaped our joint project. Our appreciation also extends to the dedicated archivists and librarians whose assistance was pivotal in developing the various case studies. Additionally, we would like to thank Zeynep Çolpan for her meticulous proofreading, language editing, and enhancement.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the funding bodies whose financial support was instrumental in bringing this book to fruition. An authors' workshop in 2022 was generously funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Grant no. F22-0020), while an editors' workshop in 2023 received support from the Swedish Research Council (Grant no. 2017-00778).

The publication of this book in an open-access format was made possible through funding from the Icelandic Research Fund (Grant no. 174481–053), the Olle Engkvist Foundation (Grant no. 225-0055), and the research hub Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World, ReNEW (Grant no. 2018/7270 MONACS).

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June 2024

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Joan Sangster, James Keating, and Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir

This book explores disenfranchisement and other voting barriers before and after the introduction of so-called universal suffrage. Focusing on economic voting restrictions, implemented through constitutional provisions, laws, policies, and practices, we explore the many disqualifications barring people from voting in self-governing and aspiring liberal democracies, including poor relief dependency, lack of property or wealth, bankruptcy, tax debt, and low income. Notions of economic independence underpinning these exclusions built and reinforced societal structures and power relations, especially in terms of class, gender, race, age, civil status, and education. Economic disqualifications are a cogent

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_1

reminder that liberal democracies "were liberal long before they were democratic."[1]

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberal democracy carried "much of the capitalist market ideology into the political arena."[2] Despite the strength of revisionist scholarship on democratisation which has begun to unfold how exclusions based on sex, race, class, and colonialism shaped the franchise even after it became "universal," the notion that voting rights were progressively extended, first to the propertied and typically male citizen, then to unpropertied men, and lastly to women, remains entrenched in public narratives of democratic expansion.[3] Building on this revisionist scholarship, both conceptually and geographically, the essays in this volume chart the intersection of economic thinking with questions of gender, race, class, ability, indigeneity, and "honour" on the development of voting rights and practices across the nineteenth- and twentieth-century world, showing how historic exclusions and limitations woven into the fabric of liberal democracy have, to the present day, conditioned political citizenship.

Historically, universal suffrage has been understood as a paramount symbol of inclusivity, equal citizenship, and civic participation. As contributors to this collection note, recent state-led celebrations marking the centenaries of "universal" suffrage in national elections have presented it as a discrete milestone. This portrayal obscures the formal and informal voting restrictions that remained intact long after women won the right to

[1] Richard S. Katz, *Democracy and Elections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 46.

[2] Katz, *Democracy and Elections*, 47.

[3] For a few revisionist examples, see, Catherine Hall, Keith McLelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Annika Berg and Martin Ericsson ed., *Allmän rösträtt? Rösträttens begränsningar i Sverige efter 1921* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2021); Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, *Taking Liberty: Indigenous Rights and Settler Self-Government in Colonial Australia, 1830–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Philips, and Shurlee Swain, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies, 1830s–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 113–81; Marthe Hommerstad and Bjørn Arne Steine, ed., *Stemmerettens grenser: Fattigdom og demokratisk utestengelse 1814–1919* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2019); Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth Century United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

vote. As democracy now faces new and concerted challenges, from subversion by dark money to the reappearance of authoritarian ideas, there is reason to revisit and question the narrative of the continuous progression of democratic ideals.

Citizenship has always been conditional and constrained and, as a corrective to the suspiciously tidy story of liberal democratic progress, we present historical interpretations and stories of how social, economic, and cultural inequalities shaped suffrage before and after the elimination of restrictions based on class, gender, race, and ethnicity. We write about democracy as an ongoing struggle and identify the power relations that defined means of including and excluding groups of people from the electorate. As we illustrate, many citizens in societies with so-called universal suffrage did not enjoy the franchise as a right. Instead, they were subject to a constantly conditional form of citizenship that, for some groups, lasted long into the twentieth century. The central contention linking our case studies and collective elaboration on the existing historiography is that exclusions, particularly economically-based restrictions, remained central to the development of democratic political citizenship long after "universal" suffrage was declared.

Examining structures of disenfranchisement in the context of changing social and economic conditions, the collection provides empirical evidence of how economic status affected political citizenship for various social groups and individuals struggling for acceptance as respectable members of the polity. The project stems from an inter-Nordic discussion on economic suffrage restrictions prompted by the suffrage centenaries celebrated throughout the region in the first and second decades of the twenty-first century. The idea was to discern a "Nordic model" of suffrage that could be explained in terms of common cultures, political institutions, and welfare models. To address this question in a global comparative context, scholars specialising in the history of suffrage in other nineteenth- and twentieth-century democracies joined in. Our discussions led to a new endeavour. Instead of focusing only on regional differences, we expanded our horizons to a more transnational project, encompassing case studies from Aotearoa New Zealand, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, India, Norway, and Sweden. The resulting collection enhances our understanding of Nordic history and highlights common threads in suffrage struggles across multiple nations.

The selection of our case studies allows us to move beyond the well-trodden political histories of the United States, France, the United

Kingdom, and Germany. Instead, we highlight histories from countries that are often overlooked in discussions about the development of modern democracy. Drawing from a wide range of source material, the chapters explore the rationale behind economic voting restrictions, considering the perspectives of those in power and the disenfranchised. The chapters in this volume not only complicate teleological narratives charting the transition from limited democracy to universal suffrage but also illuminate the differential experience of suffrage at the local and provincial levels. Our analysis spans from the 1800s to the present, with an emphasis on the first half of the twentieth century. The timeframe for each chapter is tailored to each country's suffrage trajectory and the duration of specific forms of democratic exclusion.

Examining suffrage from an economic perspective prompts new questions and insights about democracy as a contested concept. This approach illuminates democratic practices, state formation, welfare states, economic entanglements of political citizenship, gender and racial hierarchies, and colonialism. After having delved into how Enlightenment thinking shaped the liberal democratic perspective on political citizenship, this introduction highlights themes that unite the chapters. These are centred around four main areas: poor relief; different experiences of suffrage at the national, provincial, and local levels; exclusion through policy and vernacular political practices; and colonialism.

Enlightenment and Liberal Democratic Thinking

Suffrage as a universal and individual entitlement, irrespective of factors such as property, social standing and education, let alone race or gender, was not a dominant idea among the thinkers and politicians who shaped the principles and practices of representative government during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite national differences in suffrage histories, we can identify common economic and social conditions in this period that framed suffrage debates: the emergence and consolidation of market societies; agricultural and industrial revolutions; the growing strength of the bourgeois class; rural peoples isolated from their land and the commons; increased urbanisation and industrialisation; and the emergence of new working classes. Fears by bourgeois and landed groups of rebellion by the disenfranchised "lower orders" were also significant, especially after the French revolution and the revolutions of 1848. So too, as

we return to below, were the consequences of European expansion and colonial rule.

Both part of, and intertwined with these material and social forces, were significant shifts in political thinking associated with what was once referred to as "the" Enlightenment but is now described more accurately as a "pocket" of "interlocking debates and problems" concerning reason, science, progress, humanity, equality, and secularism.[4] The constellation of ideas associated with the Enlightenment were multiple, even contradictory. On the one hand, it left a legacy stressing individual rights and liberties and, most exuberantly, claims to a common, universal humanity. On the other hand, it provided political justifications for the denigration and denial of human rights and political liberties to women and many men. Nowhere was this contradiction more evident than in Mary Wollstonecraft's germinal critique of Jean Jacques Rousseau's "Enlightenment" hierarchal view of (superior) men and (inferior) women, which she countered with her own Enlightenment argument for women's virtue and equal rights.[5]

As Dorinda Outram points out, the Enlightenment validation of a "universal human subject characterised by reason" was rhetorically innovative but seldom implemented politically at that time or in the near future.[6] An Enlightenment proponent might assert that everyone should be equal before the law, yet shy away from obvious differences and hierarchies in many societies. The enslaved, "exotic or foreign" peoples, members of non-Christian faiths, and women were all difficult to define in ways that recognised their possession of reason but upheld their subservient place in existing social hierarchies. Thus, Enlightenment thinkers were caught between universal ideals and their political inclination not to overthrow all hierarchies in the existing social and political order.[7]

[4] Dorinda Outram, 'Citizenship and gender,' in *A Cultural History of Democracy, Vol. 4: In the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Mosher and Anna Plassart (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2021), 133.

[5] Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[6] Outram, 'Citizenship,' 144.

[7] Outram, 'Citizenship,' 133–34.

Historians warn that it is too simple, as some earlier writing did, to draw a direct line of progress from the Enlightenment to democracy.[8] Even if the French and American revolutions were important watersheds, they did not upend the social order. Women and many racialised and colonised peoples remained outside the orbit of "égaliberté" promised by the French revolution, as did the working classes, poor and indigent. As Stathis Kouvélakis notes, Karl Marx's critique of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* recognised that it did not stress human rights as much as it naturalised man's individual right to property.[9] For Marx, the liberal notion of rights stressed the "egoistic man … who is separated from other men and community," an "ideally self-sufficient" figure who was "motivated by the unlimited desire to satisfy personal needs."[10]

In key texts that fuelled and later described the French and American revolutions, political institutions of the old regime were challenged or altered, yet voting rights were ultimately allotted to a tiny slice of the population. For the "founding fathers" of liberalism, the unpropertied and dependent, the enslaved, women, servants, the colonised, and racialised did not equally qualify as citizens.[11] Infamously, the French Constitution of 1791 excluded the "passive" members of the population, including non-tax-paying men and all women, while the United States excluded unpropertied white males, women, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved people. The last of the major Atlantic revolutions, in Haiti, was more complex: revolutionaries drew on Enlightenment ideas to argue for slavery's end and racial freedom, yet the subsequent "counter revolution" also revealed the immense power of European imperialism and capitalism sustained by slavery and its political defenders.[12]

[8] Michael Mosher and Anna Plassart, 'Introduction,' in *Cultural History of Democracy, Vol. 4*, ed. Mosher and Plassart, 1–16.

[9] Stathis Kouvélakis, 'The Marxian critique of citizenship: For a rereading of *On the Jewish Question*,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, no. 4 (2005): 707–21.

[10] Kouvélakis, 'Marxian critique of citizenship,' 709; Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question (1843),' in *Marx: Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Joseph O'Malley with Richard A. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 44.

[11] Kouvélakis, 'Marxian critique of citizenship,' 710.

[12] Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New*

The contributions to this volume demonstrate that rationalisations for inclusion into and exclusion from the self-governing polity depended on the context and specifics of each case, resulting in variations from one country to another. Attending closely to local and regional, as well as national perspectives, suffrage scholars have begun to argue, is vital for reaching a nuanced understanding of struggles for the expansion of political rights.[13] Nonetheless, some Enlightenment and revolutionary ideas, values, and practices resonated globally throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, shaping suffrage debates, and in the process, exposing tensions between equality and hierarchy within Enlightenment thinking.

Ideals of independence and freedom pervaded debates about voting rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One consistent theme in these chapters is the emphasis on first enfranchising economically independent men, usually those who owned property (land, houses, goods, or even livestock) as well as, in many cases, those who paid taxes. Owning land and capital might also be the basis of plural voting which further reinforced the privileges of wealth. In this worldview, the vote was a privilege exercised by independent men on behalf of dependent, economically marginal, less educated men and all women and children.[14] Some Enlightenment liberals contested this view, arguing for an expanded franchise that included some women, though they might still see non-white cultures as less advanced or socially "immature"—positions that indicated the persisting contradictions and hierarchies of Enlightenment intellectual legacies.[15]

World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

[13] Ruth Davidson, 'A local perspective: The women's movement and citizenship, Croydon 1890s–1939,' *Women's History Review* 29, no. 6 (2020): 1016–33; Sonia Palmieri, Elise Howard, and Kerryn Baker, 'Reframing suffrage narratives: Pacific women, political voice, and collective empowerment,' *The Journal of Pacific History* (2023): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2023.2247348.

[14] Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 1. On children's suffrage see John Wall ed., *Exploring Children's Suffrage: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ageless Voting* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[15] The word "immature" is used in reference to John Stuart Mill's views. See Joshua M. Hall, 'Questions of race in J. S. Mill's *Contributions to Logic*,' *Philosophia Africana* 16, no. 2 (2014): 73–93. For a more critical view of nineteenth-century liberals on race, see Charles W. Mills, 'Racial liberalism,' *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (2008): 1380–97.

Economic independence, as such debates reiterated, was endowed with a moral dimension, as discussed further in the section on poor relief. Women, servants, and (in the Americas) the enslaved, were accounted for not as individuals, but as members or chattels of the households of male citizens.[16] Independence and freedom were impossible for those legally obliged to obey others, making servants, even those who were not indentured, unfit to vote in some countries. Such arguments might also be extended to women, the very poor, or those without sufficient education or other socially redeeming qualifications. Similar views were often applied to those considered insane or mentally deficient.[17] The emphasis on the ideal male voter as necessarily autonomous, freely expressing their own will, and without any social or economic debts, striates many national experiences. In nineteenth-century Sweden, as Fia Cottrell-Sundevall notes, it was not simply proof of economic independence but the *degree* of economic contribution that determined an individual's political input. The influence of this "contributivist ideology" on thinking about suffrage was transnational and extended well into the twentieth century. Political rights were allotted primarily to those deemed economic contributors, yet education, civil, and military service were also counted in some instances, reflecting the Enlightenment emphasis on rationality and education. Indeed, some liberals claimed education was a prerequisite for enfranchisement.[18] In electoral law, this was realised by granting voting rights based on a university degree or instituting plural voting for graduates, as well as with formal and informal literacy requirements. As ever, exceptions existed: some states deemed military or police service as a category of electoral inclusion, but others classified it as a category of dependency that excluded otherwise qualified members of these occupations from the franchise.

[16] James P. Young, 'From Jeffersonian republicanism to progressivism,' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 380; Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 112–13, 123–27, 162–88, 191.

[17] Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 61–62.

[18] See, for example, Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 68; Lawrence Goldman, 'Conservative thought from the revolutions of 1848,' in *Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Stedman Jones and Claeys, 701.

Gender was a separate category of suffrage exclusion (and later inclusion) though it overlapped with, reinforced, and sometimes contradicted economic, moral, racial, and educational arguments. Feminists' assessments of Enlightenment thought have differed, including whether "humanist" ideas provided encouraging imaginaries of equality to women or, instead, simply redefined patriarchal and masculine modes of domination, as well as reproducing cultural and racial oppression.[19] All of the chapters address the question of women and the vote, but many stress that, in the context of Enlightenment thinking, freedom, independence, rationality, and morality were often interpreted as masculine qualities, counterposed with less desirable feminine traits. Dorinda Outram similarly notes that the new political class in revolutionary France emphasised classically masculine virtues, with an emphasis on "self-control, self-sacrifice and personal austerity." Its members thus differentiated themselves from the monarchy, a regime they understood as characterised by the corruption of power through the agency of irrational and oversexualised women.[20] Other justifications for women's electoral exclusion claimed that men nobly shielded a weaker sex from the rough public practices of participatory politics. The veneration of manly independence is a recurring theme in many of these case studies, though some also consider how concepts of equality "awakened" women, like subordinate men, to the "possibilities" of democracy.[21] Gender is thus a primary category of our analysis, though it is usually scrutinised in concert with other structures of political exclusion and disenfranchisement, such as race and class.

[19] Some feminist writing stresses the inherent masculine bias of liberalism, for example Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988). Other historians emphasise the Cartesian dualism of the enlightenment. For a range of views see Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor ed., *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). For writing that complicates gender, humanism and enlightenment legacies differently, see Kate Soper, *Troubled Pleasures: Writings on Politics, Gender and Hedonism* (London: Verso, 1990), chapter 10; Kate Soper, 'Mary Wollstonecraft, feminism and humanism,' in *Mary Wollstonecraft and 200 years of Feminisms*, ed. Eileen James Yeo (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1997), 222–43; JoEllen DeLucia, *A Feminine Enlightenment: British Women Writers and the Philosophy of Progress, 1759–1820* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2015); Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[20] Outram, 'Citizenship,' 139–41.

[21] Mosher and Plassart, 'Introduction,' 13; Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 57. See also Knott and Taylor ed. *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*.

Capital and Citizenship: Relief and the Disenfranchisement of the Poor

Some of the contradictions that suffused Enlightenment thinking came to define political ideas about those elements of society who could not support themselves economically. The Enlightenment, notes Alexander Schmidt, incubated "many voices on social welfare and its relation to questions of equality and freedom."[22] The needs of the poor were henceforth considered "matters not just of charity but of a political nature and duty."[23] However, the same hierarchy of humanity that suffused political discussions of who should govern also shaped responses of the middle and upper classes to those without wealth, especially the impoverished. Without a doubt, those perceived as most dependent were the poor, hence they should not vote.

Historians have detailed the importance of economic qualifications to struggles over voting reform, but the myriad ways in which the poor were disqualified has received less attention. However governments were established and structured—and there are many legislative models in these essays—there were some common means of economic disqualification relating to poverty. Even as constitutional and voting reforms in many countries gradually included more white, male citizens by relaxing the economic requirements, they seldom considered enfranchising those on poor relief or residents of institutions for the physically and mentally ill, destitute, and disabled. Citizenship, as Jürgen Mackert and Bryan Turner remind us, has always been about inclusion and exclusion, about establishing "boundaries" between who belongs and who does not. Even so, the question remains why the poor relief exclusion is such a prevalent and persistent theme in economic voting disqualification.[24] Exploring the underacknowledged tenacity of poverty-related exclusions allows us to connect suffrage histories to abiding themes in welfare state histories.

[22] Alexander Schmidt, 'Economic and social democracy: The Enlightenment origins of the democratic welfare state,' in *Cultural History of Democracy, Vol. 4*, ed. Mosher and Plassart, 89.

[23] Schmidt, 'Economic and social democracy,' 109.

[24] Jürgen Mackert and Bryan S. Turner, 'Introduction: Citizenship and its boundaries,' in *The Transformation of Citizenship, Vol. 2: Boundaries of Inclusion and Exclusion*, ed. Jürgen Mackert and Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 2017), 5.

The terminology for forms of provision for those unable to care for themselves varies across countries, and later in the twentieth century is often referred to as "welfare." We nevertheless use the term poor relief as an inclusive descriptor for disqualifications relating to those receiving charity, parish, or state funds, or institutionalised with these funds, as they were unable to care for themselves or their families, whether due to unemployment, poverty, age, illness or disability. In some countries legal guardianship and poor relief were parallel, or even overlapping systems; those under guardianship for economic, health, mental disability, or reasons of "immorality," were all barred from voting.

To be sure, the exclusion of the poor was directly linked to the favoured inclusion of the propertied, wealthy, and landed elements of society, and increasingly, the expanding middle classes and respectable working classes. The poor were the antithesis of the ideal citizen in both conservative and liberal versions of governing. Even when bourgeois, liberal revolutions challenged entrenched oligarchic or aristocratic authority, they nevertheless created new social and economic hierarchies. Liberals, as Stefan Berger reminds us, feared "a genuinely democratic politics," making democratic expansion contingent upon "the acquisition of education and property."[25] This was true too of conservative political thinking which, as the chapter by Felipe Azevedo e Souza on Brazil shows, consisted of "anti-democratic" elements critical of liberal rights. There, legislators responded to the threat of an expanded popular vote by characterising the poorer classes—including the formerly enslaved and their descendants—as an "amorphous, brutalized mass" without the independence, character, or intellect to make political decisions. Their words neatly captured elite views of the poor: "Common men" should be "objects, not subjects of representation."

Although almost all the essays consider forms of poor relief disqualification, our analyses attempt to temper generalisations with consideration of historical specificity. Attention to each state's history, traditions, economic base, social policies, and political cultures is required: poor relief was shaped by existing social and political path dependencies. In some countries, pauper exclusions were constitutionally enshrined, in others legislated for in poor relief and welfare laws, sometimes in voting legislation, or even combinations of these. They also diverged within countries,

[25] Stefan Berger, 'Democracy and social democracy,' *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 16.

between national and local contexts. Likewise, when, and how the laws changed—not always in a linear, progressive fashion—varied, as did the definition of those "unworthy" of the franchise.

Poor relief was not a nineteenth-century innovation: provision for the destitute had existed for hundreds of years, often tied to church, parish, and local government authorities. As Thomas McStay Adams argues, "welfare" practices across Europe were a product of centuries of "tradition," shaped by social, political and cultural histories.[26] Still, there were some ideological continuities in many western European countries as well as white colonial and settler societies, including longstanding fears on the part of the affluent that the poor were the products of their own indolence or immorality.

Poverty was conceived of as both an economic and moral problem—the two could not be easily separated. It is striking that many countries included morality clauses alongside those relating to poor relief disqualification. These might involve disqualification for vagrancy, drunkenness, imprisonment, or failure to support one's family, to name a few. In Austria, as Birgitta Bader-Zaar shows, suffrage reforms of 1918 enfranchised those on poor relief, yet excluded others based on their "lack of respectability," including those "deprived of paternal authority over their children for three years, sentenced to prison for drunkenness more than twice" and sex workers. While women and racialised colonial subjects supposedly lacked the intellectual capacity to vote, men who were economically dependent lacked the requisite social "honour" to be entrusted with the franchise, as Eirinn Larsen and Leonora Lottrup Rasmussen put it. Their dependency was also cast as a failure of masculinity since they had abdicated their responsibility for the family, a situation, Rasmussen argues, that was accentuated by patriarchal religious ideas in Lutheran Denmark.[27]

In many countries, bankruptcy and non-payment of taxes were used to separate the irresponsible from the morally upright, independent man.

[26] Thomas McStay Adams, *Europe's Welfare Traditions Since 1500: Reform Without End, Vol. 1 1500–1700* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 1–3. See also Alvin Finkel, *Compassion: A Global History of Social Policy* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), 18–41.

[27] On gendered notions of citizenship, see Laura E. Nym Mayhall, 'Citizenship and gender,' in *A Cultural History of Democracy, Vol. 5: In the Age of Empire*, ed. Tom Brooking and Todd M. Thompson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 122.

Even failure to set aside taxes for the coming two years as legally required could disenfranchise voters in Sweden. The non-repayment of poor relief, which was perceived as neither charity nor entitlement, but as a loan, also disqualified voters. Outstanding poor relief debts, as the chapter on Iceland shows, could lead to the humiliating experience of disqualification, with some people only discovering this at the polling booth. It was also a gendered experience, as women, especially the elderly or those with dependents, were more likely to be impoverished and unable to pay back this debt. Indeed, poverty-related disqualifications overall were shaped by the notion of a male breadwinner or family patriarch and differentially impacted women and certain ethnic and racialised groups.

Since morality was central to definitions of poverty, so too was corrective discipline. Even if the poor, often considered a "residuum" at the bottom of society, were redefined constantly, relief provision usually had some educative, disciplinary function, and not only for those receiving it. Alongside disenfranchisement, constant surveillance and regulation reminded the working class how humiliating poor relief was, to be avoided at all costs, even by accepting the lowest of wages or other unpleasant alternatives.[28] When Danish politicians referred approvingly to relief as a form of both "personal" and "civic humiliation," they captured the experience well. Relief often accompanied other forms of social discipline, with the denial of the vote just one part of the lesson taught, albeit a very important one.

Many chapters explore the close connections between capitalism, liberal democracy, and attitudes towards the poor, reflecting on the role of economic rights as the foundation of political rights. T. H. Marshall, as Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir and Anupama Roy remind us, saw citizenship and capitalism developing in a relationship of "collusion and conflict." The new citizen "became an aid to capitalism since society was dominated by civil rights which offered every person the legal capacity to strive for

[28] This suggests poor relief and other "welfare" measures were not "social rights" as David Andersen, Carsten Jensen and Magnus Rasmussen contend, but rather forms of social discipline mixed with forms of charity and, for some of the poor, also considered entitlements. See Andersen et al., 'Suffering from suffrage: Welfare state development and the politics of citizenship disqualification,' *Social Science History* 45, no. 4 (2021): 863–86.

the goods one wanted to possess."[29] Those unwilling or unable to use this capacity fell outside the bounds of political citizenship. Some historians have argued that it was paupers' unwillingness *to labour* for wages, no matter how meagre, in a capitalist economy that resulted in the tightening of disciplinary laws and institutions relating to poor relief in the nineteenth century.[30]

The notion that the deserving and undeserving poor could be differentiated and treated accordingly is reiterated in these essays. The related concept of "deservedness" framed debates over welfare provision in Finland, as discussed in the chapter by Minna Harjula. In the wake of political reforms, or even revolutionary changes, older ideas about poor relief were not jettisoned, as much as altered, although one might cite India as an exception. Its 1949 Constituent Assembly recommended universal voting, including the poor and illiterate, a necessarily dramatic break from the past that was central to India's twin processes of democratisation and decolonisation.

Arguments centring on poverty and economic contributivism were not without contradiction: they might be employed by middle-class women who sought enfranchisement based on their ownership of land or payment of taxes. As chapters by Bader-Zaar and Roy show, in some instances, property and income were so critical to representation that they trumped gender exclusions, allowing women with the necessary means, or the wives of affluent men, to vote. In Norway, too, Larsen notes, women's enfranchisement was directly related to their role in a "growing market economy," with their economic experience extrapolated to "political competence." Some women suffragists also argued for enfranchisement by contrasting their class and economic status *to* the shameful poor, illiterate working men who lacked the necessary prerequisites of "independence and self-help."[31] In settler-colonial societies, this argument was

[29] Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir and Anupama Roy, 'Citizenship and gender,' in *A Cultural History of Democracy, Vol. 6: In the Modern Age*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Gary Gerstle (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 136.

[30] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Random House, 1993); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 247–49.

[31] Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 168. These class-based arguments were made by many liberal and middle-class suffragists in countries where most working-class men had the vote and women did not. Some feminists also bolstered their case for suffrage by emphasising their expertise in dealing (and not necessarily leniently) with the poor.

often made in concert with assertions of white, Anglo-Celtic women's racial and ethnic superiority compared to existing or proposed racialised male voters.[32]

Although suffrage movements "from below" are not the major focus of this collection, the chapters show that the poor and working classes had a different view of poverty. From experience, they knew well that "the working class was born precarious."[33] An illness, an accident, or the loss of a family breadwinner could suddenly throw a family into poverty. This was true too of some middle-class voters who experienced a downward economic spiral beyond their control, exemplified by the disenfranchised Norwegian teacher whose letter of hurt and complaint at his predicament is discussed in Larsen's chapter.

Altering the poor relief disqualification was a slow, uneven process, and often incomplete before the Second World War or even the 1960s. It is striking that Norway, which included voters on poor relief in 1919, both as a response to new ideas about welfare and fears of revolutionary change, stands out as an exception to this general rule. Nevertheless, as Larsen makes clear, there were still some disqualifications related to poverty and backsliding during the Depression, when Norwegian conservatives temporarily barred the "undeserving" poor from serving as local electoral candidates.

The objections of the poor and working classes and the rise of mass left-wing parties were important to the re-thinking of this exclusion. For the latter, the state served as an "economic leveller," whose institutions could be used to protect people from the vagaries of capitalist markets.[34]

[32] See, for example, James Keating, *Distant Sisters: Australasian Women and the International Struggle for the Vote, 1880–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 157; Sumita Mukherjee, 'Locating race in suffrage: Discourses and encounters with race and empire in the British suffrage movement,' in *From Suffragette to Homesteader: Exploring British and Canadian Colonial Histories and Women's Politics through Memoir*, ed. Emily van der Meulen (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2018), 94–108; Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Joan Sangster, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of Women and the Vote in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), chapters 2, 4, 9; Lara Campbell, *A Great Revolutionary Wave: Women and the Vote in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020), chapter 5.

[33] Bryan Palmer, 'The *new* new poor law: A chapter in the current class war waged from above,' *Labour/Le Travail* 84 (2019): 55.

[34] Dennis Pilon, *Wrestling with Democracy: Voting Systems as Politics in the Twentieth-Century West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 40–41.

Working-class and socialist organisations pressed for wider suffrage on one hand and basic welfare provisions on the other. Whether welfare expansion resulted from activism from below, attempts by politicians to quell protests and establish social stability, or efforts to solidify nationalist goals (or a combination of all three), these factors cumulatively contributed to working-class demands for social rights rather than being punished for poverty. After the First World War, "scientific" and social work ideas about welfare provision also stressed more curative, rehabilitative, educational, and "social engineering" welfare models. Rather than punitive discipline, poverty might better be managed with "interventions to save the destitute from themselves."[35] Further, for some countries, the rising threat of communism also encouraged new commitments to stabilising welfare and social protections.

As the twentieth century drew on, the abiding bourgeois belief in the deserving and underserving poor, along with related suffrage exclusions, came under more intense scrutiny. One reason was that the line between the deserving and undeserving, or, in the case of Finland, between those needing short-term or long-term relief, was exposed as arbitrary, unfair, and artificial. Nowhere was that false distinction clearer than in the exclusion of those who were patently unable to labour, including the sick and aged. Political opponents of poor relief exclusions publicised cases which challenged the model of the feckless, immoral pauper: it might be single mothers with young children who needed shoes and schoolbooks or the aged who had already made their economic contributions to society. Opponents also pointed to the minimal state and employer protections against unemployment, illness, and accidents, exacerbating the vicissitudes of working-class life.

Many chapters detail how labour and social democratic parties objected to all economic disqualifications in their publications as well as inside legislatures. Within European social democracy, revolutionary Marxists and reformists alike supported full suffrage, even if their ultimate goals differed, with the former favouring proletarian democracy. Socialists initially linked truly universal suffrage to "greater social equality"; moreover, many believed working-class votes would usher in socialism. With the "parliamentarisation" of reformist social democracy in the early twentieth century, some political parties struck pragmatic alliances to enlarge

[35] Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 231.

suffrage.[36] Interwar communists also mobilised the unemployed and poor to demand their entitlement to aid without disciplinary strings attached. Indeed, wars and economic crises, as we collectively show, played a role in unsettling views of the undeserving poor.

Yet, after many countries extended suffrage to those on relief, other poverty-related exclusions remained. Even social democratic parties, for all their critique, did not entirely escape the ideological power of the binary between the deserving and undeserving poor. Danish social democrats, for instance, abolished the disqualification of those on poor relief in 1933, but still barred the "workshy, negligent providers, alcoholics, vagabonds, prostitutes and the destitute." People on poor relief were no longer prohibited from voting in Finland in 1944 for national elections and in 1948 for local elections. However, those under legal guardianship were still disqualified. Those who suffered from mental illnesses or disabilities were often the last to receive the vote, sometimes waiting until after the 1960s. Notions that they were not "reasoned" voters meshed with their economic marginalisation or institutionalisation to disqualify them, and the rationales for this contained disturbing echoes of eugenic theory.

Finally, some chapters also reveal how the seemingly positive expansion of either welfare or voting rights might be contradicted by new restrictions. In the early twentieth century, New Zealand extended its welfare provisions—pensions for the aged, widows, and soldiers—yet these new "social rights" were administered through subjective, bureaucratic means. Applicants not considered "of sober habits … and good moral character" could still be disqualified. Brazil's voting reforms underscored how easily constitutional commitments to suffrage could be rolled back or negated by legislation that purported to reform corrupt or inefficient voting practices but, in reality, was designed specifically to limit voting by the poor. Moreover, the strictures banning the illiterate from voting, solidified in their 1891 constitution, amounted to the disqualification of the poor and working classes.

[36] Berger, 'Democracy and social democracy,' 17, 21.

Scales of Suffrage

Parliamentary suffrage is often considered the "apogee of citizenship." However, such a view neglects the constitutional significance of municipal government—which Rasmussen describes as the "laboratory" of modern citizenship—as well as the importance of local and regional contexts and identities in shaping campaigns for electoral expansion and the relationship between the scales of franchise in the era of democratic expansion.[37] This oversight is perhaps a consequence of the conceptual challenges in representing the complexity of sub-national variations to electoral law and practice. For example, Bader-Zaar's chapter untangling suffrage expansion in Habsburg Austria encompasses seventeen crownland diets and numerous municipal councils, each with franchises adapted to local circumstances.

More telling, perhaps, is that such myriad and often arbitrary variations to the electorate cloud otherwise neat histories of democratic progress—whether conceded gradually or won swiftly—that abound in suffrage narratives produced by activists and historians alike.[38] Put simply, Aotearoa New Zealand's oft-repeated claims to be the first country in the world to adopt a so-called universal franchise in 1893 and further, in 1894, to have elected the British Empire's first female mayor, are belied by the slow extension of municipal voting rights to non-ratepayers, the persistence of plural voting until 1971, and the continued recognition of property voting and corporate voting rights in these elections.[39] Likewise, as Harjula details, Finland, the first European country to introduce universal national suffrage in 1906, waited until 1917 before democratising local elections, albeit with long-term exclusions for tax

[37] Birgitta Bader-Zaar, 'Rethinking women's suffrage in the nineteenth-century: Local government and the entanglements of property and gender in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy, Sweden and the United Kingdom,' in *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy, and Power: Nineteenth-Century Experiences*, ed. Kelly L. Grotke and Markus J. Prutsch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108; Davidson, 'A local perspective'; Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, 'Women's voices in Swedish towns and cities at the turn of the twentieth century: Municipal franchise, polling, eligibility and strategies for universal suffrage,' *Women's History Review* 21, no. 3 (2012): 380–81.

[38] Sjögren, 'Women's voices,' 381; Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, xvii.

[39] The Labour government abolished non-resident property voting in 1986, but it was reinstated by the subsequent, conservative government in 1990. Marian Sawer, 'Property voting in local government: A relic of a pre-democratic era?' *Representation* 43, no. 1 (2007): 45–46.

debtors and recipients of poor relief (1948) and adults under legal guardianship (1972).[40]

Yet, if the municipal and regional franchise sometimes lagged the expansion of the national electorate where the primacy of property typically eroded sooner, local elections were often the site of women's earliest enfranchisement and election to public office. As many of the chapters demonstrate, legislators in nineteenth-century Europe and its settler colonies felt more comfortable including women in municipal electorates than conceding such rights at the national level. Whether this was because local administration was deemed more compatible with women's traditional sphere than national (and imperial) affairs, or if sex proved less significant than feudal notions about soil and status or liberal ideas of economic independence—especially as elites hurried to fortify the representation of capital amid rapidly changing social orders—varied between polities.[41] Reinforcing the notion that possessing a "stake" in the land governed access to the vote, the Nordic states, most Australasian colonies and Canadian provinces, portions of Habsburg Austria and colonial India, as well as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, parts of the United States, and pre-unitary Italy allowed propertied and tax-paying women to elect local representatives before their inclusion in the political nation, sometimes as early as the eighteenth century and often before all men could do so.[42]

While the successful fight for municipal voting rights in expansion of such concessions preoccupied the mid-Victorian British women's suffrage movement, property qualifications, as Joan Sangster explains, were double-edged, often forming the basis of women's exclusion as legislatures closed sex-neutral loopholes by clarifying that the concept

[40] In addition to Harjula's chapter in this volume, see Minna Harjula, 'Excluded from universal suffrage: Finland after 1906,' in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship—International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, ed. Pirjo Markkola, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Irma Sulkunen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 106–19.

[41] Bader-Zaar, 'Rethinking women's suffrage,' 126.

[42] Beyond the chapters in this collection, see *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*, ed. Susan Franceshet, Mona Lena Krook, and Netina Tan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18, 57; Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 101–02, 141–42.

of citizenship applied to men only.[43] Thus, property-owning women in Quebec, who enjoyed partial suffrage in the 1830s and 1840s, were disfranchised for much of the next century, an experience mirrored across western and central Europe.[44]

Although the municipal franchise was typically determined by overriding legislatures rather than local voters, the administration of poor laws by parish and council officials made them gatekeepers of the polity. As Cottrell-Sundevall argues, poor relief functioned not as aid, but as a loan conditioned on the expectation of repayment as a deterrent to dependency. Unrepaid relief left a voter both morally compromised and denoted their loss of financial independence and, accordingly, resulted in disenfranchisement. The scale of such exclusions, determined by local administrators, is difficult to estimate. Nevertheless, as Harjula shows of Finland—where between 2 and 3 per cent of voters were likely rendered ineligible because they received poor relief in the 1907 and 1936 general elections, and Larsen of Norway—where the figure amounted to about 4 per cent of the electorate in 1915—disenfranchisement was not a marginal feature of electoral life as its proponents insisted, but appreciably reshaped the polity.[45]

Yet as Rasmussen, Harjula, and Kristjánsdóttir explore, the story of pauper exclusion shaped growing working-class resistance to disenfranchisement. As those subject to state scrutiny knew well, local bureaucrats had the discretion to compile electoral registers, forgive so-called paupers' debts and restore their voting rights. Municipal offices, polling booths, and even workers' homes subject to inspection from sceptical officials, were all spaces where those on the margins of political citizenship countered their "civic humiliation" and fought for electoral inclusion. Adapting Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen's theory of citizenship as a relationship between an individual and a body politic, Rasmussen shows how

[43] See, for example, Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 151–60.

[44] Ruth Rubio-Marín, 'The achievement of female suffrage in Europe: On women's citizenship,' *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 12, no. 1 (2014): 8–9.

[45] Data from Harjula and Larsen in this volume and Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 114, 118, 364.

poor relief recipients in Denmark negotiated the limits of their citizenship.[46] Men teetering on the precipice of poverty wrote to local poor relief committees, using their status as family providers to seek allotments, a form of welfare which would not disenfranchise them. As she argues, such letters—in which workers couched their demands in the bourgeois argot of independence, honesty, and reliability—reveal their holistic understanding of social and political rights.

Not all such efforts succeeded: Kristjánsdóttir relates the saga of Guðmundur, a Reykjavik sailor whose campaign not to have his son's hospital and funeral fees classified as poor relief devolved into a jurisdictional accounting squabble that ended with the abrogation "of his human rights." In Europe and its settler societies, regional and local administrators were entrusted with differentiating between the deserving and the undeserving poor, resulting in protests at those levels of government. Across the Nordic states, the parameters of such discretion were inchoate and interpretations of voting restrictions various, fuelling suspicions among the political Left that poor relief committees intentionally suppressed the working-class vote. In Canada, the Depression crisis of unavoidable unemployment, coupled with labour and left-wing politics, catalysed challenges to local and provincial poor relief voting restrictions. Notwithstanding the success of opponents in many countries to poor relief exclusion, the idea of an undeserving poor did not simply disappear. Despite the narrowing of these powers of exclusion by 1934, Kristjánsdóttir reveals how bureaucrats' surveillance of beneficiaries' moral and financial competence continued into the 1980s, arguing that the "Icelandic welfare state was founded" on the principle of such intimate social discipline, another indication of how suffrage and welfare state stories are intertwined.

Practical Exclusion

Across the period of our analysis, universal suffrage seldom entailed equal citizenship. Pathways to political liberty were stymied not only by formal disenfranchisement but checks on the power of the popular ballot; the passage of eligibility criteria that disproportionately disenfranchised women, linguistic and racial minorities, and those confined to

[46] Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen ed., *Acts of Citizenship* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

state institutions; as well as the targeting of such groups for bureaucratic scrutiny. To begin, even after the adoption of the one elector, one vote principle—itself the result of the abolition of plural voting, indirect voting, and censitary suffrage systems—not all votes held the same value. Malapportionment prevailed in New Zealand and Australia (sometimes into the twenty-first century) as governments counterbalanced the urban masses by affording greater weight to the votes of rural electors, whose voices were also privileged in many Nordic contexts.[47] The practice likewise mitigated the 1907 introduction of manhood suffrage in Habsburg Austria, but rather than simply entrenching the influence of rural communities, this complex process of reform—born from the inequalities of the curial franchise—over-represented them in German-speaking districts at the expense of Czech-speaking voters.[48]

Whatever the voting system, formally universal electorates were narrowed by forms of "practical exclusion," as politicians and bureaucrats colluded to marginalise "undesirable" voters or refused to allocate the resources required to ensure their participation.[49] Depending on the context, educational requirements disqualified the poor without tying the franchise to property ownership or constituted "technolog[ies] of racial exclusion," such as rules introduced in twentieth-century Manitoba to disenfranchise Eastern European migrants and Arizona, where they excluded otherwise qualified Native voters.[50] Sometimes, as in republican Brazil and the Jim Crow American South, such categories were inseparable. Racialised fears of voter fraud not only preoccupy the

[47] Marian Sawer and Peter Brent, 'Equality and Australian democracy,' *Democratic Audit Discussion Paper*, 2011, https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2011-10/apo-nid26916.pdf, accessed June 24 2024.

[48] Henry Thomson, 'Universal, unequal suffrage: Authoritarian vote-seat malapportionment and the 1907 Austrian electoral reform,' in *Transgressing Boundaries: Humanities in Flux*, ed. Marija Wakounig and Markus Peter Beham (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2013), 105–31.

[49] Naomi Gabrielle Parkinson, 'Impersonating a voter: Constructions of race, and conceptions of subjecthood in the franchise of colonial New South Wales, c. 1850–1865,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 4 (2019), 653–54.

[50] Marilyn Lake, 'From Mississippi to Melbourne via Natal: The invention of the literacy test as a technology of racial exclusion,' in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra: ANU Press, 2005), 209–30; Cathleen D. Cahill, '"Our democracy and the American Indian": Citizenship, sovereignty, and the Native vote in the 1920s,' *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 1 (2020): 42.

contemporary United States but, as Azevedo e Souza shows, underpinned early twentieth-century Brazil's stringent enrolment criteria, as legislators assiduously stripped formerly enslaved people and their descendants of their constitutionally enshrined rights.[51]

The rationalisation of polling booths and officials as well as the delayed extension and lack of public confidence in the secret ballot were other forms of voter suppression that linked democracies from Scandinavia to South America. Unlike many of the nations surveyed here, Finland and Sweden never formally disenfranchised prisoners, yet the state's refusal to provide the incarcerated with voting papers amounted to a de facto practice of civil death that persisted into the 1960s. Further, as Cottrell-Sundevall notes, the requirement for Swedish electors to attend designated polling booths inconvenienced those (usually women) with caring responsibilities, limited mobility, itinerant workers, and the semi-nomadic Samí, a situation that was not completely remedied until 1982. In India, as Roy explains, the slow universalisation of suffrage among women and the poor was not just a matter of impracticable enrolment procedures but entrenched patterns of deference in a caste-based status society. Only with time and state efforts to remedy demographic gaps in the electorate would the democratic "rupture" promised by the 1949 constitution become a reality, albeit one peppered with charges of bureaucratic unfairness aimed at migrant workers, marginalised castes, and Muslims.

Systems of practical exclusion weighed heaviest on Indigenous peoples.[52] Implicitly targeted by ostensibly universal language and literacy qualifications which demanded they adopt their colonisers' tongues and scripts, Indigenous populations also transgressed the ideal of the independent citizen. To "enjoy" voting rights, settlers insisted First Peoples individuate communal lands, adopt a settled existence, embrace market economics and, in Canada, relinquish their "Indian status"—all processes

[51] Tova Andrea Wang, *The Politics of Voter Suppression: Defending and Expanding Americans' Right to Vote* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), 16–107; Gilda R. Daniels, *Uncounted: The Crisis of Voter Suppression in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

[52] See, for example, John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Evans et al. *Equal Subjects*; Daniel McCool, Susan M. Olson, and Jennifer L. Robinson, *Native Vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the Right to Vote* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

that hastened dispossession and deracination.[53] Still, equal citizenship remained illusory: whether out of need or desire, those who complied found themselves on the margins of the polity. If the managed inclusion of Māori in the New Zealand electorate from 1867 was far from the web of legal and administrative obstruction that constrained Aboriginal voting rights for another century in Australia, theirs remained an unequal suffrage.[54] As James Keating explores, the segregation of Māori (based on spurious "blood quantum" notions of ethnicity) into separate electorates in which the safeguards that Pākehā (white settlers) considered fundamental to their "better Britain" were slowly introduced—the secret ballot, independent electoral oversight, voter-to-seat ratios, and compulsory registration—was consistent with the ends of settler progressivism.[55] The state not only used the franchise to inculcate norms of citizenship, but to institutionalise racial hierarchies. Their status enhanced by a series of mid-twentieth century reforms, dedicated Māori parliamentary seats remain a globally distinctive feature of Aotearoa New Zealand's democracy. Despite these origins, the history of these seats is also one of enterprise, agency, and struggle. Refusing to content themselves with limited inclusion, Māori parliamentarians seized the chance to "carve out a place [for themselves] …within the developing settler nation" and press for mana motuhake (self-determination/sovereignty).[56]

Colonialism

As the previous section outlined, many of the suffrage debates and struggles discussed in this collection were framed by colonial or client relationships, though colonialism had a more direct and profound impact on certain groups and nations. Some of the European countries discussed

[53] Jarvis Brownlie, 'A persistent antagonism: First Nations and the liberal order,' in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 298–321.

[54] Jan Cooper, 'In the beginning were words: Aboriginal people and the franchise,' *Journal of Australian Studies* 42, no. 4 (2018): 428–44.

[55] See also Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), esp. 1–21.

[56] Tiopira McDowell, 'Te ana o te raiona: Māori political movements and the Māori seats in Parliament, 1867–2008,' (University of Auckland, PhD Thesis, 2013), 2.

herein were engaged in overseas colonial ventures. Denmark extended a measure of legislative autonomy to Iceland until it secured independence in 1918 but did not offer constitutional protections or autonomy to Greenland or the Danish West Indies, where non-white and Indigenous populations predominated. Finland formed part of the Russian Empire until 1917 while Austria was an empire unto itself; its subject populations had specific suffrage goals relating to their own nationalist agendas. Colonialism marked the countries in this volume originally dominated by or integrated into European empires—Brazil, India, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand—though the effects on their political development differed in terms of race, imperial relationships, economic exploitation, and indigenous cultures.

These colonial relationships were shaped by divergent political economies and altered over time. Whatever the distinctions between them, it is important to examine the nineteenth- and twentieth-century struggle for voting rights within the frame of empire.[57] Ironically, colonising countries and colonising groups within countries often mounted claims for enlarged and improved voting for their populations at precisely the point they denied those claims to others. As historians of Asian and Pacific women's suffrage movements have argued, global perspectives can also decentre the academic hegemony of narratives based on European and white settler societies, showing how their "philosophies," assumptions, and organising models were often at odds with the experiences of women in Asia and the Global South.[58]

Colonialism framed struggles over democracy and citizenship in multiple ways, not the least because of the close connections between colonialism and capitalism, the latter a rationalising force for European expansion. Many of the struggles described in this book transpired

[57] As Allison Sneider argues, this has been the case for some time. Allison L. Sneider, 'The new suffrage history: Voting rights in international perspective,' *History Compass* 8, no. 7 (2010): 692–703. See also Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*; Hall et al., *Defining the Victorian Nation*, 192–221; Ann Curthoys, 'Citizenship, race, and gender: Changing debates over the rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of women,' in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 1994), 89–104.

[58] Louise Edwards and Mina Roces, 'Introduction: Orienting the global women's suffrage movement,' in *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy*, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3; Palmieri et al., 'Reframing suffrage narratives.'.

during a period of intensifying territorial imperialism, a process Rosa Luxemburg understood as integral to capitalism's "incessant drive for self expansion."[59] It was also an era, according to Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, in which the "global colour line" was consolidated, reaffirming white supremacy through the transnational circulation and promotion of knowledges, practices, emotions, and ideas which were implemented in national contexts. Nowhere did this occur more successfully than Europe's settler colonies which proudly identified themselves as "white men's countries."[60] Whether, and how the metropolitan working-classes were absorbed into the project of empire remains a complex debate, although it is clear some European social democrats committed to the electoral inclusion of the poor in their own nations were little concerned with the rights of the colonised—unlike more critical Marxists such as Luxemburg, and later "insurgent" leftists.[61]

Such connections between capitalism and colonialism are apparent in the essays on white settler societies, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand, where the veneration of private property and the dispossession of Indigenous inhabitants became the pillars of colonial nation building, setting the scene for thinking about political rights. In Canada, when fur trading—which had required Europeans to rely on Indigenous skills and alliances—gave way to the development of land, dispossession came to dominate as a mode of accumulation, justified by the capitalist ethic of improvement. Amid this shift, the denial of voting rights to Indigenous peoples was justified with racial discourses stressing their "primitive," non-sedentary modes of existence and adherence to lifestyles indifferent or hostile to accumulation.

[59] Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson, 'Introduction: Political economy, imperialism, and non-western societies,' in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, ed. Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 7. See also Paul Le Blanc, 'Rosa Luxemburg and the global violence of capitalism,' *Socialist Studies / Études socialistes* 6, no. 2 (2010): 160–72.

[60] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).

[61] Peter Hudis, 'Rosa Luxemburg anticipated the destructive impact of capitalist globalization,' *Jacobin*, 29 July 2023, https://jacobin.com/2023/07/rosa-luxemburg-globalization-imperialism-marx-capital; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anti-Colonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), accessed June 24 2024.

Since their cultures supported communal stewardship of the land, Indigenous peoples in many settler societies fell outside of the ideal of the independent political subject, the self-improving farmer-settler whose labour increased the value of his holding and, in so doing, improved the colony as a whole.[62] Although Māori men and women were offered significant integration into parliamentary practices in New Zealand, their political inclusion arguably constituted a process of containment and alliance building at the height of the New Zealand Wars (1845–72) rather than emerging from a philosophy of human equality.[63] Interestingly, in both Australia and Canada, some rationales to omit paupers and Indigenous peoples from the vote overlapped: they were both described as dependent wards of the state, not independent men.[64] The fact that Indigenous peoples were not legally enfranchised until the 1960s in some countries speaks to the tenacious and pernicious power of internal colonialism.

The Antipodes and Canada initially used property and other wealth indicators to define the franchise, though they gradually included smaller farmers and the working classes—a process that was faster and more comprehensive in New Zealand, as was their early enfranchisement of women. However, the abolition of economic barriers to voting in the late nineteenth century was sometimes accompanied by the tightening of other restrictions, first, on the poorest of the poor—as discussed earlier, or second, based on race and ethnicity, either through direct or indirect means. Moreover, as the essays on Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand show, breaking down the economic barriers to farmer and working-class voting came at the expense of Indigenous communities. Pākehā New Zealanders, Keating shows, prided themselves on creating a "new world" liberated from the hated English workhouse, so direct or poor relief disqualification was not practised. However, the provision of land for white settlers was one strategy used to avoid a poor law, and this

[62] Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2002), 105–08.

[63] Patricia Grimshaw, 'Settler anxieties, Indigenous peoples and women's suffrage in the colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i, 1888–1902,' *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (2000): 553–72.

[64] Cooper, 'Aboriginal people and the franchise.' For a comparative view of British colonies, see Evans et al., *Equal Subjects*.

was based fundamentally on Indigenous dispossession. Moreover, other social policies might still curb the rights of the most marginalised, usually by upholding a category of the undeserving poor: the criminalisation of vagrancy, a crime of poverty, for example, led to incarceration, and the twin punishment of forced labour and voter disqualification. And as with Canada, restriction of Asian immigration created a group of second-class citizens lacking the same voting rights. Race, colonialism, gender, and class, in other words, all shaped suffrage restrictions.

Colonialism, of course, followed many patterns. Even common typologies that counterpose exploitation versus settler colonialism or external versus internal, may not capture the complexities of the past.[65] Socio-economic relations, history, culture, political structures of control and, crucially, the resistance of the colonised, all shaped suffrage struggles. The political development of Brazil and India were no less influenced by the metropole's search for markets, extraction of resources, dispossession, and exploitation of people. Voting rights were entangled with power relations between coloniser and the colonial entity, but also reflected the fractures of gender, class, and caste within colonial contexts. They also revealed the complex ties binding colony and metropole: in Britain (as in Canada), anti-suffragists argued women could not have the vote because they were not involved in the military defence of empire. During the First World War, however, Canadian pro-war women suffragists pleaded their imperial loyalties to Britain and defence of Empire as a reason *to* enfranchise them—sometimes at the expense of disenfranchising racialised immigrants and conscientious objectors.

Britain's Colonial Office viewed political development in white settler colonies and Crown colonies, such as India, as fundamentally distinct. The latter, a "tropical colony with a predominantly coloured population" was not, in their view, ready for self-governance as were white settler colonies.[66] This inevitably shaped the nature of resistance to British domination. Within India, as Roy shows, the vote was made dependent on "the racial civilizational imperatives of the British Empire," though contestations also involved class and gender. Britain offered a limited vote to

[65] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

[66] Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 123.

propertied Indian men not simply as a replication of their own voting practices, but also to legitimise a small Indian elite to shore up their rule.

The chapter on India also illustrates the value of transnational comparisons in suffrage history, though with an eye to national and colonial specificity. There, women's groups' demands for enlarged suffrage replicated arguments made in white settler countries about the value of women's (unthreatening) feminine attributes, domestic roles, and, as Roy notes, their "moral responsibilities."[67] However, in India, a nationalist-feminist argument tied women's rights to the goals of anti-colonial movements as women contested their "double oppression," a common experience in women's activism across the Global South.[68] Although the relationship between nationalism and feminism was complex and regionally specific, narratives of race and ethnicity were often employed differently in colonised countries in which white settlers did not dominate. For these colonised groups, discourses of race and ethnicity might be used "to further [their] liberation from European or American domination of all classes."[69]

Colonial conquests and the economies they spawned inevitably marked the political pathways of former colonies. In the case of Brazil, as Azevedo e Souza documents, the institution of slavery, then its belated abolition in 1888, presented the constitutional democracy and later republican governments with different quandaries relating to the rights of the racialised and the poor. If economic and political power is inherited by a continuing elite or transferred to a new national ruling class after "independence," democracy may not follow; in fact, the opposite might hold. After the founding of the republic in 1889, income-based voting ended, but the exclusion of illiterates (and women), along with a series of reforms designed to further restrict the vote, resulted in a period characterised by "lowest voter turnout" in Brazil's history.

[67] See also Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes*.

[68] Teresia Teaiwa, 'Microwomen: US colonialism and Micronesian women activists,' in *Sweat and Salt Water: Selected Works*, ed. Katerina Teaiwa, April K. Henderson, and Terence Wesley-Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), 98.

[69] Edward and Roces, 'Introduction,' 11.

Conclusion

This volume's disruption of a progress narrative of suffrage expansion leaves us with sobering thoughts about where the present and future stand in relation to the past. Now as then we might do well to question the limitations that belie "universal" suffrage. One continuity between past and present is the "tension" between the "formal equality" imagined and promised by modern citizenship and the blunt realities of "market-driven" social inequality.[70] In some western countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, new forms of voter exclusion are presently being discussed and implemented, primarily in relation to perceived or manufactured crises of voter dishonesty, despite the consistent lack of evidence of voter fraud. Nor is this confined to a few countries: journalists similarly claim many "Muslims, Dalits and women" are being "disproportionately cut from electoral rolls in India."[71] As Jess Garland notes of the United Kingdom, applying more stringent voter identification laws, justified by right-wing politicians as necessary to sustain "democracy," discourages democratic participation, as certain groups, including the poor, young, elderly and new immigrants, are more likely to be disenfranchised by these provisions.[72] Some argue that it is precisely what these laws are meant to achieve.[73] Here, the parallel with the essay on Brazil's pre-1930 voting reforms is striking.

[70] Mackert and Turner, 'Introduction,' 4.

[71] Soumya Shankar, 'Millions of voters are missing in India,' *Foreign Policy*, 9 April 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/09/millions-of-voters-are-missing-in-india/, accessed June 24 2024.

[72] Jess Garland, 'Mandatory voter ID laws would dangerously undermine UK democracy,' *Guardian*, 11 May 2021, https://theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/11/mandatory-voter-id-uk-democracy-electoral-system-voters, accessed June 24 2024.

[73] Polly Toynbee, 'The Tories have already warped an already crooked electoral system, pushing millions of voters off the roll,' *Guardian*, 26 September 2023, https://theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/26/tories-electoral-system-millions-of-voters, accessed June 24 2024.

It is also worth noting that the longest legally sanctioned exclusion of voters still exists in many countries, whether in policy, constitutional or electoral law: the disqualification of prisoners, who in almost all contexts are overwhelmingly poor and racialised. In many countries, incarceration rates are increasing disproportionally to population growth, some argue as a direct result of welfare cuts, austerity, and "law and order" criminalisation of social ills.[74] Civil death thus looms larger than ever, though few political entities are as draconian as the handful of American states which disallow even "felons" who have served their time from ever voting, a further exclusion of the racialised poor.[75]

Beyond legal forms of economic disqualification, many chapters also identified informal and ideological means of silencing or discouraging potential voters. These remain a significant problem today. It is not only that the homeless, itinerant workers, and students, among others, are more likely to be omitted from residence-centred voter lists, but also that marginalised peoples have learned the lesson that their voices are not welcome, do not count, and are not reflected in most governments. As citizenship theorists such as Ruth Lister argue, poverty still fundamentally "inhibits civic participation" creating a form of second-class citizenship.[76] Indeed, the "exclusion and separation of those in poverty from the democratic process" has been "increasing" in the neoliberal era.[77]

[74] Palmer, '*The new* new poor law,' 83–93; Todd Gordon, 'The political economy of law and order policies: Policing, class struggle, and neoliberal restructuring,' *Studies in Political Economy* 75, no. 1 (2005): 53–77.

[75] Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen, *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[76] Ruth Lister, *The Exclusive Society: Citizenship and the Poor* (London: Child Poverty Action Group, 1990), 171.

[77] Ruth Lister, 'A politics of recognition and respect: Involving people with experience of poverty in decision-making that affects their lives,' in *The Politics of Inclusion and Empowerment: Gender, Class and Citizenship*, ed. John Andersen and Berte Siim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 121.

Last, but not least, one conclusion of these contributions is that suffrage rights are invariably shaped by the economic and social relations and ideological context in which they are constructed, debated, and challenged. The ascent of neoliberalism since the 1990s has resulted in attacks on the welfare state and social citizenship, often by harkening back to an emphasis on individual initiative, responsibility, and self-sufficiency, precisely the ideas used earlier to punitively disqualify "undeserving" voters. "Moral arguments" are invoked by those in power to reject citizen entitlements which supposedly jeopardise "individual initiative" and inhibit "personal responsibility." How will the instrumentalisation of these received wisdoms effect social and political rights?[78]

Neoliberalism is also the context in which current crises of migration are playing out. Exacerbated by imperialism, war, climate change and global poverty, migration, especially from the global South, is increasing, and is often greeted with xenophobic efforts to deny what Seyla Benhabib terms "the rights of others," not to mention policing of borders to prevent desperate migrants from finding new homes.[79] Even those allowed entry, such as "guest" workers—encouraged to migrate to fill labour shortages—are typically afforded limited to no citizen rights. Political citizenship has for so long been tethered to the nation-state, yet an increasing number of people have no claim on nation-state status, leaving them without any political voice. All these questions suggest that political rights are far from universal, even in countries which claim they are at the forefront of democracy. The question this leaves us with is whether these rights will become even more limited and particularistic, or if political movements for inclusion will successfully push in the opposite direction.

[78] Mackert and Turner, 'Introduction,' 6; Palmer, '*The new* new poor law,' 76–79.

[79] Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

Earning the Vote with Honour. Suffrage, Economic Independence, and Gender in Norway, ca. 1814–1919

Eirinn Larsen

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814, written after Napoleon's defeat,[1] was inspired by American and French suffrage laws; it reserved the right to vote for men who paid land taxes and high-level civilservants.[2] The reasoning was that these men could act independently and for the common good, thus receiving trust and esteem from other eligible citizens. Consequently, to paraphrase the British sociologist T. H.

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[1] Klaus Iversen, *Suspensjon av stemmerett. Utviklingen av grunnlovens suspensjonsbestemmelser fra 1814 til 1954* (MA- thesis in history: University of Bergen, 1970), 2, Bull, 513–514.

[2] Henrik Bull, "Tidligere § 52 (1814–1954)," in *Grunnloven. Historisk kommentarutgave 1814–2020*, eds. Ola Mestad and Dag Michaelsen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2021), 513. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215054179-2021

F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_2

Marshall, political rights in Norway were not secondary to civil rights.[3] Economic and moral measures were also used to define honour among men on whom the vote depended. Nevertheless, Norway was the first among Nordic countries to remove an article from the constitution that suspended the vote for citizens who enjoy "or within the last year have enjoyed support for the poor."[4]

The Disqualification Act, Article 52 D in the Norwegian constitution, resulted from a compromise between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party and was introduced in 1898 when all adult men above 25 were enfranchised. The aim was to limit the vote to worthy male members of society, but the clause also affected women. Between 1901 and 1913, there was a gradual introduction of census-based suffrage for women in Norway at the local and national levels (see Table 2.1). Like men, the precondition was that women could support themselves and act as independent, honourable citizens, similar to the requirements in Austria described in Chapter 3 by Birgitta Bader-Zaar. This means that poor relief recipients in Norway continued to have their vote suspended after introducing so-called "universal" suffrage, until the constitutional committee in 1919 argued that "legislators cannot add stones to the heavy burden that poverty under all circumstances is."[5] However, even after this decision, Norwegian citizens were not entitled to vote if they were being prosecuted and had their legal status as adults taken from them, yet bankruptcy no longer led to the loss of suffrage rights after 1914 (see Table 2.1).[6]

This chapter addresses the pivotal role of economic independence for the right to vote and run for election in Norway during the long nineteenth century and how it later lost ground in Norwegian suffrage law. I am particularly interested in how economic constraint changed and

[3] Thomas Humphrey Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 20.

[4] Klaus Iversen, *Suspensjon av stemmerett. Utviklingen av grunnlovens suspensjonsbestemmelser fra 1814 til 1954* (MA- thesis in history: University of Bergen, 1970), 2, Bull, 513–514.

[5] Constitutional committee meeting, November 1919, cited in Iversen, 104.

[6] The Constitution for the Kingdom of Norway, signed May 17 1814 at Eidsvoll, *Lovdata*. DOI: https://lovdata.no/dokument/HIST/lov/1814-05-17-18140517.

interacted with gender over time, given that for centuries, social honour among men has been tightly connected to material wealth and property ownership, while for women, it was more closely related to family and kinship.[7]

Table 2.1 Voting restrictions in Norway, 1814–2022

	National elections	*Local elections*
Age	1869/1969/1979[a]	1869/1969/1979
Gender	1907[b]/1913	1901[c]/1910
Bankruptcy	1914	1914
Receivers of public poor relief	1898–1919	1898–1919
Convicted for crime	2022	2022
Under guardianship or disempowered	1980	1980
Electoral fraud	2003	2003
Serving foreign states during war time	2022	2022
Non-Norwegian citizens in Norway	2020	1979[d]/1983
Taken up citizenship in a foreign state	2020[e]	2020[e]

Sources: Henrik Bull, "Tidligere § 52 (1814–1954)", in *Grunnloven. Historisk kommentarutgave 1814–2020*, eds. Ola Mestad and Dag Michaelsen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2021), 513–519, The Constitution for the Kingdom of Norway, signed May 17 1814 at Eidsvoll, *Lovdata*. DOI: https://lovdata.no/dokument/HIST/lov/1814-05-17-18140517

Comments:

[a]In Norway, suffrage rights have always tended to follow the changes in the age of maturity. Citizens who did not fulfil these requirements, would consequently not be entitled to vote and stand for election. In 1814, the maturity age was 25, in 1869 it was 21, in 1969 it was 20, and in 1979 it became 18.

[b]In 1907, census-based suffrage to adult women was introduced at the national level as well, while this right was extended to all self-reliant women in 1913.

[c]In 1901, Norway introduced census-based local suffrage rights for adult women, while all self-reliant women enjoyed this right from 1910 onwards.

[d]In 1979, citizens of other Nordic states received the right to vote and stand for election in local elections in Norway on the condition that they had legal rights to live in the country. In 1983, the right to participate in local elections was extended to all non-Norwegian citizens on the condition that they had the legal right to live in Norway and had lived here for minimum three years before election day.

[e]In 2020, Norway introduced dual citizenship.

[7] Arnved Nedkvitne, *Ære, lov og religion i Norge gjennom tusen år* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2011),52, 75–84, Christopher Corédon, "Honour" in *A Dictionary of Medieval Terms and Phrases* eds. Christopher Corèdon and Ann Williams (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 53–91.

Among the First Constitutional States of Europe

Norway, previously under Danish rule for four centuries until the defeat of Napoleon, was among the first European countries to attain an independent constitutional monarchy. The opportunity for change presented itself when Denmark, being on the losing side, had to cede Norway to Sweden due to the Treaty of Kiel (14. January 1814). The constitution was hastily written in the spring of 1814 before geopolitical circumstances shifted again. The 112 men assembling to draft the Norwegian constitution had all been selected by four "men of honour" in February during church service throughout the country. By April 8, most delegates had reached their destination after travelling through snow, slush, and mud, on ice or sea, by horse and foot. Spring was a problematic time for journeying in a wintery country like Norway.[8] When the young regent, Christian Fredrik, arrived the following day in a wagon pulled by eight horses, unpleasant feelings of cold and wetness were possibly replaced by excitement and joy at this exceptional sight. A constitution was to be written. The scene was Eidsvoll, the home of businessman Carsten Anker, one of Norway's wealthiest men.[9]

Located about a day's ride north of the new capital, Christiania, Anker's manor, where the Norwegian constitution was drafted, was intentionally chosen to favour men residing in Norway's southern and middle parts. Delegates from the northern parts of Norway, with a large Sami population, did not arrive in time; consequently, there were no Sami representatives in the delegation. As a result, the constitution never included specific suffrage rules for indigenous people. The issue was that this specific group, many of whom lived nomadic lives or earned their livelihood from farming and fishing on state-owned land, was overlooked as the constitution was written and suffrage rules were established. Only seven years later, in 1821, the population of the northernmost county, Finmark, was included in Amendment 50, regardless of whether they were indigenous peoples. This differentiated Norwegian suffrage from the two cases in Chapter 4 by James Keating, and Chapter 9 by Joan Sangster, on New Zealand and Canada, respectively.

[8] Karsten Alnæs, *1814. Miraklenes år* (Oslo: Schibsted Forlag, 2013), 73.

[9] Knut Mykland, "Carsten Anker," in *Norsk biografisk leksikon* at snl.no, accessed 9. June 2023 from DOI: https://nbl.snl.no/Carsten_Anker.

In Norway, the constitutional committee argued that the qualification for Sami men to vote was based on their role as payers of an entitlement tax for those earning their living in Finmark rather than their cultural differences from other Norwegians. The men in Eidsvoll had limited knowledge about this particular group of taxpayers, i.e., men of entitlement, registered separately from ordinary taxpayers. The reason, as historian Marthe Hommerstad argues, was that entitlement taxation had a long and very complex history, reaching back to the Middle Ages.[10] However, according to the arguments of the constitutional committee, when the "forgotten taxpayers" were first discussed on September 10, 1818, there could not be "any doubt that if the status of these citizens had been known by the constituent assembly [in 1814], they would have been given the vote in line with other tax-paying residents of Norway."[11]

The "fathers" of the Norwegian constitution were still a relatively diverse group in geographical and social terms. Fifty-seven of them were pastors, magistrate bailiffs or legal officers, and holders of high-levelled military positions; 5 belonged to the landed gentry, which at the time meant they represented the commercial aristocracy with the right to export and import; 13 were ordinary businessmen; 22 self-owners or farmers; 10 petty officers; and, five private soldiers who most likely often worked as farmers to make ends meet. This social composition was to colour the debate and the rules of political eligibility first set in 1814, as they all were based on virtues ascribed to themselves, such as economic independence and esteem in the eyes of other men of honour.

Civic Freedom as Economic Independence

Suffrage was initially regulated by two main paragraphs in the Norwegian constitution of 1814: Amendment 50 stated who was entitled to vote and represent the state, whereas Article 52 clarified the conditions for suspending the right to vote for people who had previously met the conditions required to vote. Additionally, Article 53 explained the

[10] Marthe Hommestad, "Samenes stemmerett—en forglemmelse i Grunnloven," in *norgeshistorie.no* 2022, accessed 23. April 2023 from DOI; https://www.norgeshistorie.no/grunnlov-og-ny-union/1376-samenes-stemmerett.html.

[11] The Norwegian Parliament, "Da samer fikk stemmerett" (Oslo: Stortinget, 2022), accessed 24.04.2022 from DOI: https://www.stortinget.no/no/Stortinget-og-demokratiet/Historikk/da-samer-fikk-stemmerett/.

grounds for permanently repealing the right to vote if a citizen who previously met all formal requirements for voting was convicted of a crime, engaging in the enslavement of people, or another disgraceful punishment, treason, or electoral fraud, such as buying and selling votes.[12] This indicates that honourability was crucial for obtaining political citizenship in Norway from the outset, but not related to economic contributions only. According to the wording of Amendment 50 in 1814, the vote was reserved for Norwegian citizens who were 25 years of age, had been living in the country for five years, and:

> are or have been civil servants, or b) in the countryside owned or, for over five years, leased taxable property, or c) were township citizens and owned a farm or land worth a minimum 300 *riksdaler* value in silver in a town or seaport.[13]

As seen above, civil servants were in Norway given political rights equal to holders of taxable land; however, this was a point of contention among the men assembled at Eidsvol in 1814. Civil servants were among some viewed as unworthy of the vote. The argument was that they were unable to be free agents like self-owners and businessmen since they represented the state or the crown and consequently would have more difficulties acting independently. When civil servants were deemed eligible to vote and could keep voting well after their retirement until their passing, it was because Norway still relied heavily on civil servants in 1814. After four hundred years under the Danish crown, they occupied the highest echelons of the Norwegian social hierarchy at the time the men assembled in Eidsvoll.

The importance of economic qualification was common to all articles in the Norwegian constitution regulating the vote, albeit they were different and tied to the question of men's honour. For instance, Article 52 mirrored the economic requirements expressed in Amendment 50 but had, unlike Article 53, more emphasis on economic freedom as a precondition for political rights. For example, in the case of bankruptcy, a man previously eligible to vote would be disqualified according to Article

[12] Marthe Hommerstad, "Grenser for stemmerett på 1800-tallet," in *Stemmerettens grenser. Fattigdom og demokratisk utestengelse 1814–1919*, eds. Marthe Hommerstad and Bjørn Arne Steine (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2019), 34.

[13] The Constitution for the Kingdom of Norway, signed May 17 1814 at Eidsvoll.

52. This disqualification would remain in effect until creditors had been repaid unless the bankruptcy was caused by fire, blight, or another provable accident.[14] In other words, economic ruin was not just economic ruin: it was only socially acceptable if the man had not caused it.

The requirement that insolvent men would lose their vote was set at a time when Norway had no banking system or insurance companies. Norwegian businessmen, therefore, depended on credit from Hamburg or London. Economic hardship, such as bankruptcy, was also poorly regulated until the Supreme Court ruled in 1859 that creditors could file for bankruptcy, not just the insolvent man himself. In 1863, this provision was replaced with a bankruptcy law but only applicable for personal bankruptcy since Norway did not have many stock companies. What was novel was the fact that banks could file an insolvent person for bankruptcy, whereas earlier, the insolvent man had to do it himself, indicating that bankruptcy as a legal status did not rest upon institutional rules but his—or hers, if she was a widow—ability to file for him or herself. This made economic failure a moral and personal matter.[15]

Historian Erika Vause writes that bankruptcy, according to the French Code de Commerce (1808), was the same as *mort civile*, a condition that negatively marked a person's ordinary social life.[16] Insolvent men were banned from entering French coffeehouses, indicating that they had lost their social respectability and standing and consequently were not wanted among honourable men. However, Norway had few cafes to frequent at the turn of the nineteenth century. More than 90 per cent of the population lived in the countryside and made their living from fishing, farming, and logging, either self-owning or as servants. According to Danish-Norwegian law, a financially failing man was not trusted in civil affairs. He could not testify in court and, from 1814, also not vote or run in elections.[17]

[14] Bull, 513.

[15] Sverre Flaatten, "En handelsmann blir til. Konkursloven av 1863 og rettsliggjøring av den økonomiske handlingen," in *Kontroll av kapital 1814–1917*, ed. Sverre Flaatten (Oslo: Akademisk Publisering, 2021), 133–134.

[16] Erika Vause, "'He Who Rushes to Riches Will Not be Innocent': Commercial Honour and Commercial Failure in Post-Revolutionary France." *French Historical Studies,* 35 (2) 2012, 321–349.

[17] Flaatten, 133–134.

The period known as the "quadricentennial night," representing the 400-year duration of Danish rule, established civil servants as the ruling elite in Norway. They were required to take an oath of loyalty at the king's table. This dominance of a social and administrative class continued after 1814, partly due to Amendment 50 as Norway entered a personal union with Sweden. Historian Jens Arup Seip termed the technocratic state the *embedsmanns* state, which persisted until the early 1880s when the constitutional struggle led to overthrowing the Swedish-Norwegian king's power and replacing it with parliamentarian rule.[18]

A Third Route to Electoral Male Franchise with the Parliamentarian State

From the introduction of parliamentarism in 1884 and onwards, the Norwegian state became increasingly open to emerging social and increasingly organised interests and identities, political parties, interest groups, and voluntary associations, and secured compulsory education and freedom of speech. This has made it difficult for historians, in hindsight, to define an overreaching rule, or logic, of suffrage rights throughout the long nineteenth century in Norway, although some have tried. According to Hommerstad, who has studied the organising force of the farmers in parliament during the 1830s and 1840s, private property—the land—governed the vote.[19] Others, such as Nils Rune Langeland, argue that the content of political competence shifted over time.[20]

From 1814 to 1884, economic competence was part of what Langeland calls political competence, although it was certainly not the only element. During this period, government service was as we have seen already an alternative and increasingly important route to political citizenship in Norway, in addition to land ownership. Langeland maintains that the right to vote also gave state service representative force and legitimacy in the electoral system. Including academically trained civil servants in parliament played a decisive role in shaping the subsequent development

[18] Jens Arup Seip, *Utsikt over Norges Historie* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1974).

[19] Hommestad, "Grenser for stemmerett på 1800-tallet.".

[20] Nils Rune Langeland, "Røysteretten som mål på politisk kompetanse," in *Politisk kompetanse. Grunnlovens borgar, 1814–2014*, ed. Nils Rune Langeland (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2014), 58.

of Norwegian political culture.[21] Nevertheless, as part of the political struggle in the late 1800s, the tradition of 1814 was mobilised again. This means the qualities required for political eligibility were discussed when new demands were made from social groups not yet having the vote. For instance, in the first parliamentary debate about women's suffrage in June 1890, following a request from the Women's Suffrage Rights Association, one of the representatives argued that the Swedish system, which allowed widows of landowners to vote did not mean that women had an individual right to vote and represent others, as "the soil is voting, not the individual."[22]This demonstrates that the historical interpretation of voting rights, made by parliamentarians or historians in hindsight, is never from the political debate on suffrage rights. Historians, including myself, have often tended to undermine the restrictions many individuals faced after so-called universal suffrage was passed in the Norwegian parliament in 1898 for men and in 1913 for women. The paragraphs regulating the suspension and loss of voting rights in Norway, i.e., Articles 52 and 53 in the Norwegian constitution, remained unchanged from 1814 to 1884.

In 1884, a third route to the electoral male franchise was added: men with taxable income above a certain threshold could vote unless they were private servants and living at their employer's residence. This reform, made in the wake of a parliamentary crisis and a rising concern that the country suffered from a democratic deficit, aligned the electoral system with a new economic reality. Changes in employment and growing urbanisation had reduced, rather than expanded, the electoral franchise set down in 1814.[23] This indicates that previous notions of honourability among men were in flux and that the requirements set when the Norwegian constitution was first written were outdated.

In the first parliamentary election of 1815, only 40 per cent of men over 25 had the right to vote and stand for election, representing a

[21] Nils Rune Langeland, "Grunnlovens politiske borgar," in *Politisk kompetanse. Grunnlovens borgar, 1814–2014*, ed. Nils Rune Langeland (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2014), 22.

[22] Eva Kolstad, *Utsnitt av lovforslag, Utsnitt av lovforslag, komité-innstilinger og debatter i Stortinget om stemmerett for kvinner 17. mi 1814–11. juni 1913* (Oslo: Stortinget, 1963), 21.

[23] Rolf Danielsen, "The *embetsmenn* state: golden age, decline and fall," in *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Times*, eds. Rolf Danielsen et al. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 265–267.

mere 6.5 per cent of the total population.[24] By 1870, the number of enfranchised men had further declined, leading the opposition in parliament to argue that Norwegian democracy was in a terrible state.[25] At the same time, the self-awareness of those excluded from the vote had increased, whether through improved education, waged work, or collective organisation. Whereas "the *embetsmanns* state rested upon an alliance of bureaucrats, businessmen, and large farmers," the emerging economic elite of merchants and tradesmen frequently aligned themselves with the opposition, specifically the Liberals.[26] In the 1860s and 1870s, these men had moved up the social ranks through entrepreneurial activities in commerce and industry. Throughout the nineteenth century, freedom of enterprise was an essential precondition for the renewal of Norwegian society and polity, including the country's suffrage law.[27]

According to Marshall, economic freedom was a key component of what it meant to be a fully accepted member of British society by the end of the eighteenth century, closely followed by other liberties, such as personal freedom, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice.[28] In Norway, these legal adjustments arrived considerably later than in Britain.[29] The king of Denmark had already introduced economic liberalism in the late eighteenth century, directly influenced by Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776). The debates surrounding economic policy after the Norwegian constitution of 1814 were confusing, shifting from mercantilist patriotism to free-trade liberalism. As a result, Norway did not adopt a liberal free trade policy until the mid-1800s. Nevertheless,

[24] Statistics Norway, '*Stemmeberettigede ere de norske Borgere*', in Historisk utvikling i stemmerett, valdeltakelse og valgte 1814–2009 (Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2010), 1.

[25] Ibid, 4, with reference to statistical information about the consequences of the proposition to change the suffrage rights conducted by the Norwegian Statistical Bureau in 1877.

[26] Danielsen, 266.

[27] Eirinn Larsen, "Stemmerett til alle!" in *Norsk likestillingshistorie 1814–2013* eds Hilde Danielsen, Eirinn Larsen and Ingeborg W. Owesen (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015 (paperback), 67–110.

[28] Marshall, 10, 17.

[29] Hans Christian Garmann Johnsen, *The New Natural Resource. Knowledge Development, Society and Economics* (London: Routledge, 2014), 105–106. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315555140.

the constitution of 1814 provided the country with a new economic order and political foundation.

Economic Freedom as a Prerequisite for Modern Democracy

The principle of commercial freedom was mentioned explicitly in Article 101: "New and permanent limitations on the freedom of enterprise should not be granted to anyone in the future."[30] However, it took several sessions in parliament before this principle materialised in new economic laws and reforms, such as the Trade Act of 1842 and the Crafts Acts of 1833 and 1866. This movement towards free trade and laissez-faire allowed adult men and single women from the mid-1800s to gain the right to engage in industrial production and buy and sell ready-made goods within city limits. In 1866, rural areas adjusted to the same principle as more prominent merchants lost their monopoly on trade outside towns. Additionally, Norway signed several free-trade agreements with other countries, including France. In 1894, wedded women obtained the economic rights of single women.

Nineteenth-century economic reforms had no immediate effect on women's suffrage in the way they had for men, as income tax was added as a prerequisite for the male vote in 1884. Differently put, a new political citizen followed the new economic order as long as the economically active citizen was not a woman. However, this does not imply that there was no connection between women's civil rights and their eventual political rights in the long run.

The reasoning for turning women into economic subjects was still different. Whereas the economic rights of men were said to stem from their personal liberties (granting them the ability to engage in export trade and have a say in political matters), women's economic rights were initially tied to the limitations imposed by marriage as a source of financial provision. The basis for granting Norwegian women economic rights, and restricted to domestic trade and commerce, was to fight and reduce poverty among women, not to turn them into political citizens.

That only men could be citizens of the state was taken for granted for most of the nineteenth century. In 1818, the constitutional committee

[30] The Constitution for the Kingdom of Norway, signed May 17 1814 at Eidsvoll.

concluded there was no reason to limit the vote to "Norwegian citizens *of the male sex*," as suggested by the most conservative of all parliamentarians in the early nineteenth century, Valentin Sibbern. Norwegian women had, besides, "not yet claimed participation in government."[31] However, regarding economic rights, the state's interest differed, especially given the increasing number of unmarried women. This required changing the law to empower women to support themselves better financially.[32] Consequently, single women (unmarried, divorced, or widowed) were the first to be granted the right to engage in trade and crafts in Norway, as similarly described by Bader-Zaar for Austria in Chapter 3. Women whose husbands had emigrated to America, or were hospitalised because of uncured illnesses (and thus unable to provide for their families) were later also granted the same right. In the case of Mrs. Sørine Andersen, who in May 1880 applied for a commercial licence in Kristiania, the city officials commented, "Mrs. Andersen has to deliver her trade licence back if her husband, who has left for America, decides to return."[33]

Around the mid-1880s, the growing economic capacity of women prompted the question of an expanded franchise for women, just as it had for men. Although the franchise was initially a monopoly of civil servants, freeholders, and other respectable men, economic liberalisation enabled more men to succeed in the economic struggles of nineteenth-century capitalist society. In Marshall's words, this took the vote "towards […] a monopoly which could […] be described as open and not closed."[34] However, as foreshadowed, the number of enfranchised men in Norway declined throughout the century. From the mid-1860s, it decreased notably due to the growth of smallholders without land and the arrival of new occupational groups. A report by the Norwegian Statistical Bureau (SSB) in 1877 stated that the number of men without political franchise

[31] Kolstad, 6.

[32] Eirinn Larsen, "Næringsfrihet som likestilling," in *Norsk likestillingshistorie 1814–2013* eds Hilde Danielsen, Eirinn Larsen and Ingeborg W. Owesen (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015 (paperback)), 83–87.

[33] Archive of Oslo, Borgerrullene for Christiania By 1879–1889.

[34] Marshall, 19.

was particularly high in urban areas where many new working and middle-class people resided.[35] The capital, Kristiania (now Oslo), had the lowest proportion of citizens qualified to vote, with only 41 out of 1000 inhabitants having voting rights, while rural parts of the north and south had 60 to 80 out of 1000 inhabitants eligible to vote. The political consequence was that taxable income was added to the economic prerequisites qualifying a person to vote.

The newly established Statistical Bureau of Norway did not mention women's rights or raise the issue of the lack of political rights for economically independent women in the same survey, ironically covering the twenty-five female functionaries employed to work on its statistical calculations. However, the bureau was aware of the question by discussing the integration of "levy taxed women into the statistical listing," concluding that "so far, the answer has been that this should happen."[36] Although this positive statement was to have no direct consequences for women's political rights, the same report issued by the SSB paved the way for the extension of the male franchise in the sense that men with a taxable income above a certain threshold were granted the vote in 1884. The limit was set to 500 kroner annually in the countryside and 800 kroner in the towns. With these new voting rules, Norway's share of enfranchised men almost recovered to 1815 levels, with 63 voting individuals per 1000 inhabitants.[37]

From Economic to Political Rights for Women

The growth of civil and economic rights during the nineteenth century coincided with the rise of capitalism, which was—and still is—a system of inequality, not equality. In the early stage of modern capitalism, there was, however, no immediate conflict between men's and women's expansion of formal economic rights and existing social inequalities. Applying Marshall's perspective to a Norwegian context, these economic rights were deemed necessary to maintain social inequalities since citizenship centred around civil rights rather than political ones. Moreover, civil

[35] Statistics Norway. *Statistiske oplysninger om De fremsatte stemmerettsforslags virkning*, (C. No. 14. First part, 1877).

[36] Ibid. C No. 14, Second part, 1877, Appendix 2, 245.

[37] Statistics Norway, *'Stemmeberettigede ere de norske Borgere'*, 4.

rights were indispensable to a market economy by giving each man—and an increasing number of women—the power to engage individually in economic competition while equipping them with the tools to protect themselves.[38]

The expansion of women's economic rights in Norway resulted in a rapid increase in female business owners, particularly in larger towns and cities experiencing fast-growing populations and a higher demand for goods and services.[39] Between the early 1880s and the mid-1890s, the number of women granted the right to engage in business tripled in Kristiania (the Norwegian capital) and by 1902, women made up more than half of the newly granted trade licencees. Similarly, married women promptly took advantage of the economic rights introduced in 1894 due to the Married Women's Property Act of 1888. Indeed, the average businesswoman was not simply a spinster or a poor widow in need of a family income, as the public discourse often portrayed.

Married women engaged in business also before 1894. Women from the lower social classes turned to buying and selling homemade goods, produce, flowers, and agricultural products to make ends meet. Since the mid-1800s, doing business with products of this kind was unregulated and not in need of a trade licence. Running private schools and hotels was also common among married women, especially as the expansion of female professions, such as teaching, nursing or administrative work, was conventionally (rather than legally) reserved for unmarried women.[40]

The economic mobilisation of Norwegian women within a growing market economy during the late nineteenth century is significant and relevant for understanding the evolving relationship between suffrage, economic independence, and gender in Norway—and for various reasons. First, it helped integrate women into the Norwegian polity, as Norway,

[38] Marshall, 33.

[39] Eirinn Larsen, "Selvgjorte kvinner: Kjønn, entreprenørskap og næringsliv rundt 1900." *Heimen*, (49 (2), 2012),144. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1894-3195-2012-02-04, Steinas Aas, "Kvinnebyen Bodø før 1940," in *Politikk, Profesjon og Vekkelse. Kvinner i Norge på 1800- og 1900-tallet* ed. Knut Dørum (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2014). 111–138.

[40] Hilde Danielsen, "Den kjønnsdelte arbeidsdagen in *Norsk likestillingshistorie 1814–2013* eds. Hilde Danielsen, Eirinn Larsen and Ingeborg W. Owesen (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015 (paperback)), 122–124, 145–147. In 1928, Oslo municipality decided not to hire married women with breadwinning husbands, yet the state never introduced this rule.

from 1901 to 1909, introduced census-based suffrage for women. This meant only economically responsible women or wives of self-reliant men could vote and run for election. Second, it shaped the outcome of local and national elections since eligible women tended to vote more conservatively than men.[41] The national election of 1909 was proof of this, as I will come back to shortly, and affirms that economic independence was a dividing line in political Norway at the turn of the twentieth century, not gender.

Even as the basis of male political rights shifted towards personal status and what was argued to be "universal suffrage" became the new political norm, economic standing remained necessary for the qualification of political rights in Norway. As stated in the introduction, male and female recipients of public poor relief were denied voting rights until 1919, of which many—if not the majority—were women. Introduced in 1898, the Disqualification Act, Article 52 D reinforced the importance of economic qualifications and independence for voting and representing others in Norway, particularly among lower-class individuals. However, bankruptcy was from 1914 no longer a disqualifying factor. With the enactment of the Shares Act of 1910, designed to regulate the increasing number of stock companies, insolvency was no longer viewed as a personal matter for owners of businesses and industries, while poverty remained a personal matter.

The economics-driven introduction of the first wave of female suffrage in Norway raises the question of which political party helped secure the female vote. Norwegian historians have provided different answers, but the question has caused minimal discussion overall. One possible reason is that the history of women's suffrage has often been written with a sympathetic lens towards political parties on the left of the political spectrum. These parties, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, aligned with the women's liberation movement to advocate for more progressive policies on gender equality. In the early 1900s, as the introduction of census-based suffrage to women began, the Conservative party notably emphasised economic qualifications for electoral participation, aligning

[41] Eirinn Larsen and Lars Fredrik Øksendal, "De glemte kvinnevalgene." *Historisk tidsskrift* (92 (4), 2013), 582–583. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1504-2944-2013-04-06, Alf Kaartvedt, *Drømmen om borgerlig* samling, *1884–1918* (Oslo: Cappelens Forlag, 1984),161.

with what has been discussed in this chapter. According to the Conservatives, it was of utmost importance to remain loyal to the intent of the Norwegian constitution, especially Amendment 50. The party also saw it as their responsibility to maintain a healthy public economy and avoid revolutionary behaviour within the political system; thus, suffrage was limited to self-reliant men and, later, women.[42] After so-called universal male suffrage was approved (and partially lost) in 1898, the Conservatives turned their attention to census-based female vote. In their view, economically independent women and wives of self-reliant men represented an untapped political resource to the advantage of themselves and other non-socialist parties.

Self-Reliant Women, a Conservative Political Resource

Liberal members of the Liberal Left Party had been the first to take the question of female suffrage up for discussion in parliament in the 1880s. While they possessed close links with the organised suffragist movement, these men also belonged to the emerging and increasingly urban middle class. These members witnessed the paradox that economically independent men qualified for the vote while women in similar situations did not. In June 1890, before so-called universal male suffrage was introduced, a Liberal party member asked his fellow representatives in parliament why only male businesspersons had the right to vote when female proprietors could be just as successful. He said:

> There might be two businesspeople on the same street, side by side – one could have the name Wilhelm Hansen, the other Wilhelmina Hansen; they trade the same products, show the same success, and fulfil the same civic duties. Why should only Wilhelm Hansen have the right to vote and Wilhelmina Hansen not? [Yes, because] she is born a woman.[43]

Still, the Liberals hesitated to prioritise women's suffrage as a party agenda until 1906. They feared doing so might jeopardise their overall strategy from 1891, which focused on achieving political progress and

[42] Kaartvedt, 157, 161.

[43] Kolstad, 22.

success through suffrage for all adult men.[44] In contrast, the Conservative Party drove the reform in favour of Norwegian women from 1900 onwards, even though conservative representatives a decade earlier had characterised male suffragists as "old hags."[45] This new strategy adopted by the Conservatives reflected a desire to minimise the impact of newly enfranchised men in 1898. They sought to achieve this by permitting economically responsible women to serve as a "conservative resource" within the electoral system.[46] In other words, census-based suffrage for women had the same objective as the Disenfranchisement Act, Article 52 in the Norwegian constitution, but it targeted financially stable women rather than lazy, unemployed, or dishonourable men.

From 1901 to 1911, as census-based voting rights for women in Norway were being introduced, the criterion was set to an annual taxable income of 300 Norwegian kroner in the countryside and 400 kroner in the cities, where the average income was higher. In contrast, the income requirements for men in 1884 had been 500 and 800 kroner, respectively. This meant many women could qualify for the vote, but not all.

At the time, the average income of male workers was between 800 and 1200 kroner annually, which enabled many women to obtain the right to vote through their husbands after 1901. In addition, women functionaries, teachers, and other professionals qualified based on their earnings. The same counted for the rising numbers of self-employed businesswomen.[47] However, unskilled women and women working in shops and in homes as servants were primarily excluded from the vote due to the 1901 economic requirements. This illustrates that economically independent women were targeted strategically by the Conservative Party to dilute the revolutionary effect of universal male suffrage on the parliamentary system. Additionally, this highlights the significance of women's economic mobilisation in the preceding decades, which led to high voter turnouts among urban women in the forthcoming elections.[48]

[44] Aslaug Moksnes, *Likestilling eller særstilling. Norsk Kvinnesaksforening 1884–1913* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1984), 414.

[45] Larsen, "Stemmerett til alle!," 180.

[46] Yngve Flo and Jacob Aars, *Frå politiske rettar til politisk makt* (Oslo: Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet, 2010), 7.

[47] Andreas N. Kiær, *Indtægts- og formuesforhold i Norge*. Tillæg til *Statsøkonomisk tidsskrift*, 1892 og 1893 (Kristiania: H. Ashehough & Co, 1893; 52.

[48] Larsen and Øksendal, 572, 576.

At the *local level*, the 1901 election marked a breakthrough for women as a political resource. At the *national* level, however, the breakthrough came in the 1909 election. That year, 163,000 of the newly qualified 295,000 women cast their vote after a suffrage reform was implemented for the national elections two years earlier. Women's participation proved decisive for the victory of the conservative parties.[49] The national election of 1909 also gave women their first seat in the Norwegian parliament in 1911, when Anna Rogstad entered the Norwegian parliament as the first woman, while in 1913, the suffragette Fredrikke Marie Qvam could finally tell the international audience at the women's suffrage conference in Budapest that Norway had approved universal suffrage to women and that other countries should follow its example.[50] However, it was not quite that simple: a rising number of women had their vote suspended because of Article 52 D in the following years.

From Honour to Shame and the Disadvantage of Poor Women

During the 1915 national election, disenfranchised men and women increased significantly. Out of the 47,000 individuals who lost their vote in 1915, the majority had it suspended due to poor relief. Thirty thousand of these individuals were women who required public assistance or had husbands who did as the loss of voting rights enforced by the Disenfranchisement Act Article 52 D followed a household principle.[51] If a husband lost his right to vote due to illness and needing medical

[49] This reform followed the same qualification requirements introduced in 1901, i.e., 300 kroner annually in the countryside and 400 kroner annually in the cities. See Kaartvedt, 161, Larsen and Øksendal, 582–583.

[50] Norwegian National Women's Suffrage Society, *Annual report* 1913. In Archive after Fredrikke Marie Qvam, Private Archive No. 5, The University Library of NTNU, Special Collection, Trondheim, Norway, Box 59. For more on this, see Eirinn Larsen, "'The gender-progressive Nordics' A Matter of History," in *Gender Equality and Nation Branding in the Nordic Region* eds. Eirinn Larsen, Sigrid Marie Moss and Inger Skjelsbæk (London & New York: Routledge, 2021). DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017134

[51] Johanne Bergkvist and Unn Hovdehaugen, "En stjerne i margen. Seks fattige kvinners kamp for stemmeretten," in *Stemmerettens grenser. Fattigdom og demokratisk utestengelse 1814–1919*, eds. Marthe Hommerstad and Bjørn Arne Steine (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2019), 327.

treatment by a public hospital, initially interpreted as receiving public assistance, his wife would also lose her political rights. However, this system was increasingly criticised and described as unreasonable. The Disenfranchisement Act was based on an increasingly outdated distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. This was initially a social and legal category left over from the laissez-faire liberal period. Consequently, the relationship between suffrage, the requirement of economic independence, and gender was to shift again, this time to the disadvantage of poor women.

Most women who had their vote suspended after 1913 lived below the poverty line, often due to the burden of being single mothers. In need of public assistance of some kind, such as free schoolbooks for their children or a pair of shoes to wear, they automatically lost their right to vote due to Article 52 D. The Labour Party, which had representation in the Norwegian parliament since 1903, raised the injustice of this provision as a significant issue during the forthcoming elections. Kristiania, the Norwegian capital, where the Labour Party made the most progress, was also the city with the largest surplus of poor and single mothers.

It is easy to imagine the humiliation and shame it evoked in individuals when having their vote suspended. In Chapter 8, Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir describes the emotions experienced by Icelandic women as their suffrage rights were revoked. Similarly, Norwegian historians have recently started to reconstruct the stories of individuals rejected from polling stations due to poverty, illness, or other reasons, using the letters of complaint addressed to the local and central government as primary sources. These letters are valuable sources for studying the emotional aspect of a democratic tradition where economic independence and honour among men long served as preconditions for the right to vote and represent others.

Men and women could have reached the polling station only to discover that a star was drawn next to their name in the eligible citizen register. For instance, Haldor J. Romsloe, initially a self-employed man running a commercial college for young adults in Bergen and later in Haugesund, located on the western coast of Norway, wrote a letter to the Norwegian parliament in 1912. In his letter, Romsloe described his feelings when denied the right to vote due to his cancer diagnosis and impending death. He had needed a guarantee from a local officer to get a new lease for a house for his family, and although he never used the

guarantee, he had his political rights revoked. "For this improper and defamatory behaviour in a public polling station," he wrote,

> I submit in reverence my complaint to the honourable parliament (…) My wife and I have been married for 36 years and have 13 children, but despite this, I can say that today, I am a man without debts, although I have no money in the bank (…) But no excuse from the honourable election committee in Haugesund could and should be recognised, as the action (depriving me of the right to vote) was impermissible.[52]

Historian Jannike Hegnes, who has recently analysed this letter in greater detail, argues that the complaints made by Romsloe and others to the Norwegian parliament did not immediately impact suffrage legislation, instead helping it change over time. In 1919, Article 52 D was removed from the Norwegian constitution, marking the waning of the previously prevalent notion that only those capable of providing for themselves had the social dignity and honour necessary to earn the right to vote in Norway. New understandings of the state's role as a welfare provider partially contributed to this change, including introducing social security schemes for single mothers administered by local governments and expanding hospital services. Additionally, concerns about the potential revolutionary force of the proletariat have surely factored in as well, although discussing the impact of the Russian Revolution on the changes in Norwegian suffrage law extends beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the perception that political citizenship was reserved for economically independent and honourable men, which dominated Norway during most part of the nineteenth century, did not disappear with the emergence of the parliamentarian state in 1884. The reason was that, for most countries, including Norway, political rights were—and still are—constitutional rights that require a two-thirds majority vote to be changed. Consequently, it took time for new views on civic and political eligibility to materialise and factor into the Norwegian suffrage law and for older norms regarding male honour to fade.

[52] Jannike When Hegnes, "'idet jeg bestemt nedlegger protest' Stortingets behandling av klagene fra de suspenderte," in *Stemmerettens grenser. Fattigdom og demokratisk utestengelse 1814–1919* eds. Marthe Hommerstad and Bjørn Arne Steine (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2019), 111.

Conclusion

The ballot, rather than a seat in government, has been proof of full membership in a society, "and its value depends primarily on its capacity to confer a minimum of social dignity," writes the American political scientist Judith Shklar.[53] In Norway, the right to represent the state has always followed the right to vote. The definition of a socially honourable person changed considerably from 1814 until 1919 however, which helped transform the relationship between individuals and society and between the voter and the elected. As demonstrated in this chapter, this argument assumes that material independence and economic contributions, along with shared understandings of trust, fairness, and responsibilities towards others, were significant norms in social and economic life during the era of the liberal state. Therefore, economic independence became a defining aspect of a man's public respectability and may have also influenced his self-respect.

Suffrage rules in Norway were initially shaped by the cultural norms of masculine honour prevalent in the old society until these rules changed to better fit a capitalist society, which was the foundation of the new democratic state. The rise of commercial freedom for men and single women in the 1840s gradually opened the possibilities for women to engage in business and, from 1901, to vote and stand for election on the condition that they, or their husbands, had an annual income over a certain threshold. Again, this highlights that introducing modern citizenship rights in Norway was never confined to political activities and concerns alone. The content of Norwegian suffrage law and its limits were the result of historical circumstances and experiences, cultural values and practices found outside the political sphere, as well as changing political perceptions of what qualities men and later women had to possess to be able to vote and represent others in local and national governments.

During the long nineteenth century, the role of economic qualifications shifted from economic freedom as a prerequisite for political eligibility during the constitutional state (1814–1884) to economic dependence as grounds for the suspension of suffrage rights during the parliamentarian state (1884–1919). Economic worth and moral behaviour were still crucial to suffrage rights in Norway until the enfranchisement of public poor relief recipients in 1919. After 1919, other

[53] Ibid.

grounds for suspending the right to vote became prevalent, including being sentenced for a crime, disempowerment, and electoral fraud (see Table 2.1).

Gendered understandings of what it meant to be a socially respected person also played a role when Norway later transitioned to a welfare state, although not as prominently as during the liberal-state period discussed in this chapter. In the early 1900s, the idea that the right to vote must be earned based on moral qualities started to lose traction in Norway. However, there was no guarantee that this notion would not be mobilised for political purposes in the future. Indeed, during the economic recession of the early 1930s, non-socialist parties briefly succeeded in reintroducing Article 52 D in the Disenfranchisement Act to exclude the so-called undeserving poor from running for local elections.[54] Again, the argument was that public confidence in local government would weaken if unemployed and economically dependent men ran politics. The Act was soon eradicated, as the Labour Party came into power in coalition with the Farmers Party in 1935. The example still illustrates that it was outside the political sphere but in civil society, in the marketplace, in production and commerce, in the world of work, and in voluntary associations that the political citizen of Norway initially found "his social place, his standing, the approbation of his fellows, and possible some of his self-respect," while those not granted these marks of civic dignity felt "dis-honoured, not just powerless and poor."[55]

[54] Trine Berg Kopperud, "Arbeiderpartiet og striden om ugildhetsloven 1932–1935." *Arbeiderhistorie* (2021), 101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2387-5879-2021-01-0.

[55] Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship. The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 62.

CHAPTER 3

Expanding the Electorate in Habsburg Austria, 1860s–1918: (Dis)Integrations of Economic and Educational Qualifications, Gender, and "Universal" Suffrage

Birgitta Bader-Zaar

When constitutional reform commenced in the early 1860s in the Habsburg Monarchy, economic independence and higher education were the fundamental pillars upon which enfranchisement was built. The vote was not considered to be an individual right. Rather, elections should ensure that certain interests, based especially on property and wealth as well as learning, found adequate representation. The Emperor introduced elected local government councils and territorial legislative bodies (i.e. provincial diets) in the kingdoms, duchies, and margravates that would later, after the compromise with Hungary had transformed the Monarchy into a dualistic state in 1867, constitute the Austrian half of the empire. These seventeen "Austrian" crownlands—the Bukovina, Galicia, Silesia,

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_3

Moravia, Bohemia, and the provinces that comprise most of present-day Austria (Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol, Vorarlberg), as well as Carniola, the Littoral (Gorizia and Gradisca, Istria, Trieste), and Dalmatia—embodied populations speaking diverse languages and living in different cultures. In the nineteenth century, these crownlands underwent varying degrees of economic and social change, although agriculture remained the primary economic sector. There was a gradual increase in industrial production, particularly in the Alpine regions, Bohemia, and around major cities. Capital and education allowed some leeway in previously rigid social stratification, while social mobility was almost impossible for workers and poor peasants who were destitute. The literacy rate reached 81 per cent in 1910, but rates remained much lower in some crownlands such as Galicia. Politics were marked by massive conflicts over equal language rights and nationalist pressure for ethnic autonomy, and workers' demands for social rights and political participation. These crises led to unstable governments that repeatedly ruled by emergency decree at the turn of the century.[1]

Social change and political crises led to various electoral reforms early on. From the mid-1890s these included the introduction of so-called universal suffrage for men over twenty-four, however, at the same time leaving economic qualifications in effect within a system of unequal representation. When electoral reform at the level of the Habsburg Austrian parliament finally consented to the equal representation of voters in 1907, it continued to exclude recipients of public poor relief, among others, despite the principle of "universal" suffrage. The reforms for the crownland diets and local government bodies from the early 1900s, however, retained unequal representation, combining the older censitary system based on taxation with the general admission of adult men to the vote. Aside from aiming to preserve the political influence of the nobility, the wealthy middle-class, and local notables for as long as possible, it is crucial to recognise that this complex system of representation based on the taxation of property and income could outweigh gender considerations,

[1] For the impact of the growth of agrarian and industrial capitalism on social change see *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 9, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010); for general histories of the period see Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016); John W. Boyer, *Austria 1867-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

particularly at the local level and in crownland diets. Thus, in the early 1860s, the government did not consider gender per se as a ground for exclusion but as a measure to strengthen the political clout of the nobility and the middle class. Women's political representation, however, soon became a subject of discussion. When "universal" suffrage was brought up in political debates, the government and most political parties explicitly defined "universal" to only include men.

This chapter will outline the complex legal developments of economic and educational voting qualifications from the 1860s and after "universal" and equal suffrage for men was introduced at the parliamentary level in 1907. It will also focus specifically on women voters in Habsburg Austria. Based on the example of the town of Wiener Neustadt, located south of Vienna in Lower Austria, it will illustrate how elections allowing unequal representation that included women voters and "universal" suffrage for men worked in practice. The paper ends with an outlook on change in the election systems after World War I, specifically in the newly founded Republic of Austria.

The Election System in Habsburg Austria Before "Universal" Suffrage for Men

Liberal ideas of representation were first realised in Habsburg Austria, during the revolution of 1848. Prima facie, enfranchisement was broadly conceived to extend to all Austrian citizens over twenty-four, i.e. full legal age, regardless of their religious affiliation. The latter provision not only referred to Christian denominations, including the minority of Protestants in predominantly Catholic Austria but also to the Jewish population. For the first time, citizenship incorporated the latter, albeit for a very short period; they were to only achieve complete emancipation in 1867–68. Voters were also expected to maintain their full citizen rights and reside in their constituency for at least six months. Drawing from Enlightenment ideals that viewed political participation as the domain of free and economically independent male citizens, additional restrictions were imposed, which excluded workers receiving daily or weekly wages, servants, and individuals supported by public charity.

Furthermore, voting was indirect, with electors deciding the members of the *Reichstag*.[2] This same parliament drafted a liberal constitution that would rest on popular sovereignty, which was, however, unacceptable to the Emperor. He dissolved the *Reichstag* in March 1849, and imposed a new constitution that was again soon abolished in late 1851. The only electoral measure to survive the 1850s was a provisional municipal law that introduced a uniform electoral system for the Austrian and Bohemian lands. It became the foundation for elections when a new attempt at constitutionalisation was made in the early 1860s.

State budget deficits due to military defeats forced the Emperor to allow a parliament and more autonomy for Habsburg Austria's crownlands and municipalities. As before, economic and educational qualifications continued as barriers against the notion that the right to vote was inherent. The rising wealthy bourgeoisie gained substantial inclusion, and the nobility maintained its political leverage.[3] Property and income as critical principles for representation overrode all other requirements so that gender, and for a brief period even age,[4] were at first not considered to be grounds for exclusion at the local and diet representative levels (Table 3.1).

[2] For how these elections worked in practice see Thomas Stockinger, *Dörfer und Deputierte. Die Wahlen zu den konstituierenden Parlamenten von 1848 in Niederösterreich und im Pariser Umland (Seine-et-Oise)* (Vienna: Böhlau; Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012).

[3] Ralph Melville, *Adel und Revolution in Böhmen: Strukturwandel von Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Österreich um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1998), 249–53; Peter Urbanitsch, "Die Gemeindevertretungen in Cisleithanien," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 7/2, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 1199–2281, here 2203.

[4] See also Gerald Kohl, "Alter und Wahlrecht. Zum Verhältnis bürgerlicher und politischer Rechts- und Handlungsfähigkeit seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 28, no. 1 (2008): 151–63, here 162–3.

Table 3.1 The right to vote in Habsburg Austria, 1849/1861–1914

Municipal suffrage	*Suffrage for crownland diets*	*Suffrage for the* Reichsrat *(Lower House of Parliament)*
1849/1862: Enfranchisement for: • Persons paying taxes on landed property, houses, or income from employment, business, or trade (women included, except in some major towns, and, at first, minors) • Persons with higher education without any tax requirement (clergy, civil servants, retired military officers, university graduates, teachers in public schools) Unequal representation of voters who are allocated to 2–3 electoral bodies, depending on wealth and status. Verbal voting. Women vote by proxy; this method was increasingly controversial. Individual reforms in crownlands, for example: • **From the 1870s:** increasing use of ballots • **1896**: introduction of personal income tax adds voters • **In the early 1900s:** "universal" suffrage for men based on an expanded length of residence introduced in some towns in a separate electoral body	**1861:** Curial system with unequal representation • Virilists (= high church dignitaries, university rector) • Curia of great landowners (usually real estate listed in registers for noble or feudal property with a minimum tax) • Curia of chambers of commerce and industry • Curia of cities and towns: • Municipal voters of the first two municipal electoral bodies + minimum tax for the third electoral body, • In municipalities with two electoral bodies first two-thirds of the tax register • Curia of rural communities: municipal voters of the first two municipal electoral bodies, first two-thirds of the tax register in municipalities with two electoral bodies/ indirect voting via electoral college. Individual reforms in crownlands, for example: • **From the 1880s:** women's suffrage restricted to the curia of great landowners in several crownlands • **The late 1890s:** introduction of general curia with "universal" suffrage for men Compromises, e.g. in Moravia (1905) and the Bukovina (1910) introduce distinct electoral districts according to language affiliations	**1873:** • Based on the curial system of the diets (without virilists) • Austrian citizenship, minimum age of 24 • Excluded are convicted criminals and persons under criminal investigation (including cases involving immorality, greed for profit, and bankruptcy), persons under guardianship, and recipients of poor relief from public sources • Women are only enfranchised in curia of great landowners **1882**: minimum absolute tax lowered for municipal and rural community voters **1896**: minimum absolute tax lowered again **1896:** additional general curia with "universal" suffrage for men (6 months residence required), most voters of the first four curiae have a second vote here Direct or indirect voting, depending on crownland regulations **1907:** "universal," equal, and direct suffrage for men = abolition of curial system • Minimum of one year residence • Additional grounds of exclusion: men placed under police supervision or submitted to forced labour, convicted for drunkenness, or if authority over children was withdrawn

Comment and references: This table was created by the author using various pieces of legislation from Habsburg Austria: *Allgemeines Reichs-Gesetz- und Regierungsblatt für das Kaiserthum Österreich* 1850/1; *Reichs-Gesetz-Blatt für das Kaiserthum Österreich* 1861/20; *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* 1873/40, 41; 1882/142; 1896/168,169, 226; 1907/15, 17, 18; and the numerous election laws for the diets and the municipalities of the crownlands, compiled in the yearly statute collections of each crownland (= *Landesgesetzblätter*).

The electoral system covered three levels of voting: local government, crownland diets, and the Lower House of the Austrian parliament.[5] Generally, the right to vote was based on the payment of a minimum amount of taxes on landed property, ownership of a house, or on income from employment, business, or trade. In addition, voters with higher education—the so-called "intelligentsia" (*Intelligenzwähler*), i.e. the clergy, civil servants, (retired) military officers, university graduates, and teachers in public schools—could qualify. For local council elections, taxpayers were grouped into two or three electoral bodies based on their tax amounts, which benefited the representation of the more affluent population segment, including local notables. A higher absolute tax rate in certain statutory towns privileged wealth even more.

Elections of crownland diets used a slightly different method with a curial system. Voter requirements largely followed those applied to local government elections. However, voters were grouped into four curiae: great landowners (usually defined as owners of real estate listed in registers for noble or feudal property with a minimum tax); chambers of commerce and industry; cities and towns; and rural communities. Representation of the curiae was unequal, favouring the great landowners and the wealthy bourgeoisie that was represented in the chambers and urban municipalities, while putting less economically powerful municipalities in the curia

[5] For the election system of the Imperial Council see Vasilij Melik, *Wahlen im alten Österreich: Am Beispiel der Kronländer mit slowenischsprachiger Bevölkerung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 119–64; Karl Ucakar, *Demokratie und Wahlrecht in Österreich: Zur Entwicklung von politischer Partizipation und staatlicher Legitimationspolitik* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1985); Franz Adlgasser et al. eds. *Hohes Haus! 150 Jahre moderner Parlamentarismus in Österreich, Böhmen, der Tschechoslowakei und der Republik Tschechien im mitteleuropäischen Kontext* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015); Peter Urbanitsch, "Vom neoständischen Kurienparlament zum modernen Volkshaus—Die Liberalisierung des Reichsratswahlrechtes 1873–1911," *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 147, no. 1 (2012): 19–50. For an introduction in English see Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "From Corporate to Individual Representation: The Electoral Systems in Austria 1861–1918," in *How Did They Become Voters? The History of Franchise in Modern European Representation*, ed. Raffaele Romanelli (Den Haag: Kluwer Law, 1998), 295–339. For the level of the crownland diets see Vasilij Melik, "Zusammensetzung und Wahlrecht der cisleithanischen Landtage," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 7/2, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 1311–52; for local government see Jiří Klabouch, *Die Gemeindeselbstverwaltung in Österreich* (Munich: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1968); Jeremy King, "The Municipal and the National in the Bohemian Lands, 1848–1914," *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 89–109; Urbanitsch, "Gemeindevertretungen."

of rural communities at a disadvantage. Besides, the so-called virilists, i.e. high church dignitaries and the university rector, were automatically members of the diets.

At first, the municipal councils and the curiae of the diets of the crownlands remained the only bodies that were elected. The parliament, fittingly named the "Imperial Council" (*Reichsrat*), consisted of an Upper House, which included the higher nobility, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and persons of merit appointed by the Emperor, and a Lower House that represented the diets via delegated members. It was not until 1873 that the Lower House began to be elected. These elections were based on the curial system for the diets; they added Austrian citizenship, a legal age (twenty-four) and male gender (except for the curia of great landowners) to voting qualifications.

Overall, the social stratification of voters was not always as clear-cut as the election laws might have implied, at least in the 1860s and 1870s. Since the vote did not always rely on an absolute minimum tax and voters could qualify by belonging to the first two-thirds on the tax list, considerable variations in the necessary tax qualifications among and within the crownlands were possible. Overall, the proportion of voters was higher in rural communities and poor agrarian regions compared to towns and the few industrialised areas of Habsburg Austria, respectively.[6]

Democratic Expansion of the Election System? Electoral Reform from the 1890s to the Outbreak of World War I

Beginning in the 1890s, the government gradually began to allow extensions of suffrage for men to establish social peace. This move was not only a response to growing urbanisation and the emergence of new mass political parties (notably the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats), but it also served as an antidote to nationalist strife. Generally, tax requirements were lowered for the curiae of cities and towns and rural communities. The introduction of personal income tax in 1896 also added voters to the municipal franchise.

In 1896, the government introduced an additional general curia for the Lower House elections of the Imperial Council, which extended voting

[6] Melik, "Zusammensetzung," 1321–3.

rights to men without any tax qualifications, i.e. "universal" suffrage. The government aimed to include workers as a buffer against middle-class nationalists. Members of the military and the police, however, were disenfranchised. General curiae were gradually introduced for the elections of the crownland diets, and "universal" suffrage for men was also added in the form of a third or fourth electoral body at municipal elections in some towns, albeit trimmed down by long residency qualifications.

The representation of the general curia in the legislative bodies was highly unequal compared to the other curiae. For instance, during the 1897 elections, the small curia of great landowners, which accounted for approximately 0.1 per cent of all voters, elected 20 per cent of the Lower House of the *Reichsrat* members. On the other hand, the voters enfranchised in the general curia, constituting roughly 62.8 per cent of all voters, only elected 17 per cent of the members.[7] Most members of the other electoral bodies had a second vote in the general curia, which was elected indirectly in most regions. The voter turnout in cases of indirect voting only amounted to 35.6 per cent (and was far lower in some crownlands). All these factors further diminished the general curia's political power. Two other curiae sustained this highly hierarchical form of representation: the small curia of chambers of commerce elected 5 per cent and the curia of cities and towns, representing 7.8 per cent of all voters, elected 28 per cent of the parliamentary members. In contrast, rural communities achieved nearly equal representation, with 29.4 per cent of all voters electing 30 per cent of members.

Unequal representation of the population across crown lands presented an additional problem in the *Reichsrat*, with densely populated Galicia having the least representation. With the extension of the franchise, elections were now accompanied by even more corruption and conflicts and violent clashes between supporters of different political parties and nationalist movements.[8] The presence of police and military personnel at

[7] For the following: "Die Ergebnisse der Reichsrathswahlen in den im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern für das Jahr 1897." *Österreichische Statistik* 49, no. 1 (1897): V and tables IV, VI, VII, and XIII; Helmut Rumpler et al., "Die Reichsratswahl 1897: Tabellen, Karten, Diagramme," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 7/1, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 1231–1310, here 1242–47.

[8] Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "Democratization and the Practices of Voting in Habsburg Austria, 1896–1914: New Directions in Research," *Austrian History Yearbook* 53 (2022): 107–20, here 111–5; specifically for Galicia see Harald Binder, *Galizien in Wien:*

elections became customary in regions known for nationalist tensions and industrial areas with a significant Social Democratic following.

The curial system was finally abolished for the Imperial Council, where male adults aged twenty-four and above qualified for the vote from 1907 onwards. The government yielded to pressures for electoral expansion in Hungary and Vienna, spurred by the Russian Revolution of 1905. They acquiesced to the demands of Social Democrats and Czech and Polish nationalist parties, hoping that the implementation of "universal" and equal men's suffrage would weaken nationalist parliamentary obstruction. By shifting power to emerging mass parties a more stable government might be established. Attempts to retain plural voting based on additional votes for family fathers, men with higher education, a higher age limit of thirty-five, or tax limits on property and businesses were rejected.[9]

Women's suffrage received little attention in debates at this time as class-related concerns took precedence for the Social Democrats. They were cautious about introducing this contentious issue, fearing it might jeopardise overall reform efforts. The number of voters did not change significantly, especially as the residence requirement was extended to one year, excluding, for example, itinerant workers. Voter numbers remained at approximately 20 per cent of the population. We can estimate that about 18 per cent of the male population over twenty-four years was excluded from the vote.[10] The reform also aimed to achieve more equitable ethnic representation, taking into consideration speakers of officially recognised languages in Habsburg Austria. Additionally, indirect elections were finally abolished at this legislative level, and voter turnout rose to 84.6 per cent, partially driven by compulsory voting in six crownlands.

In contrast, property, tax, educational qualifications, and the curial system remained in place at the crownland level for diet elections until the end of the Habsburg Monarchy. These restrictions also persisted at the

Parteien, Wahlen, Fraktionen und Abgeordnete im Übergang zur Massenpolitik (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005).

[9] William Alexander Jenks, *The Austrian Electoral Reform of 1907* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 78–90.

[10] "Ergebnisse der Reichsrathswahlen 1897," VII, table VI; "Die Ergebnisse der Reichsratswahlen in den im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern im Jahre 1907." *Österreichische Statistik* 84, no. 2 (1908). The rough estimate is based on the census of 1910. Statistics, unfortunately, do not include any exact information on the percentage of voters among all men over twenty-four years.

local level, where notables and elitist parties (rather than newly emerging mass parties) continued to be the reference points for voters in smaller towns and communities.[11] Finally, during this period, nationalist accusations of uneven representation were increasingly met with compromises that introduced distinct electoral districts aligned with language affiliations based on the census, such as in Moravia in 1905 (for German- and Czech-speaking populations) and later in the Bukovina in 1910 and, although not implemented, in Galicia in 1914.[12]

Economic restrictions still played an essential role despite introducing so-called universal suffrage at the parliamentary level and within the curial system. Since the early 1860s, suffrage exclusion had been implemented for convicted criminals and people under criminal investigation,[13] including cases involving immorality, greed for profit, and bankruptcy.[14] The election law for the Lower House of the Imperial Council of 1873 added guardianship and receiving poor relief from public sources to the provisos entailing exclusion.[15] Poor relief was administered by the municipalities where a person had their right of domicile, even if that person did not reside within the community. Each village or town decided how to administer poor relief and was not controlled nationally. This system resulted in the enforced relocation of those deemed destitute if they did not have legal domicile in the municipality. Furthermore, the municipality was unwilling to help persons considered legal strangers. As the electoral reform of 1896 clarified, aid flowing from health insurance, accident or disability benefits, exemption from school fees, educational grants, and emergency relief did not count as poor relief, thus taking the new social

[11] See e.g. Hannes Stekl, *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 186; King, "The Municipal," 103-4.

[12] Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848–1918* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985); Gerald Stourzh, "The Ethnicizing of Politics and 'National Indifference' in Late Imperial Austria," in *Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte: Ausgewählte Studien 1990–2010*, ed. Gerald Stourzh (Vienna: Böhlau, 2011), 283–323; Börries Kuzmany, "Habsburg Austria: Experiments in Non-Territorial Autonomy," *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 43–65.

[13] "Reichsgemeindegesetz," March 5, 1862, art. IX, *Reichs-Gesetz-Blatt* (hereafter RGBl.) 1862, no. 18.

[14] RGBl. 1861, no. 20, February 26, 1861, e.g. § 17 for Lower Austria.

[15] RGBl. 1873, no. 41, April 2, 1873, §§ 9, 20.

policy regulations that had begun to be introduced in the 1880s into account.[16]

Economic exclusions remained in place after the abolition of the curial system and the introduction of "universal" and equal suffrage for the Imperial Council. The Social Democrats briefly argued against any exclusions based on poverty but did not wish to enforce the point in this reform.[17] Data from the 1910 census reveals that most individuals receiving public poor relief were women, suggesting that this measure did not significantly exclude many men.[18] "Able-bodied" destitute men were perceived to be "workshy" and were forced into labour and workhouses,[19] where they and men placed under police supervision did not qualify to vote. Finally, men who failed to meet the contemporary expectations of sobriety, had prior convictions for drunkenness, or lacked evidence of being responsible family fathers (resulting in the withdrawal of their authority over their children) were disqualified from voting.[20] Morality and respectability were now clearly emphasised in political participation alongside economic qualifications.

[16] RGBl. 1896, no. 169, June 14, 1896, § 20. For the social policy regulations see Emmerich Tálos, *Staatliche Sozialpolitik in Österreich. Rekonstruktion und Analyse* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1981).

[17] Report of the election reform committee in *Beilagen zu den stenographischen Protokollen des Abgeordnetenhauses des österreichischen Reichsrathes im Jahre 1906, sess. 17, vol. 27 (Vienna: K.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1907)*, no. 2727, 516–8 (the Social Democrat Viktor Adler on pp. 517).

[18] See "Berufsstatistik nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1910 in den im Reichsrate vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern. Hauptübersicht und Besprechung der Ergebnisse," *Österreichische Statistik* N.F. 3, no. 1 (1916): 132.

[19] Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann, *Über die Grenzen der Armenhilfe: Kommunale und staatliche Sozialpolitik in Wien und Budapest in der Doppelmonarchie* (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1991).

[20] RGBl. 1907, no. 17, January 26, 1907, § 8.

Women and the Vote

As previously mentioned, enfranchisement was initially age- and gender-neutral, at least at the local government and crownland diet levels. Women who owned property or paid taxes were typically included in the franchise. Women's marital status did not define enfranchisement per se due to the principle of separation of property in marriage law. However, not all towns and rural communities adhered to women's basic enfranchisement in legal terms and practical implementation. Several statutory towns, including significant business centres such as Vienna, Prague, and Brno, imposed comparatively higher tax limits and banned women from the franchise.[21] Furthermore, at least at the local government level, women and minors were usually not permitted to attend the polls. Minors had to be represented by a guardian, single women and widows required a male proxy,[22] and married women had their husbands serve as their representatives.

The early election laws for the diets decreed that votes generally had to be cast personally, causing significant confusion among election officers on how to proceed in the case of female voters. Typically, women were ineligible for election, but some election laws in the crownlands were not explicit about this, while others unambiguously restricted eligibility to men. Nevertheless, in Bohemia and Galicia, women capitalised on the law's vague wording to run as candidates in 1908 and 1912. This was partly a strategy in the feminist struggle for the full enfranchisement of women but was also motivated by the commitment of the Czech- and

[21] On women's suffrage see Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "Rethinking Women's Suffrage in the Nineteenth Century: Local Government and Entanglements of Property and Gender in the Austrian Half of the Habsburg Monarchy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom," in *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy, and Power: Nineteenth-Century Experiences*, ed. Kelly L. Grotke and Markus J. Prutsch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 107–26; Birgitta Bader Zaar and Carola Riedmann, "Stimmberechtigte Frauen vor 1918: Zum kommunalen, Landtags- und Reichsratswahlrecht für Frauen in der österreichischen Reichshälfte der Habsburgermonarchie," in *"Sie meinen es politisch!" 100 Jahre Frauenwahlrecht in Österreich: Geschlechterdemokratie als gesellschaftspolitische Herausforderung*, ed. Blaustrumpf ahoi! (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2019), 65–79; Sabine Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht in Stadt und Land Salzburg vor 1918," *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 64, no. 1 (2020): 29–46.

[22] For an example see Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht," 32–3.

Polish-speaking nationalist movements to support women's right to vote as part of their political agenda.[23]

At the Imperial Council level, women were only included among the voters of the curia of great landowners, most likely to strengthen this small curia's influence. If they were the sole business owners, women were also indirectly involved in electing representatives for the chambers of commerce and trade's curia, as they could name the managers of their businesses as proxies.[24]

To which degree married women held property in their own right was not always evident, although the Austrian Civil Code of 1811 had decreed the separation of property at marriage, and not coverture as was the case, for example, in Britain. Ellinor Forster and other scholars have concluded that, in practice, wives often entrusted the management of their property to their husbands, including any profits the property might have generated.[25] In cases where property was jointly held due to a marriage contract, wives had a legal say in decisions. The specifics of the agreement reached at marriage and how it was implemented varied from one region to another in Habsburg Austria. These variations were closely linked to the longstanding traditions of property management that had prevailed before the nineteenth century.[26]

Numerous amendments from the 1880s onwards changed the right to vote for municipal councils and crownland diets and lowered tax rates. Women faced varying and sometimes contradictory regulations depending on their crownland of residence. The Imperial Council's decision to restrict women's suffrage to the curia of great landowners and, in 1896, to

[23] One female candidate was successful, in Bohemia in 1912, however, was prevented from occupying her seat in the end. See Luboš Velek, "'Der' erste weibliche Abgeordnete der Habsburgermonarchie im Böhmischen Landtag 1912," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 26, no. 2 (2015): 41–69.

[24] Elisabeth Guschlbauer, "Der Beginn der politischen Emanzipation der Frau in Österreich (1848–1919)" (Doctoral diss., University of Salzburg, 1974), 34–5.

[25] Ellinor Forster, "Handlungsspielräume von Frauen und Männern im österreichischen Eherecht. Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert zwischen Rechtsnorm und Rechtspraxis)" (Doctoral diss., University of Innsbruck, 2008), 396; also Ursula Floßmann et al., *Österreichische Privatrechtsgeschichte,* 8th ed. (Vienna: Verlag Österreich, 2019), 118, 127.

[26] Margareth Lanzinger et al., *Aushandeln von Ehe: Heiratsverträge der Neuzeit im europäischen Vergleich*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Böhlau, 2015); Margareth Lanzinger et al. eds., *Negotiations of Gender and Property through Legal Regimes (14th–19th Century): Stipulating, Litigating, Mediating* (Leiden: Brill; Boston: Nijhoff, 2021).

establish a separate general curia exclusively for men influenced the election laws of several crownlands. From 1884 women were often deprived of the right to vote for the diet in the cities and towns' as well as rural communities' curiae. The general curiae introduced in the crown lands from 1902 were exclusively accessible to men, except in Vorarlberg, where women paying a low tax rate were included. This exception may have been implemented as a countermeasure to the influence of male workers' votes in this curia.

The tendency to exclude women from voting also impacted municipal suffrage, where, for example, voting was restricted to men in the town of Graz in 1897 and the Bukovina in 1908. Politicians were particularly troubled by the requirement for women to vote by proxy in municipal elections. They were concerned that their political opponents might besiege female voters, urging them to sign the proxy notification in their favour or possibly even forging these women's signatures.[27] At the same time, the presence of women in such a political place as the polling station contradicted the prevailing gender ideal of separate spheres, where women were assigned to the private domain of home and family.

Nevertheless, other crownlands and towns successfully prevented attempts to abolish women's suffrage, such as Bohemia in 1888, Lower Austria in 1891 and the city of Salzburg in 1901.[28] Furthermore, some places even allowed female teachers to vote as educated voters without any tax requirements, as observed in the city and crownland of Salzburg, Ljubljana, and other municipalities of Carniola.[29] A few crownlands even allowed women to continue to vote personally or introduced personal voting for single women as a new measure, such as in Lower Austria in 1904 for municipal elections, Vorarlberg in 1909 for both municipal and diet elections, and in the municipality of Ljubljana in 1910.

The experience of voting was not always positive for women voters, however. In the municipal elections of 1911 in Ljubljana, they voted

[27] Bader-Zaar and Riedmann, "Stimmberechtigte Frauen," 74, 76–8; Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht," 36.

[28] Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht," 36–9.

[29] Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht," 35; *Landesgesetzblatt für das Herzogthum Krain/Deželni zakonik za vojvodino Kranjsko*, 1910, no. 31, § 17, art. 3, and no. 32, § 15c, art. 3.

in a separate polling station, and some women, notably nuns, experienced aggressive campaigning by supporters of various political parties.[30] Married women who qualified to vote were only admitted to the polls if their husband was not entitled to vote. Usually, the tax rates of wives were combined with those of their spouses, and only the husband was present at the polls.[31] Combining the tax rates of married couples aimed to bolster the electoral bodies representing property and tax-paying individuals in relation to the newly introduced general class of voters with "universal" suffrage.

We still know little about enfranchised women, although we have some data. Jutta Martinek noted that the female voters in the curia of great landowners (i.e. owners of real estate listed in registers for noble or feudal property with a minimum tax) did not necessarily belong to the higher nobility but could also include middle-class women. Some women were joint owners. Women's convents could also be listed in this curia. Numbers are, however, scattered. In Upper Austria, for example, between 7 and almost 11 per cent of the voters of the curia were women from 1861 to 1879, and in Salzburg, close to 10 per cent could vote in 1897, while an additional 7 per cent figured as joint proprietors.[32]

In towns and smaller municipalities, the percentage of female voters could reach 20 to 25 per cent, as demonstrated by examples such as Bohemia in the 1880s, Graz (before the abolition of municipal suffrage for women in 1897), and the city of Salzburg at the turn of the century.[33] Women who owned property, professional women or women who ran businesses were not unusual. In 1890, women constituted 18 per cent of self-employed individuals in business and industry throughout Habsburg Austria, with higher-than-average percentages in Carinthia, Carniola, the Littoral, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Upper Austria, and particularly

[30] Bader-Zaar and Riedmann, "Stimmberechtigte Frauen," 72.

[31] *Landesgesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für das Erzherzogthum Österreich unter der Enns* (hereafter: LGBl. Österreich unter der Enns), 1904, no. 76, § 6; *Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die gefürstete Grafschaft Tirol und das Land Vorarlberg,* 1909, No. 16, § 6.

[32] Jutta Martinek, "Materialien zur Wahlrechtsgeschichte der Großgrundbesitzerkurie in den österreichischen Landtagen seit 1861" (Doctoral diss., University of Vienna, 1977), 494, 489, 504. For examples from other crownlands see ibid., 499, 509, 514, 540.

[33] Urbanitsch, "Gemeindevertretungen," 2214. For further numbers in Carniola (Marburg/Maribor, Pettau/Ptuj and Krainburg/Kranj) see Melik, *Wahlen*, 155; for Salzburg see Veits-Falk, "Das kommunale Frauenwahlrecht," 39.

Vorarlberg. By 1910, the number had increased to 24.9 per cent.[34] However, it is essential to note that these figures do not reflect these women's income, especially as they included women working in the cottage industry. Among the businesswomen, some owned factories, but most produced women's apparel and accessories, either at home or as heads of workshops.[35]

A lack of sources makes it difficult to find more information on the many women with enough income or property to be eligible for the franchise. As the election registers were typically not archived, we have limited information about the voters. Obtaining data on the numbers of enfranchised single and married women, their actual turnout at the polls, or their representation by male proxies, as well as their impact on elections, requires extensive and, often, unsuccessful searches through numerous archives in the various territories that constituted Habsburg Austria.

[34] Gerhard Meissl, "Die gewerblich-industrielle Arbeitswelt in Cisleithanien mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Berufszählungen 1890 und 1910," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 9/1, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 323–77, here 349.

[35] On the whole, 41 per cent of all people working in Austria in 1900 were women. The numbers of single and married working women were nearly even, a large segment was employed in agriculture. Edith Rigler, *Frauenleitbild und Frauenarbeit in Österreich: Vom ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1976), 54–9. On women's employment in general see Renate Banik Schweizer, "Der Prozess der Urbanisierung," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 9/1, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 185–232; Meissl, "Gewerblich-industrielle Arbeitswelt." For business women before 1848 see Waltraud Schütz, "Zwischen öffentlicher Kontrolle und individuellem (Ver-)Handeln: Zur Geschichte unternehmerisch tätiger Frauen im Wiener Vormärz," *L'Homme. Z.F.G.* 31, no. 2 (2020): 95–112; for legal bases and later periods: Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, "Wiener Geschäftsfrauen um die Jahrhundertwende," in *Auf dem Weg zur Beletage: Frauen in der Wirtschaft*, ed. Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1997), 145–78; Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann and Regine Bendl, eds., *Unternehmerinnen: Geschichte & Gegenwart selbständiger Erwerbstätigkeit von Frauen* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2000).

Adult Suffrage for Men in the Curial System and Enfranchised Women: The Example of Wiener Neustadt in 1913

This section will now focus on the town of Wiener Neustadt in January 1913, for which at least statistics on women voters exist. A major revision of the municipal election law had introduced a general electoral body for men with "universal" suffrage (while retaining the tax and education qualifications for the other three bodies based on the tax register). It also changed election practices, launching compulsory voting and election booths and allowing unmarried women who qualified to cast their votes personally for the first time. Married women, however, had to be represented by their husbands. Thirteen per cent of all voters were women.[36] It is difficult to discern whether they were active in trade or lived off annuities or pensions. In any case, Wiener Neustadt had a notable proportion of self-employed women engaged in the clothing or merchandise trades.[37]

The first electoral body in Wiener Neustadt comprised the wealthiest taxpayers (i.e. the first three-twelfths of people listed in the taxpayer register) as well as men who paid more than a hundred crowns of direct taxes and had lived in the town for at least a year. This electoral body also included (male) honorary citizens of the town (*Ehrenbürger*), the higher clergy and rabbis, retired officers, school principals, senior teachers, and university graduates. Women only qualified for the first category of taxpayers mentioned here and comprised approximately 8.5 per cent of these voters, i.e. 60 in absolute numbers.

[36] "Die Gemeinderatswahlen in Wr.-Neustadt." *Zeitschrift für Frauen-Stimmrecht* 3, no. 2 (1913): 2; LGBl. Österreich unter der Enns 1912, no. 187, Gemeindewahlordnung, §§ 15–19.

[37] Women comprised 34 per cent of the self-employed in industry and commerce, and 57 per cent in trade and transport. See "Berufsstatistik nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1910 in den im Reichsrate vertretenen Königreichen und Ländern. Niederösterreich," *Österreichische Statistik* N.F. 3, no. 2 (1914): 2–37.

The next four-twelfths of the tax register comprised the second electoral body and included in addition: men who paid more than fifty crowns of direct taxes and had lived in the town for at least a year; men who had the right of domicile in the town and had applied for and been awarded the town's citizenship (*Bürgerrecht*); other members of the clergy; other specific civil servants; graduates and teachers. 135 women (approximately 14 per cent of the voters) were enfranchised in this group of voters. The third electoral body included the remaining five-twelfths of the taxpayers on the tax register as well as men who paid more than twenty crowns of direct taxes and had lived in the town for at least a year, and various lower civil servants. Approximately 190 members of this electoral body were women (about 15 per cent of the voters). The fourth electoral body, which enjoyed "universal" suffrage, consisted solely of men who were required to have a considerable minimum residency in the town, specifically three years. Male voters from the first three electoral bodies were entitled to cast a second vote in this particular body.

Voters cast their vote on different days, beginning with the fourth general electoral body, followed by the third, second, and ultimately first electoral bodies. This system provided the opportunity to secure the election of a desired candidate by the end of the voting rounds in case their initial election attempt was unsuccessful.[38] The elections were heavily guarded by the military police (*Gendarmerie*), and hardly any conflicts were reported. Interestingly, local newspapers barely noted that unmarried female voters were now permitted to appear at the polls personally. Only the Christian Social newspaper mentioned shortly before the elections that "with the new electoral regulations, voting by proxy no longer applies to enfranchised women, so that in the future it will no longer be possible for municipal employees to grab women's votes and women will be spared harassment by municipal officials."[39] The Social Democratic newspaper "Gleichheit" only highlighted the many women who assisted the party by making sure that voters went to the polls (called "Schleppen der Wähler," literally "dragging voters").[40]

[38] Melik, *Wahlen*, 174.

[39] *Wr.-Neustädter Zeitung. Christlich-deutsches Volksblatt für das Viertel unter dem Wiener Walde. Wiener Neustadt*, January 4, 1913, 1. See also the article by Social Democrat Emmy Freundlich, "Frauen an die Wahlurne," *Gleichheit*, January 24, 1913, 4.

[40] *Gleichheit. Sozialdemokratisches Organ für die Interessen des arbeitenden Volkes*, January 31, 1913, 1.

Overall, novelties such as the election booth and proportional representation, as well as debates on which party would profit from "universal" suffrage in the fourth electoral body dominated public discussions. The election booth appeared to overtax some voters who had difficulties understanding its function, especially as the vote was not really "secret." In the late nineteenth century, written ballots began to be introduced in Habsburg Austria. These ballots were distributed to voters before the elections and could be filled in at home, allowing anyone, such as employers or the clergy, to inspect or complete them. Thus, voters who brought their ballots along only used the polling booth to insert them into envelopes handed out by the electoral commission.[41] As newspapers reported, some voters did not dare to lift the curtain to the polling booth themselves and instead ducked underneath it or just waited inside for something to happen. Others mistook the wastepaper basket as the ballot box.[42]

Despite "universal" suffrage benefiting the Social Democrats to some extent, as they emerged as clear winners in the fourth and third curia (where women were enfranchised), the system of unequal representation based on the four electoral bodies in the end resulted in the German Nationalist Party obtaining a majority of eighteen seats. In comparison, the Social Democrats secured only twelve seats, and the Christian Socials claimed ten seats.[43]

Epilogue

It is challenging to predict how issues concerning economic voting qualifications and gender and suffrage extensions would have evolved in Habsburg Austria. The outbreak of World War I led to the suspension of all political participation. However, demands for "universal" suffrage at all government levels and full women's suffrage persisted during the war and grew following the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Habsburg Monarchy

[41] See also Bader-Zaar, "Democratization," 117–9.

[42] *Arbeiter-Zeitung. Zentralorgan der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie in Oesterreich*, January 28, 1913, 7; *Wiener Neustädter Nachrichten. Unabhängige deutschnationale Zeitung*, February 1, 1913, 1.

[43] For the election results see *Wr.-Neustädter Zeitung*, January 29, 1913, 2, and February 1, 1913, 1; *Gleichheit*, January 31, 1913, 1; *Wiener Neustädter Nachrichten*, February 1, 1913, 1.

finally collapsed in late 1918. All the then newly formed nation-states introduced parliamentarism, but not all became democratic. Full women's suffrage, equal to men's, was achieved in the new Republic of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, while Hungary added educational qualifications. Italy, Romania, and Yugoslavia did not allow women to vote at all, which was a particular setback for Slovenian women who had enjoyed casting municipal votes in person at the local government level shortly before World War I.

During the period of radical change at the end of October 1918 in the small Republic of Austria, which had merged the mostly German-speaking territories of Habsburg Austria, the Social Democrats successfully pushed through their political rights agenda as a condition for their entry into government. For the first time, men and women above the age of twenty now possessed direct "universal" and equal suffrage at all levels of political participation, even though all parties worried about women's suffrage as a "leap in the dark."[44] Proportional representation was to ensure a just delegation of interests. Economic and educational qualifications disappeared entirely. The financial hardship caused by the war was considered, and poor relief and bankruptcy no longer disqualified potential voters.[45] Furthermore, the requirement of one year of residency, introduced in 1907, was abolished, as was the exclusion of soldiers.

However, other barriers did continue; guardianship, forced labour, police supervision and convictions for certain crimes excluded voters. Connected to these exclusions were voting restrictions based on moral

[44] "Sprung ins Ungewisse": Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik [Austrian State Archive, Archive of the Republic], MRang MR 1. Rep. StRPv, box 3, prot. no. 53, 3 December 1918, 18 (Viktor Waldner). On the introduction of women's suffrage see Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "Women's Citizenship and the First World War: general remarks with a case-study of women's enfranchisement in Austria and Germany," *Women's History Review* 25, no. 2 (2016): 274–95; Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "Die Demokratisierung des Wahlrechts," in *Die junge Republik. Österreich 1918/19*, ed. Robert Kriechbaumer et al. (Vienna: Böhlau, 2018), 101–12, here 104–8.

[45] *Beilagen zu den stenographischen Protokollen der Provisorischen Nationalversammlung für Deutsch-Österreich 1918 und 1919* (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1919), no. 77, 4–5.

grounds: Men continued to be disqualified if they had been deprived of paternal authority over their children (for a maximum of three years) or sentenced to prison for drunkenness more than twice.[46] Regarding women, the legislature considered it "necessary and self-evident" to exclude sex workers from the right to vote.[47] This measure, however, was only effective briefly.[48]

A further exclusion that prevailed was the qualification of citizenship for voting. This had significant implications for a society affected by the territorial and political consequences of the war. According to the new law, all individuals who had the right of domicile in the new territory of the Austrian Republic in early December 1918 were considered citizens. Citizenship could also be acquired by individuals who had resided in the region since at least the beginning of August 1914 or had moved there later, provided they had come from another municipality in Habsburg Austria. However, migrants from Dalmatia, Istria, and Galicia were excluded from this provision, primarily preventing the naturalisation and enfranchisement of numerous Jewish refugees from Galicia who had fled particularly to Vienna during the war.[49] The issue of citizenship remains contentious in present-day Austria, where it is associated with economic exclusion. Advocates for abolishing the citizenship requirement for voting emphasise the high costs of naturalisation, which effectively bar those less well-off, including women, from enfranchisement.[50]

[46] *Staatsgesetzblatt für den Staat Deutschösterreich*, no. 115, § 13.

[47] *Beilagen Provisorische Nationalversammlung*, no. 77, 5. See also Veronika Helfert, "Die Sittlichkeit der Staatsbürgerin," in *"Sie meinen es politisch!" 100 Jahre Frauenwahlrecht in Österreich: Geschlechterdemokratie als gesellschaftspolitische Herausforderung*, ed. Blaustrumpf ahoi! (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2019), 125–37.

[48] Gerhard Strejcek, *Das Wahlrecht der Ersten Republik: Analyse der Wahlrechtsentwicklung 1918–1934 mit der Wahlordnung zur konstituierenden Nationalversammlung und Nebengesetzen* (Vienna: Manz, 2009), 16, note 57.

[49] Hannelore Burger, *Heimatrecht und Staatsbürgerschaft österreichischer Juden: Vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis in die Gegenwart* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 132-40.

[50] Ines Rössl and Gerd Valchars, "Einbürgerung, Einkommen und Geschlecht: Hürden beim Zugang zum Wahlrecht," in *"Sie meinen es politisch!" 100 Jahre Frauenwahlrecht in Österreich: Geschlechterdemokratie als gesellschaftspolitische Herausforderung*, ed. Blaustrumpf ahoi! (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2019), 301–12.

CHAPTER 4

Winning the Vote in a "World Without Welfare": Aotearoa New Zealand from Representative Government to a Universal Franchise, 1840–1933

James Keating

After the institution of representative government in 1852, New Zealand moved steadily towards a universal franchise.[1] Pākehā (white settler) New Zealanders have long enjoyed reciting the milestones in the country's journey from Britain's newest colony in 1840 to the world's first full democracy before the century's end: elected legislatures from 1852, manhood suffrage for Māori (1867) and Pākehā (1879), the abolition of plural voting (1889), capped by women's enfranchisement in

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[1] I use New Zealand when referring to the colony (1840–1907) and Dominion (1907–47), but Aotearoa New Zealand for the modern nation (1947–).

F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_4

1893.[2] Such pride in this egalitarian past, a feature of both Pākehā identity and the "progressive presumption" that underpins liberal thinking about electoral expansion, occludes the gendered and racialised undercurrents that animated colonial life and overlooks the ways that New Zealand's democracy compares with other sites of early enfranchisement.[3] Unlike the Nordic states, competitors in the "race" to universal suffrage, punitive citizenship disqualification for welfare recipients did not caveat New Zealand's franchise. This was not because the colonists did not prize economic competence. After all, property qualifications defined its nineteenth-century electorate. Rather, the colony had been established by settlers determined to repudiate the models of public relief they had left behind in Britain. Instead of dispensing aid, the state regulated immigration to maintain wages and alienated Māori land to settlers, who were expected to be self-reliant.

In response to critiques of the wider applicability of T. H. Marshall's influential thesis—derived from his reading of English history—that suffrage extension presaged the recognition of social rights, I juxtapose Aotearoa New Zealand's celebrated introduction of the universal franchise against its immediate and less heralded contraction.[4] The chapter begins by retracing the colony's suffrage journey. In the conventional telling, settler society—animated by a democratic spirit—peacefully suppressed its plutocratic elements and incorporated disenfranchised groups into the polity through the vote. From the heights of the Electoral Act 1893, a social state emerged, gradually replacing the colony's ad-hoc charitable arrangements. Yet, heeding Melanie Nolan's reminder that Aotearoa New Zealand's egalitarian tradition was born "compromised," this chapter situates the vaunted extension of social and political rights alongside its unhappy corollaries.[5] As Māori and women discovered, their place within

[2] Melanie Nolan, 'The reality and myth of New Zealand egalitarianism: Explaining the pattern of a labour historiography at the edge of empires,' *Labour History Review* 72, no. 2 (2007): 121.

[3] Ibid., 116–19; Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xvii; Peter Meihana, *Privilege in Perpetuity: Exploding a Pākehā Myth* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2023), 115–19.

[4] T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 1–85; David Andersen, Carsten Jensen, and Magnus B. Rasmussen, 'Suffering from suffrage: Welfare state development and the politics of citizenship disqualification,' *Social Science History* 45, no. 4 (2021): 863–86.

[5] Nolan, 'New Zealand egalitarianism,' 120–21.

the nation remained contingent. Universal suffrage did not entail equal citizenship. Others, such as prisoners, Asian migrants, and people with mental illnesses, found themselves cast as foils to an incipient nationalism and, as a result, saw their social and political rights constricted by an interventionist state. Building on Marilyn Lake, Raewyn Dalziel, and others' exposition of the contradictions inherent in the political orders forged in fin-de-siècle Australasia, I argue the coincidence of public assistance with the abrogation of the rights enjoyed by "communal enemies" after 1893 was not anomalous, but an outcome congruent with the aims of settler progressivism.[6]

British Autocracy to Manhood Suffrage for Māori, 1840–67

Inhabited by Māori since the fourteenth century, from 1769 the islands that became New Zealand were the subject of European exploration. Over the following decades, hundreds of sojourners arrived seeking "flax, timber and whales; seals, sex and souls."[7] Plans for the islands' incorporation into the British Empire had existed since neighbouring New South Wales (NSW) was established as a penal colony in 1788. Nevertheless, it took fifty years for the Colonial Office, persuaded by missionaries and systematic colonisers as well as the emergence of a settler economy, to

[6] See especially Tony Ballantyne, 'The state, politics and power, 1769–1893,' in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99–124; Raewyn Dalziel, 'An experiment in the social laboratory? Suffrage, national identity, and mythologies of race in New Zealand in the 1890s,' in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation, and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Philippa Levine, and Laura E. Nym Mayhall (London: Routledge, 2000), 87–101; Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Phillips, and Shurlee Swain, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies, 1830–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 134–56; Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019); Charlotte Macdonald, 'Suffrage, gender, and sovereignty in New Zealand,' in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reform*, ed. Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 14–33.

[7] James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders, From Polynesian Settlement to the end of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Allen Lane, 1996), 129.

pursue "Colonization organized and salutary."[8] On 14 January 1840, spurred by the New Zealand Company's claim to have purchased swathes of Māori land, Britain incorporated New Zealand within NSW's boundaries.[9] Days later, William Hobson, the islands' first Lieutenant-Governor, sailed east from Sydney.

Under instruction from London, on 6 February 1840, he and forty-five Māori rangatira (leaders) signed a hastily drafted and translated treaty at Waitangi. The treaty, which amassed 500 additional signatures from rangatira across much of the colony, granted the British Crown sovereignty and the exclusive right to purchase Māori land. It guaranteed Māori "the Rights and Privileges of British Subjects" and the protection of their "lands and estates." Breached by the state for much of the next century, the treaty would, by the 1980s, come to be seen as a founding document.[10] In the short term, however, it laid the basis for Hobson's proclamation of British sovereignty in May 1840 and, by November, the declaration of New Zealand as a colony separate from NSW.[11]

Democratic reform occurred rapidly, though it was riven by tensions between competing interests: metropolitan and colonial, Pākehā and Māori, urban and rural. No sooner had the Crown declared Hobson

[8] Lord Glenelg to the Earl of Durham, 29 December 1837, enclosed in Standish Motte to the Marquis of Normanby, 4 March 1839, in *Correspondence with the Secretary of State Relative to New Zealand* (London: House of Commons, 1840), 20–21; Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2015), 188–99.

[9] 'Proclamation by His Excellency Sir George Gipps …,' 14 January 1840, enclosed in Gipps to Lord Russell, 14 January 1840, in *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), Colonies: New Zealand, Vol. 3 1835–42* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970), 123–24.

[10] Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin/ Port Nicholson Press, 1987), 258. There is a voluminous literature on the treaty's history and historiography, but for an overview see Ned Fletcher, *The English Text of the Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2022); Miranda Johnson, *The Land is our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 107–60.

[11] Enclosed in Lieutenant-Governor Hobson to Russell, 25 May 1840, in *BPP, New Zealand, Vol. 3*, 137–41; 'Charter for erecting the Colony of New Zealand …,' 24 November 1840, enclosed in Russell to Hobson, 25 December 1840, in *BPP, New Zealand, Vol. 3*, 153–55.

governor than settlers began protesting against arbitrary government.[12] During the Crown colony years (1840–52), governors took advice from appointed councillors but, in practice, exercised unilateral power on behalf of the Colonial Office.[13] The Municipal Corporations Ordinance 1842, which mandated the election of town councils under a "near … universal" manhood franchise, offered settlers a taste of democracy.[14] Yet, confronted by questions over the legitimacy of the Wellington borough council, the first elected under the regime, Britain soon dissolved the body and quashed the legislation.[15]

Unsurprisingly, criticism of the Crown's "tyrannical" governance increased.[16] By the late 1840s, constitutional associations could be found across the colony. Drawing on Chartist principles, members demanded "those safeguards of liberty which we enjoyed at home"—representative government and regular elections—alongside manhood suffrage, payment of legislators, and the secret ballot.[17] Seeking to ameliorate gubernatorial autocracy, in 1846 the British parliament passed the New Zealand Constitution Act. Had it been implemented, the law would have allowed voters to elect local officials, who would appoint provincial and colonial legislators. Nevertheless, on the advice of Governor George Grey—who considered the system over-elaborate and liable to provoke Māori suspicions about the settlers' newfound political dominance—Britain suspended the act in 1848; a decision the constitutional associations branded "arbitrary and suspicious."[18] Having been agreed in principle, the devolution of power would not be long delayed. Another Constitution Act, passed

[12] Enclosed in Russell to Hobson, 25 December 1840, in *BPP, New Zealand, Vol. 3*, 155–56.

[13] Ballantyne, 'State, politics, power,' 105–6.

[14] *Nelson Examiner*, 26 March 1842, 2; Municipal Corporations Ordinance 1842, ss. 9–12.

[15] Ballantyne, 'State, politics, power,' 109.

[16] *Nelson Examiner*, 14 April 1843, 232.

[17] *Nelson Examiner*, 26 March 1842, 2; Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Party, 1916–2016* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016), 28–30. See, e.g., 'Address from certain inhabitants of Wellington …,' 1 September 1848; 'Memorial from certain inhabitants of Nelson …,' 12 February 1849, *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives* (*AJHR*), 1883, A-3a, 10, 22–23.

[18] A. H. McClintock, *Crown Colony Government in New Zealand* (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1958), 286–93; 'Despatch from Governor Grey to the Right Hon. Earl Grey,' 3 May 1847, *AJHR*, 1883, A-3a, 3–5.

in 1852, established a form of self-government consisting of a bicameral legislature with an appointed Legislative Council, an elected House of Representatives, and six elected provincial councils—both comprised of single and multi-member seats, returned under a first-past-the-post system[19] (Table 4.1).

Neither law quite revived the generous suffrage of 1842. Instead, from the colony's first general election in 1853, and following British political tradition, the franchise was delimited by sex, age, nationality, and property rights, but not religion, occupation, or education. Male British subjects aged over 21 could vote once in each electorate in which they: owned a freehold valued at more than £50; a leasehold of at least £10 per annum; or rented property with an annual lease of £10 in towns and £5 in the country. Additionally, the Constitution Act codified the common law practice of civil death, disenfranchising those jailed for serious crimes such as "treason, felony, or infamous offence[s]."[20] Although the lack of a secret ballot (adopted from 1870 and made compulsory in 1890) and the appointed Legislative Council disappointed radicals, the franchise was broader than its equivalent in England where, after the Second Reform Act 1867, just 33 per cent of men—notoriously defined as the 'respectable' working-classes—could vote.[21] By contrast, over three-quarters of Pākehā men qualified as electors. Accordingly, appeals to the working classes became a staple of late nineteenth-century electioneering. Here, the property qualification might be understood not as a bid to disenfranchise Pākehā workers but as an effort to encourage stability in a colony fearful of "restless mobility."[22] Thus, by the 1870s, candidates who ran as "working men" began entering the colony's legislatures. Nevertheless, parliamentarians were unsalaried until 1892, preventing

[19] New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, 15 & 16 Vict., c. 72; André Brett, *Acknowledge no Frontier: The Creation and Demise of New Zealand's Provinces, 1853–76* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2016), 51–52. The number of multi-member electorates in the colonial parliament declined from 1853 and, by 1905, only single-member seats remained.

[20] New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, c. 72.

[21] Franks and McAloon, *Labour*, 30–31; Catherine Hall, Keith McLelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36, 71–118.

[22] Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 266–84; John E. Martin, 'Political participation and electoral change in nineteenth-century New Zealand,' *Political Science* 57, no. 1 (2005): 40–41.

Table 4.1 Suffrage qualifications for the New Zealand House of Representatives (Lower House) since 1852

Sex	*Age*	*Requirements besides British subjecthood**	*Grounds for voter disqualification*
1852: Men only 1893: Universal suffrage	1852: 21 + 1969: 20 + 1974: 18 +	1852–1879: property qualifications for landowners and tenants. From 1860, holders of goldminers' licences were exempt from this requirement, as were voters in the Māori electorates established in 1867 1889: Plural voting abolished 1905: Absentee voting introduced (postal voting was inaugurated in 1927) 1975: British subjecthood removed as a requirement for voters (New Zealand citizenship had existed since 1948, but it was not tied to voting rights. Thus, the provision extended the franchise to permanent residents after one year's residency)	1852–1975: imprisonment (initially for "serious" crimes. From 1905 this applied to all sentences longer than a year and, from 1956, to all prisoners) 1858–: a conviction for "corrupt practices" (electoral fraud), usually resulting in three years' disenfranchisement 1893–: serious mental illness (defined in 1893 as 'lunacy' but clarified over the twentieth century as applying to institutionalised patients. From 1975, disenfranchisement has been restricted to those institutionalised on criminal, rather than civil, grounds) 1977–: imprisonment (in 1993 this was narrowed to only those with sentences longer than three years, a policy revoked in 2010 and reinstated in 2020)

Sources: Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 241–43; Geddis, *Electoral Law*, 61–68, 118–28

*Chinese migrants were forbidden from naturalising—and thus disenfranchised—between 1908 and 1952. This is discussed further below, as are the intricacies of the pre-1879 property threshold, which have been simplified above

those without means or significant organisational support from entering the lower house.[23]

Further, by allowing plural voting for property owners, the inaugural franchise safeguarded the political primacy of capital. When, in 1875, a wealthy parliamentarian boasted that he possessed "eleven votes," he reminded the colonists that suffrage remained a "privilege extended to those individuals possessing a sufficient financial 'stake' in the country."[24] Likewise, the notionally colour-blind franchise was essentially a privilege restricted on racial grounds. Settler fears of Māori electoral power—Pākehā remained a demographic minority until 1860—prompted the inclusion of an English literacy clause in the 1846 Constitution Act's untested electoral apparatus. The franchise bestowed on New Zealand in 1852 neither retained this provision nor explicitly omitted Māori, but the property threshold excluded most men from voting, as they held land collectively.[25] Some historians attribute this to legislators' "ignorance," but the more plausible explanation remains that Pākehā circumscribed Māori electoral participation to buttress their tenuous political hegemony.[26] Thus, Māori who sought to exercise their rights were subject to administrative prejudice, with the courts applying voter qualifications more stringently than to Pākehā; for example, fewer than ten per cent of Māori applicants survived the routine judicial scrutiny of Wellington's electoral rolls in 1858.[27]

Despite its liberal franchise, mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand was an apathetic electorate. Mirroring the United Kingdom but in contrast

[23] John E. Martin, *Honouring the Contract* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2010), 100–2; J. O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record, 1840–1984*, 4th ed. (Wellington: Government Printer, 1985), 302.

[24] *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (*NZPD*) 19, 1875, 35; Andrew Geddis, *Electoral Law in New Zealand: Practice and Policy*, 2nd ed. (Wellington: LexisNexis, 2014), 61.

[25] Alan Ward, *A Show of Justice: Racial 'Amalgamation' in Nineteenth Century New Zealand*, rev. ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), 97; Paerau Warbrick, 'Dynamic and interesting events: The nineteenth-century Māori elections', *New Zealand Journal of History* 53, no. 2 (2019): 32–33. On the parallel disenfranchisement of Indigenous people in Canada, see Joan Sangster's chapter in this volume.

[26] Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, 92–93; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, rev. ed. (Auckland: Penguin, 2004), 143.

[27] Evans et al., *Equal Subjects*, 77–78; Warbrick, 'Dynamic and interesting,' 33.

to the United States, only half of those registered voted in colonial elections, and seats often went uncontested.[28] Provincial polls, by contrast, were spirited affairs. This phenomenon has been attributed to the ineffectiveness of central government and the settlers' parochialism.[29] Pākehā localism also reflected the fragmented nature of colonial life: inter-island travel remained difficult, and the provinces controlled the matters which structured voters' lives. Although New Zealand was never quite, as David Thompson suggests, "a world without welfare," a common antipathy towards the English Poor Laws left its settlers determined not to replicate the humiliating workhouse system.[30] Instead, colonisation was predicated on the belief that thrifty and industrious settlers would prosper, so long as government regulated migration and guaranteed access to land, thus enabling the rise of "a democracy of property-owning producers" and forestalling dissent from below. This vision relied on the alienation of Māori land, whether through legal means or brutal confiscation.[31] Such a society prized prudence and family responsibility, instantiating these values by denying the needy formal recourse to the skeletal aid provided by the state. Nevertheless, undercutting the settlers' moral opposition to the workhouse, those convicted of a burgeoning array of public-order offences (such as vagrancy) faced harsh jail sentences and often found themselves pressed into one of the prison gangs upon whose labour much of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century New Zealand was built.[32] In such a society, there was little question that

[28] F. W. S. Craig ed., *British Electoral Facts 1832–1980*, 4th ed. (Chichester: Parliamentary Research Services, 1981), 79–80; Michael P. McDonald, 'National turnout rates, 1789–present,' *US Elections Project*, https://www.electproject.org/national-1789-present.

[29] Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003), 38; Brett, *Acknowledge no Frontier*, 73; Raewyn Dalziel, 'Towards representative democracy: 100 years of the modern electoral system,' in *Towards 1990: Seven Leading Historians Examine Significant Aspects of New Zealand History*, ed. David Green (Wellington: GP Books, 1989), 55–56.

[30] David Thompson, *A World Without Welfare: New Zealand's Colonial Experiment* (Auckland: Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books, 1998); Bronwyn Labrum, 'The changing meanings and practices of welfare, 1840s–1990s,' in *New Oxford History of New Zealand*, 390–97; Margaret Tennant, *Paupers & Providers: Charitable Aid in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

[31] Miles Fairburn, 'Is there a good case for New Zealand exceptionalism?' *Thesis Eleven* 92, no. 1 (2008): 34; Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, 11–67.

[32] Jared Davidson, *Blood & Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2023), esp. 78–80.

social care would be accompanied by citizenship disqualification such as governments across Europe and its settler societies, including the United States, Canada, Victoria, and NSW, implemented to reduce spending by stigmatising poor relief.[33]

Whereas most Australian colonies instituted manhood suffrage by 1859, New Zealand's electorate grew haphazardly as the state enfranchised groups perceived to threaten social cohesion. Hoping to avoid the unrest that wracked 1850s Victoria as goldfield workers—many of whom flocked east when the province of Otago's goldrush began in 1861—demanded political rights, parliamentarians relaxed New Zealand's franchise. From 1860, all British men who held a £1 miner's licence (or, later, a goldfields' business licence) could vote. At the goldrushes' peak, between 1862 and 1870, several special miners' electorates operated across the colony.[34] More significantly, seeking to consolidate the support of iwi (extended kinship groups) friendly to the Crown amid the New Zealand Wars (1860–72) and to mitigate the withdrawal of imperial troops, parliament readdressed the system of de facto Māori disenfranchisement. Its response, the Maori Representation Act 1867, entitled men over 21 to elect Māori parliamentary representatives in four reserved electorates. Long viewed by settler society as an inclusive gesture, the measure was less about democratic transformation than an effort to manage Māori aspirations and assuage London humanitarians while furthering the project that instigated the wars: "establishing, unequivocally, the fact of British sovereignty" in a colony where "hapū-centred [kinship group] polities and indigenous norms" still challenged settler authority.[35] Intended as a makeshift solution until the Native Land Court (1865) enabled Māori to hold property under freehold tenure, and thus register as electors—a corollary of the court's function to hasten the subdivision of customary land—in 1876 parliament extended it indefinitely.[36] The segregation of Māori voters into vast electorates; one for

[33] Alvin Finkel, *Compassion: A Global History of Social Policy* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), 34–40, 85–99.

[34] Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 44–47.

[35] Anderson et al., *Tangata Whenua*, 256; Mark Hickford, 'Reflecting on colonial New Zealand's historical-political constitution and laws' histories in the mid-nineteenth century,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 48, no. 1 (2014): 12; Warbrick, 'Dynamic and interesting,' 33–34.

[36] Ward, *Show of Justice*, 209.

every 12,500 people, compared to one for every 3000 Pākehā, left the settlers' hegemony undiluted. Still, from the 1868 general election, Māori enjoyed guaranteed parliamentary representation and manhood suffrage, a right achieved twelve years in advance of their Pākehā counterparts and 51 years before Britain.[37]

Democratic Expansion in the "Social Laboratory," 1868–93

Piecemeal franchise extension could only go so far. Between 1867 and 1878, the Pākehā population doubled to about 412,000, stimulated by ambitious public works programmes, which used foreign capital to subsidise British migration and finance large infrastructure projects. The policy revolutionised colonial life, hastening the abolition of provincial government and the transition to a unitary state in 1876.[38] Further, the disenfranchisement of many "serious" men among the arrivals—chiefly city clerks and the sons of tenant farmers—reinvigorated the manhood suffrage debate.[39] Reflecting the democratic impulses of the era, the principle was settled in 1875, when the franchise was extended to all long-term renters, but political instability delayed further reform until 1879.[40]

Manhood suffrage galvanised the electorate: within one electoral cycle Pākehā voter registration leapt from 71 to 90 per cent.[41] Nevertheless, the vestiges of monied privilege remained. Landowners retained plural voting rights, with a modest (£25) property threshold required to vote in multiple seats. Then premier, the conservative John Hall sought to provide "a second vote … to a large number of small freeholders who are a very valuable class in the country."[42] One class of freeholders denied such largesse were Māori, who could only vote in one general electorate, however extensive their land holdings.[43] In 1881, the

[37] Ballantyne, 'State, politics, power,' 117.

[38] Brett, *Acknowledge no Frontier*, 198–207.

[39] Dalziel, 'Toward representative democracy,' 53–54.

[40] Lodgers Franchise Act 1875, s. 2.

[41] Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 70–71.

[42] *NZPD* 33, 1879, 11.

[43] Evans et al., *Equal Subjects*, 135–36.

Hall ministry further mitigated the expansion of the franchise by introducing a "country quota," which weighted each rural vote at about 1.28 times its urban equivalent. The policy—which echoes the preferential treatment afforded to rural voters in Iceland that Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir's chapter details—was ostensibly intended to ease the difficulties of democratic representation in isolated communities. It also constituted a response to anxieties about urbanisation in a colony whose economic base and cultural imaginary remained rural. As Hall understood, until its abolition in 1945, the gerrymander bolstered the interests of the landed classes who dominated these electorates.[44]

Ironically, Hall's success hastened the democratic tide sweeping New Zealand. Mollified by the country quota, in 1889 parliament abolished plural voting in general elections (individuals and businesses who pay rates in multiple municipalities still possess voting rights in each). The Māori seats aside, where several hundred men retained plural voting rights for another electoral cycle, the 1890 election was the first held under the "one man, one vote" principle.[45] In retrospect, this moment would be understood as a "seismic shift" towards democracy, especially as the victorious Liberal coalition held power until 1912.[46] After a decade of economic stagnation which had clouded the settlers' utopian dreams, voters clung to the Liberals' promise that a "better Britain" could yet be realised through state intervention. Profiting from the absence of a labour party until the First World War, the Liberals' commitment to land reform, tax reform, and industrial arbitration appealed to workers, smallholders, and bourgeois radicals alike. Under John Ballance (1891–93) and his successor, Richard Seddon (1893–1906), the Liberals transformed New

[44] The quota fluctuated between 18 and 28 per cent, collectively granting denizens of electorates without settlements larger than 2000 people four to five additional representatives at each election until 1937. Although the urban Māori population diminished over the nineteenth century, the vastness of the Māori electorates meant that they counted as 'urban' seats. Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Electoral Atlas* (Wellington: GP Books, 1989), 6–8, 132–37, 145; Ben Schrader, *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities, 1840–1920* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), 132–34, 362–81.

[45] In 1886, 796 Māori men enrolled to vote in general electorates in which they owned property. It is unclear how many voted more than once in 1890. Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 77; 'Natives on the electoral rolls,' *AJHR*, 1886, session 1, G-12a; *NZPD* 65, 1889, 56.

[46] Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury & Otago, 1840–1914* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002), 105.

Zealand by building a modern state intent on social transformation.[47] In 1891, however, their chief obstacle was the Legislative Council. In 1892, the ministry introduced term limits and began repopulating the chamber with malleable nominees. Although the Council limped on as an instrument of patronage until 1951, it had been defanged, allowing the Liberals to redraw the contract between the voter and the state.[48]

During the Liberals' first term, calls for women's enfranchisement, the final hurdle in New Zealand's half-century of electoral expansion, reached a crescendo. In 1869, Mary Ann Müller published *An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand*, the colony's first public demand for women's suffrage.[49] Although an organised suffrage campaign would take two decades to emerge, it became a perennial subject of debate, stimulated by letterists like Müller, who used the press to disseminate ideas about women and citizenship that had circulated globally since the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention.[50] At the municipal level, some provinces enfranchised women taxpayers in 1867, presaging the principle's universalisation in 1876. Nevertheless, its application was limited until the Married Women's Property Act 1884—in practice, at least—allowed wives to retain their assets.[51] Attuned to local feminist demands as well as the British radical liberal tradition, Attorney-General Robert Stout sought to extend the 1867 provision by allowing women who paid municipal taxes the vote in colonial elections from 1878. Reflecting the centrality of women's productive and reproductive labour to an agricultural economy—much like Finland, another site of early enfranchisement—and the association between suffrage and the powerful temperance movement, the measure sailed through the lower house, but failed to convince the Legislative Council.[52]

[47] Ballantyne, 'State, politics, power,' 120–24; David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891–1912* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), 37–75.

[48] McAloon, *No Idle Rich*, 112–13, 176.

[49] Fémmina, *An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand* (Nelson: J. Hounsell, 1869); James Keating, *Distant Sisters: Australasian Women and the International Struggle for the Vote, 1880–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 107.

[50] Macdonald, 'Suffrage, gender, sovereignty,' 17–19.

[51] Barbara Brookes, *A History of New Zealand Women* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), 108, 121.

[52] *NZPD* 28, 1878, 158. See Raewyn Dalziel, 'The colonial helpmeet: Women's role and the vote in nineteenth-century New Zealand,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 11,

Meanwhile, the machinery of government continued to open. By 1885, men and women could vote and stand for education boards, liquor licensing committees, and hospital and charitable aid boards on equal terms.[53] Bucking this egalitarian trend, the suffrage movement that coalesced around the Women's Christian Temperance Union debated whether to pursue partial enfranchisement. Advised by John Hall, whose desire to mitigate the influence of "loafing single men" saw him become parliament's foremost advocate of women's suffrage, in 1890 the Union committed to fight for the vote for propertied women "as a step to Universal Suffrage."[54] Members never formally reconsidered the decision yet, combined, the opposition of Kate Sheppard, the WCTU's preeminent suffragist, and the absence of a parliamentary majority for anything less than full enfranchisement, meant that the Union soon reverted to demanding womanhood suffrage.[55]

Sheppard's instincts proved correct. Freed from the suspicion that women's enfranchisement would swell the conservative vote, independent suffrage groups and trade unions mobilised working-class women. Their energy told in the movement's annual petitions, which in 1893 accrued almost 32,000 signatures—a quarter of the colony's women—demanding the vote.[56] Despite embracing universal suffrage, Sheppard and her allies nevertheless supported bills that omitted women's right to stand for office.[57] The tactical gambit succeeded. The prospect of women entering parliament had for decades seen bills defeated in the Legislative Council, yet on 19 September 1893 the Electoral Act received royal assent, enfranchising all women over 21. Māori women played little part

no. 2 (1977): 112–23; Irma Sulkunen, 'An international comparison of women's suffrage: The cases of Finland and New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,' *Journal of Women's History* 27, no. 4 (2015): 93–94.

[53] Brookes, *New Zealand Women*, 119–21.

[54] Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL), MSX-0913/120, John Hall to G. Stead, 30 June 1891; *Report of the National Women's Christian Temperance Union of New Zealand Fifth Annual Meeting* (Dunedin: Munro, Hutchinson, & Co, 1890), 12.

[55] Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, rev. ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 43–45.

[56] Macdonald, 'Suffrage, gender, sovereignty,' 20–22.

[57] Megan Hutching, *Leading the Way: How New Zealand Women won the Vote* (Auckland: HarperCollins, 2010), 49–58.

in the campaign—a consequence of its urban character, Pākehā suffragists' reluctance to forge interracial networks, and the concurrent struggle for women's rights within the Kotahitanga parliament (1892–1902), a body that aspired to Māori self-determination and sought redress for land grievances—but they were enfranchised on the same basis as Māori men.[58] Feeling indebted to the transnational feminist community from whom her compatriots had drawn inspiration, as the first general election under universal suffrage approached Sheppard remarked that "the eyes of the world" lingered on "the women of New Zealand"[59] (Fig. 4.1).

Over the following twenty years, her prediction was born out amply. The colony and its Tasman neighbours—self-styled "social laboratories"—captivated travelling metropolitan progressives including Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Henry Demarest Lloyd, and Albert Métin.[60] In New Zealand, the means-tested old-age pension instituted in 1898 and the annuities awarded to widows (1911), miners (1915), soldiers (1915), those bereaved by influenza (1918), and the blind (1924) were framed as social rights. These measures ameliorated the indignities of navigating the colony's voluntary aid system and came without the threat of citizenship disqualification. Nevertheless, all claims were audited by bureaucrats tasked to separate deserving and undeserving subjects. Such entitlements were withheld from those deemed to lack the requisite "sober habits and … good moral character" to justify public assistance, a category used to disqualify single mothers, the homeless, and those with criminal records.[61] Māori faced onerous scrutiny and, as a result, their access to welfare declined throughout the interwar years. State discipline rather

[58] Lachy Patterson and Angela Wanhalla, *He Reo Wāhine: Māori Women's Voices from the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2017), 171–82; Miranda Johnson, 'Chiefly women: Queen Victoria, Meri Mangakahia, and the Māori Parliament,' in *Mistress of Everything: Queen Victoria in Indigenous Worlds*, ed. Sarah Carter and Maria Nugent (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 228–45.

[59] *Prohibitionist*, 25 November 1893, 3.

[60] Peter J. Coleman, *Progressivism and the World of Reform: New Zealand and the Origins of the American Welfare State* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987); Lake, *Progressive New World*.

[61] Melanie Nolan, *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2000), 69–102; Old-age Pensions Act 1898, s. 8.

Fig. 4.1 An election night crowd in Wellington, 2 December 1931
Such images, which depicted the dissemination of electoral results in the pre-broadcast era and emphasised the orderliness of New Zealand's polls, were a popular trope of early twentieth-century reportage. (ATL, William Hall Raine Collection, 1/1-017,997-G)

than social security or redistribution prevailed.[62] Minimal as they were, these precursors to what became known as the 'cradle-to-grave' welfare state established by the first Labour government (1935–49) suggest that for Pākehā men, at least, New Zealand followed Marshall's germinal account of the cumulative development of civil, political, and social rights. Though suffrage was a far cry from equal citizenship, for the many, it did not lead to suffering through the retrenchment of social spending as Andersen, Jensen, and Rasmussen propose of Northern and Western Europe. Instead, armed with the vote, the colonists responded to the

[62] Labrum, 'Practices of welfare,' 397–406; Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand, 1898–1998* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998), 17–47.

problems of the fin-de-siècle by renewing the contract between state and society.[63]

Fighting for the Vote After "Universal" Enfranchisement, 1893–1933

The Electoral Act 1893 is often celebrated as the apex of a democratic revolution that separated suffrage from property ownership—for parliamentary elections, at least—and extended it to all British subjects aged over 21.[64] Yet fixating on paradigmatic victories that bridged disenfranchisement and political citizenship implies that franchise extension was rectilinear.[65] Instead, the struggle for universal suffrage continued. Perhaps to justify the generous new political order and to aid the atomised colony's transformation into a coherent nation, over the next half-century state and society constructed communal enemies and, accordingly, abrogated their citizenship.[66] As well as enfranchising women, the Electoral Act 1893 disqualified anyone the state deemed a "lunatic" from voting.[67] Reflecting shifting understandings of mental disorder and patterns of institutionalisation, the parameters of this category have fluctuated. Since 1975 only those detained in psychiatric wards for over three years on criminal, rather than civil grounds, remain disenfranchised.[68]

[63] Andersen et al., 'Suffering from suffrage'; Marshall, *Citizenship*, 1–85; Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 103–7; Thompson, *World Without Welfare*, 154–63.

[64] Property ownership remained a prerequisite of municipal enfranchisement in some regions until 1944. Graham Bush, 'The local government electoral process: An historical overview,' *Political Science* 50, no. 2 (1999): 151–55. See, e.g., Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 102, 112–14; Martin, *Honouring the Contract*, 98. For critical perspectives, see Macdonald, 'Suffrage, gender, sovereignty,' 24–29; Nolan, 'New Zealand egalitarianism,' 121.

[65] Louise Edwards and Mina Roces, 'Introduction: Orienting the global women's suffrage movement,' in *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy*, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8–13.

[66] John Stenhouse and Brian Moloughney, '"Drug-besotten, sin-begotten fiends of filth": New Zealanders and the oriental other, 1850–1920,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 33, no. 1 (1999): 45–50.

[67] Electoral Act 1893, s. 8.

[68] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1986), 238.

From 1905 parliament further narrowed the polity, gradually transforming civil death from a response to the gravest crimes into a universal punishment. The vote, such policies reiterated, remained a privilege rather than a right. In 1975 the Labour government abolished the ban, making that year's election the first in which all prisoners could vote. It would also be the last: the subsequent, conservative administration curtailed prisoners' voting rights, and they have remained a partisan issue, yo-yoing between full and partial disqualification.[69] Carceral disenfranchisement, as Joan Sangster argues in this volume, is best considered intersectionally: in Aotearoa New Zealand, poor and Indigenous peoples are vastly over-represented in the prison muster. In 2020, the Labour government acknowledged as much; in response to a Waitangi Tribunal finding that blanket disenfranchisement contravened the state's obligations to Māori, it restored voting rights to prisoners with sentences less than three years.[70]

The campaign for prisoner enfranchisement must be considered alongside the ways Aotearoa New Zealand's twentieth-century electoral system denied Māori substantive equality. Alongside its celebrated provisions, the 1893 Electoral Act separated the Māori and general electorates. Following a "hereditarily delineated definition of ethnicity," those the state classified as more than half Māori descent could only vote in the Māori electorates. Anyone deemed to possess less than half Māori "blood" had to register in a general electorate. Until 1975, only so-called "half castes" could choose where they exercised their vote and, until 1967, only those qualified to vote in an electorate could stand for parliament.[71] The result was a segregated electoral system. Māori nevertheless maximised the seats' potential—before the early-twentieth-century advent of party politics, Māori members' votes often decided the fate of legislation—and criticised their limitations. During the 1870s and 1880s, rangatira demanded parliamentary representation "in the same proportion as the representation is of the European race by the European members." In 1867, this would have amounted to twenty seats, threatening Pākehā hegemony in

[69] Geddis, *Electoral Law*, 66–70.

[70] Waitangi Tribunal, *He Aha I Pērā Ai? The Māori Prisoners' Voting Report* (Wellington: Legislation Direct, 2020); Electoral (Registration of Sentenced Prisoners) Amendment Act (No 2) 2020, ss. 4–6.

[71] Electoral Act 1893, ss. 7, 148–51; Ashlea Gillon, Donna Cormack, and Belinda Borell, 'Oh, you don't look Māori: Socially assigned ethnicity,' *MAI Journal: A New Zealand Journal of Indigenous Scholarship* 8, no. 2 (2019): 128–29.

a seventy-eight-member legislature.[72] After twenty years of parliamentary growth, the 1887 reduction of the lower house from 95 to 74 members, alongside booming Pākehā migration, resulted in the four seats falling in line with the Māori proportion of the population until the 1950s.[73]

Even so, the democratic norms codified during the Victorian era were extended slowly to Māori. The secret ballot, a practice fundamental to the Pākehā conception of the vote as an individual right rather than a public trust, was withheld from Māori voters until 1938. Although the establishment of a non-partisan electoral commission in 1887 made New Zealand the envy of comparable democracies, the exclusion of Māori seats from its purview ensured their composition would not reflect demographic change as did the general electorates.[74] Likewise, when parliament instituted triennial liquor licensing referendums in 1893, it excluded the Māori electorates until 1949, by which point temperance had lost its political salience. That year, Māori electoral rolls were first published, but voter registration was not made compulsory until 1956, a measure implemented 32 years earlier in the general electorates.[75] Similar disparities defined the juror franchise: until 1962 Māori could be barred from common juries.[76] Some historians have characterised these divergences from the rights Pākehā enjoyed as evidence of "careless, if not convenient, neglect," rather than discrimination.[77] Yet Māori electoral inequality was consistent with settler progressivism, in pursuit of which reforming politicians forged societies that were democratic and elitist, emancipatory and coercive, and, above all, striated by racial hierarchies.[78] From this vantage point, limiting Māori political participation made sense, as it preserved a

[72] Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, 144; Ward, *Show of Justice*, 226; Waitangi Tribunal, *He Maunga Rongo: Report on Central North Island Claims, Stage One*, vol. 1 (Wellington: Legislation Direct, 2007), 337–38.

[73] *Royal Commission on the Electoral System*, Appendix B, 65–66.

[74] The Māori electorates were redistributed three times between 1867 and 1983. McRobie, *Electoral Atlas*, 8–9, 18.

[75] Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 101, 160–67.

[76] Anderson et al., *Tangata Whenua*, 411.

[77] See, e.g., Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, 172; Geddis, *Electoral Law*, 102–3; John Wilson, 'The origins of the Māori seats,' *New Zealand Parliament Pāremata Aotearoa*, https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/research-papers/document/00PLLawRP03141/origins-of-the-m%C4%81ori-seats.

[78] Ballantyne, 'State, politics, power,' 124.

system designed in 1867 to ensure the "supremacy of white interests in the legislature."[79]

While Māori sat uneasily within the colonists' "definition of whiteness," by the century's end the Chinese migrants who had worked the goldfields were excluded from Pākehā conceptions of the nation altogether.[80] Invited by the Otago establishment in the 1860s, when—two decades later—gold grew scarce and the economy faltered, they served as racialised others against which an incipient nation could be defined.[81] From 1881 these attitudes informed a border regime suspicious of all non-British arrivals, but engineered to deter Chinese migration through passenger-per-ship quotas and poll taxes.[82] The measures shrunk an already small Chinese community, yet discrimination mounted in the twentieth century. Pākehā—in common with white colonists across the Pacific Rim—feared that the presence of peoples they deemed "transient," unassimilable, and inherently unfree contradicted the ideals of settlement, endangering progressive reform and national unity. Nowhere, as Tony Ballantyne observes, was the imbrication of border control, racial exclusion, and national progress made clearer than former Liberal minister William Pember Reeves's influential history, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand* (1902), which positioned "the Anti-Chinese Acts" as the genesis of the Australasian social laboratory.[83] Whereas the state encouraged most European settlers to naturalise as British subjects—New Zealand citizenship was established in 1949—between 1908 and 1952 Chinese migrants were forbidden from doing so, and thus prevented from voting. Further reflecting the settlers' conflation of race and nation,

[79] Patricia Grimshaw, 'Settler anxieties, indigenous peoples, and women's suffrage in the colonies of Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai 'i, 1888 to 1902,' *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (2000): 563; Catherine Irons Magallanes, 'Indigenous political representation: Identified parliamentary seats as a form of Indigenous self-determination,' in *Unfinished Constitutional Business? Rethinking Indigenous Self-Determination*, ed. Barbara Ann Hocking (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005), 110.

[80] Barbara Brookes, 'Gender, work, and fears of a "hybrid race" in 1920s New Zealand,' *Gender and History* 19, no 3 (2007): 502.

[81] Stenhouse and Moloughney, 'The oriental other,' 47–48, 57–58.

[82] Chinese Immigrants Act 1881; Chinese Immigrants Amendment Act 1888; Aliens Amendment Act 1892; Chinese Immigrants Amendment Act 1896; Undesirable Hawkers Prevention Act 1896; Immigration Restriction Act 1899.

[83] Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire*, 58–61; William Pember Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 1 (London: Grant Richards, 1902), v.

between 1898 and 1938—when the Social Security Act inaugurated the modern welfare state (one in which "European blood" no longer constituted a criterion of inclusion)—the Dominion denied those "Chinese or other Asiatics" who had already naturalised access to public assistance.[84]

Naturalisation laws also exposed the gendered limits of citizenship. Until 1935 women who married non-British "aliens" were denaturalised and disenfranchised. By contrast, alien women who married Britons assumed their husband's nationality, entitling them to vote and exposing fissures in the "great white walls" New Zealand erected in concert with the Anglophone settler world.[85] Beyond these gendered discrepancies, from 1920 the Immigration Restriction Amendment Act gave the minister of customs oversight of arrivals not "of British birth or parentage"—a tool intended to restrict all Asian migration.[86] Deferring to metropolitan sensibilities—as Reeves quipped, "the average colonial democrat" harboured "views on … alien and undesirable immigrants which might turn the hair of an English humanitarian Whig grey"—the Act said nothing about race.[87] Nevertheless, and though it was never as noisily proclaimed as the White Australia policy, New Zealand's system of ministerial prerogative functioned as intended, serving to keep the

[84] Old-age Pensions Act 1898, s. 64(4); Jacqueline Leckie, *Invisible: New Zealand's History of Excluding Kiwi-Indians* (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2021), 143–47. In 2002, Prime Minister Helen Clark apologised for the imposition of the poll tax on Chinese migrants. Giselle Byrnes, 'A radical reinterpretation of New Zealand history: apology, remorse, and reconciliation,' in *New Zealand's Empire*, ed. Katie Pickles and Catharine Coleborne (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 251–52; Andrew Francis, *'To be Truly British we Must be Anti-German': New Zealand, Enemy Aliens and the Great War Experience, 1914–1919* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 15–46.

[85] In response to feminist campaigning, between 1935 and 1946 (when women retained their citizenship upon marriage) those denaturalised on marriage were afforded the rights of British subjects but remained legal aliens. Harriet Mercer, 'Gender and the myth of a White New Zealand, 1866–1928,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 52, no. 2 (2018): 23–41. For transnational studies, see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008); Mae Ngai, *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021).

[86] Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1920, s. 5; Leckie, *Invisible*, 24, 39–69.

[87] Reeves, *State Experiments*, vol. 1, 68–69.

country white and British by formally curtailing Asian immigration until the 1950s and, informally, for another two decades.[88]

Finally, the centrality of the suffragists' victory to Aotearoa New Zealand's self-image has obscured women's arduous paths to parliamentary representation. From the mid-1890 feminists strove to exemplify the virtues of enfranchisement to a watching world while they fought to alleviate their remaining social, political, and economic "disabilities."[89] Yet, hampered by the collapse of the suffrage coalition, and confronted by the canard that the legislature was "no place for any woman," direct political participation seemed a distant prospect.[90] Without a legislative voice, women struggled to alter the compact among capital, labour, and government to make the Dominion a "workingman's paradise."[91] Only after the First World War would politicians convince themselves of women's capacity for office. Prompted less by the war's destabilising effects on gender relations than the chagrin that the Dominion lagged over a dozen countries in the matter of women's rights—especially the United Kingdom, upsetting the grandiose Pākehā sense of themselves as "better Britons"—in 1919 parliament allowed women to enter its chambers.[92] The Women's Parliamentary Rights Act remains a publically unheralded leg of Aotearoa New Zealand's democratic journey. This is because it complicates the country's claims to have "led the world" in 1893 and

[88] Sean Brawley, '"No 'White Policy' in NZ": Fact and fiction in New Zealand's Asian immigration record, 1946–1978,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 27, no. 1 (1993): 16–36.

[89] Keating, *Distant Sisters*; Katie Pickles, '"Fossilised prejudices" and "strange revolution": Commemorating the Women's Parliamentary Rights Act 1919,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 53, no. 1 (2019): 111–15. See, e.g., *Daybreak*, 25 January 1896, 3; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 May 1901, 2; Sandra Wallace, 'Powder-power politicians: New Zealand women parliamentary candidates' (PhD diss., University of Otago, 1992), 29–35, 46–49.

[90] See, e.g., *White Ribbon*, December 1900, 7–9; *Maoriland Worker*, 9 December 1914, 4.

[91] Nolan, *Breadwinning*, 14, 29.

[92] Pickles, 'Fossilised prejudices'. The sense of better Britishness and its contradictions—the desire to simultaneously escape "old world" problems and emulate the mother country—connected settlers from British Columbia to New Zealand. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 466–73.

necessitates reckoning with the prejudices that delayed the election of the first female parliamentarian until 1933, women's ability to serve as jurors until 1942, and the election of a Māori woman to parliament until 1949. Peeling back the veneer of progress shows that it would take at least fifty years before the political reorganisation of the 1890s would prove transformative for all those in Aotearoa New Zealand.[93]

Conclusion: Remembering Democratic Expansion in Aotearoa New Zealand

At the 1922 election, the first in which inhabitants of the outlying and sparsely populated Chatham Islands were enfranchised, almost all British subjects aged over 21 and resident in New Zealand could vote and stand for office. These rights were the result of a fifty-year period of democratisation which broadened the inaugural franchise of 1852 by eroding electoral property qualifications, abolishing plural voting, and enfranchising women. By 1893 New Zealanders could claim to be the world's "most fully enfranchised" people and to inhabit a society in which capital conferred individuals with few electoral advantages.[94] If the colonists' refusal to emulate the Poor Laws meant that citizenship disqualification never became a corollary of welfare disbursement, their successful pursuit of state social protection after 1893 largely accords with Marshall's argument about the stadial relationship between political and social rights.

[93] Women's delayed access to jury service, which was not granted on equal terms until 1976, was mirrored in Australia. Elsewhere in the world such discrepancies between electoral and jury enfranchisement were anomalous. *NZPD* 185, 1919, 756–67; Brookes, *New Zealand Women*, 264, 374; Pickles, 'Fossilised prejudices,' 123–24.

[94] The phrase describes Australia in 1902 but applies equally to New Zealand. Clare Wright, '"A splendid object lesson": A transnational perspective on the birth of the Australian nation,' *Journal of Women's History* 26, no 4 (2014): 14.

Nevertheless, while riding this wave of democratisation, the progressive settler state ensured that some floundered in its wake. For decades after their enfranchisement—a victory which served as a hallmark of the social laboratory overseas—full political citizenship eluded women. Likewise, the ostensibly race-blind electoral arrangements of 1852 were, for Māori, more instruments of exception than straightforward enfranchisement.[95] For much of the next century, the four representative seats created in 1867 suppressed Māori electoral influence. These exclusionary tendencies were exemplified in the reluctant universalisation of democratic norms and social protections that Pākehā believed distinguished their "better Britain." All else aside, the practice of holding Māori polls up to a month before general elections until 1951 offered a reminder of the state's priorities.[96] For others subject to the state's growing powers—those incarcerated in prisons and asylums—the twentieth century witnessed the diminution of their citizenship, a category forbidden to Chinese residents before 1952. Since 1971, when women's liberationists inaugurated 19 September—"Suffrage Day"—as a day of protest, it has been co-opted by those more eager to celebrate the country's egalitarian roots than its lingering inequalities.[97] Such a pioneer victory demands commemoration, but only alongside women's vigorous fight first for parliamentary rights and then to reform a hostile party system that inhibited their realisation. Collectively, these restrictions eclipse Pākehā claims to have built a truly democratic society. Only by returning those whose electoral rights remained by design uncertain, threatened, or denied altogether, to the history of suffrage extension can we appreciate the contingencies and compromises that characterised Aotearoa New Zealand's "universal" franchise.

[95] Dalziel, 'Social laboratory,' 87.

[96] Electoral Amendment Act 1950, s. 5.

[97] Sandra Grey, 'Out of sight, out of mind: The New Zealand women's movement,' in *Women's Movements: Flourishing or in Abeyance?*, ed. Sandra Grey and Marian Sawer (London: Routledge, 2008), 70–71.

CHAPTER 5

Constitutional rights in conflict. The evolution of political and social rights in Denmark, 1849–1961

Leonora Lottrup Rasmussen

On June 5, 1849, King Frederik VII signed Denmark's first Constitution. His signature marked the transition from autocracy to constitutional monarchy and a more democratic government. The new Constitution granted suffrage to a significant part of the male population. All male citizens over 30 with an "unblemished reputation"[1] received the right to vote unless he was in private service, had received public poor relief or was unable to manage their estate.[2] Most notably, this allocation of rights excluded women, servants, criminals, people who declared

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[1] The term unblemished reputation (Uberygtet) meant having a clean criminal record. Danmarks Riges Grundlov, 5. juni 1849. Retrieved November 12, 2023 from: Danmarkshistorien.dk, accessed June 9 2024. http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/danmarks-riges-grundlov-af-5-juni-1849-junigrundloven/

[2] Danmarks Riges Grundlov, 5. juni 1849.

F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_5

bankruptcy and recipients of poor relief from voting. However, while women and servants were granted suffrage with the revision of the Constitution in 1915, exclusion based on economic independence and the ability to support oneself remained unchanged. Voting restrictions due to bankruptcy and criminality were abolished only in 1959. Two years later, in 1961, the last restriction that excluded recipients of poor relief from formal political citizenship was abrogated.[3] By then, restrictions only affected roughly 5,000 citizens and were considered outdated and in conflict with the European Social Pact.[4]

While the Constitution of 1849 laid the foundation for the political exclusion of poor relief recipients that would last more than a century, it also rendered receiving poor relief a constitutional right. Article 89 in the 1849 constitution stated that: "Those who are unable to provide for themselves, and whose support does not lie with any other, are entitled to receive public help."[5] This was a paragraph remarkable not just because it remained unaltered throughout all subsequent revisions of the Constitution and would also eventually act as a starting point for the Danish universal welfare state in the twentieth century but also because the paragraph is unique within an international context. Due to article 89, poor relief recipients—contrary to other excluded groups—were prevented from exercising their constitutional right to vote precisely because they exercised another constitutional right, their social right to receive relief. Consequently, public poor relief recipients uniquely embody the complex interplay between political and social citizenship. By placing the poor relief recipient as the focal point of the analysis, this chapter explores two key questions: Why were recipients of poor relief excluded from suffrage, and how did the process of inclusion progress?

[3] Christiansen, Niels Finn. "Social- og familiepolitikkens rolle i den demokratiske inklusion." In *Før og efter stemmeretten - køn, demokrati og velfærd*, edited by Anette Borchorst og Drude Dahlerup (Frederiksberg: Frydenlund, 2015), 39–61.

[4] Folketingstidende, 1960/1961, 7000; Christiansen, Niels Finn."Borgerret i Danmark: En fortælling om køn, fattigdom, etnicitet og politisk træghed. In *Stemmerettens grenser: fattigdom og demokratisk utestengelse 1814–1919,* edited by Marthe Hommerstad & Bjørn Arne Steine (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2019).

[5] Danmarks Riges Grundlov, 5. juni 1849. This, as well as all subsequent translations, have been done by the author.

This chapter addresses these questions by focusing on legislative shifts connected to constitutional revisions and social policy. It discusses negotiations leading up to the social reforms of the 1890s, including the reforms that made it possible for citizens to receive certain types of relief without losing rights. It also discusses the enactment of the 1933 social reform, which made it the exception rather than the rule to lose political rights when receiving public support. Through the lens of citizenship, the analysis in this chapter emphasises notions of gender and marital status, as well as the interplay between formally defined citizenship and the practice of citizenship at the local level of government.

Exclusions and Inclusions

From 1849 to 1961, the inclusion of poor relief recipients into formal political citizenship was part of a more extensive development where the right to vote was gradually expanded, more social groups were included (Table 5.1), and the voting age was lowered (Table 5.2). As mentioned above, the suffrage clause in the 1849 constitution excluded women, servants, criminals and people declared bankrupt from voting, alongside poor relief recipients. It further excluded individuals declared as legal minors and were under guardianship, as well as people who did not have permanent residence in the electoral district one year before the election. Consequently, poor relief recipients (in addition to exclusions based on gender or occupation) could lose their voting rights on numerous grounds since poverty often led to other factors that resulted in disenfranchisement. Individuals experiencing poverty were more likely to move around searching for jobs or a better life, and poverty was associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal activities.[6]

However, it is worth noting that the development of political rights, as depicted in Table 5.1, might provide a skewed impression of who was excluded from voting in practice. For instance, the *Rigsdag* (the Danish Parliament) enacted a law on the restoration of honour ("Agtelsesoprejsning") in 1868, allowing formerly convicted individuals to regain their honour—and consequently, their voting rights—five years after serving

[6] Bruun, Frederik. *Beretning fra kontoret for Fængselsvæsenet om Straffeanstalternes Tilstand* (Copenhagen, 1885).

Table 5.1 People excluded from the vote in Denmark, 1849–present

Excluded groups	*Gained the vote at national elections (lower and upper champers)*	*Gained the vote at municipal elections*
Women	1915	1908
Servants (people in private service)	1915	1908
Criminals (prisoners and formerly convicted)	1959	1959
Declared bankrupt (people who were not in legal control of their property)	1959	1959
Recipients of public poor relief	1961	1961
Under guardianship (people said legal minors)	Still in effect	2016
Transients (people who did not have a permanent residence in the electoral district for a specific period)	1915	1915

Source: Den almindelige stemmeret, 1848-. Retrieved November 12, 2023 from: https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/den-almindelige-stemmeret-1848; Danmarks Riges Grundlov af 5. juni 1915. Retrieved November 12, 2023 from: Danmarkshistorien.dk, https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/danmarks-riges-grundlov-af-5-juni-1915; Lov om ændring i lov om kommunale valg og lov om valg til folketinget in *Folketingstidende*; Lov om offentlig forsorg 16. maj 1961, in *Folketingstidende*.

Table 5.2 Voting age in Denmark, 1849–present

Year	*Voting age*
1849	30 (Folketinget and Landstinget)
1915	35 (Landsting) 25 (Folketinget)
1953	23
1961	21
1971	20
1978	18

Source: Tal og fakta om valg og afstemninger. Retrieved November 12, 2023, from https://www.ft.dk/folkestyret/valg-og-afstemninger/tal-og-fakta-om-valg-og-afstemninger#F176B8F5D2904A1F9C46A9BE0ACA331

their sentence.[7] Furthermore, the Constitution made it possible for recipients of poor relief to have their rights restored. In conjunction with the local administration of poor relief, this option led to a less rigid and more malleable political citizenship than the constitutional legislation reflects, as I will discuss in detail in the following sections.

In addition to the seven grounds for disenfranchisement (Table 5.1) and the age limit (Table 5.2), the 1849 constitution excluded all non-citizens from voting.[8] However, the Constitution remarkably lacked provisions regarding the acquisition of citizenship; Danish citizenship was still defined by The Citizenship Ordinance of 1776.[9] The unresolved question of citizenship in 1849 was likely due to unresolved questions about territories under Danish rule and their connection to the kingdom.[10] At the time, Denmark was a conglomerate state, which, in addition to the kingdom, included the Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg duchies, as well as the Danish West Indies colony and the overseas territories of Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.[11] The enactment of a more democratic form of government naturally prompted questions about whether the Constitution applied to all territories belonging to Denmark and how these territories, if applicable, achieved political representation. The duchies question was of crucial significance. Based on a desire for an independent Schleswig–Holstein, the duchies started a civil war in 1848. Although the Danish kingdom won the war in 1850, Denmark later lost Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg to Germany in 1864.

Regarding the other territories under Danish rule, a resolution was reached where Greenland and the Danish West Indies were excluded from

[7] Rigsdagstidende, Folketingets Forhandlinger, 1867–1868, tillæg A, 779.

[8] Danmarks Riges Grundlov, 5. juni 1849.

[9] According to The Citizenship Ordinance of 1776, non-natives could gain citizenship if they were employed in government service; were in possession of wealth (e.g. landed estates, factories, plantations, etc.); were willing to invest in Danish industries or experts (e.g. soldiers, scholars, artists, etc.) In order to become a Danish citizen, non-natives had to request a letter of naturalization. Around 1840 only about 3–4 of such letters were issued annually. Ersbøll, Eva. *Dansk indfødsret i international og historisk belysning* (Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, 2008), 432–433.

[10] Ersbøll, *Dansk indfødsret,* 446.

[11] Det danske rige, 1814–1914. Retrieved November 12, 2023 from https://danmarkshistorien.dk/perioder/fra-enevaeldig-helstat-til-nationalstat-1814-1914/det-danske-rige

the constitutional framework due to their status as colonies and, therefore, did not gain any political rights.[12] Conversely, the Faroe Islands and Iceland, recognised as Danish counties, were each granted two elected representatives in the *Rigsdag*. Nevertheless, Iceland declined to be represented in the *Rigsdag* and, in 1874, gained its own Constitution.[13]

According to the 1849 constitution, the *Rigsdag* comprised two chambers: *Folketing* (lower chamber) and *Landsting* (upper chamber). Initially, the voting rights for both chambers were similar. However, following the 1866 revision of the Constitution, a privileged suffrage system was introduced for the Landsting. The system included changes such as granting the wealthiest men the privilege of dual votes and allowing the king to appoint 12 of the 66 Landsting members. These voting rights persisted until 1915, when equal voting rights were reinstated, although the Landsting voting age remained ten years higher at 35 until 1953 (Table 5.2).[14] Following the revision of the Constitution in 1866, a privileged suffrage system was enacted for rural municipalities in 1867 and for urban municipalities in 1868 and remained in place until 1908. Under the 1868 Act, the majority of the city council was elected by those with the right to vote for the Folketing, while those with the highest taxation elected a minority.[15]

Independence and Autonomy

When Denmark got its first Constitution, the country was undergoing significant change and development in terms of economic structure and demographic composition. The country had transitioned from an agricultural-based economy to an industrialised society with the growth of

[12] Denmark sold the Danish West Indies to USA in 1917. While the population of Greenland did not gain any political rights in 1849, elected assemblies (Forstanderskaber) was established in 1857, which were entrusted with the administration of local affairs. However, it was not until the revision of the constitution in 1953 that Greenland was recognized as a Danish county and granted two elected representatives in the Rigsdag. Grønlands historie. Retrieved November 12, 2023 from https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/groenland

[13] See Kristjánsdóttir's chapter in this volume.

[14] Valgret 1834-1915, Retrieved November 12, 2023 from https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/valgret-1834-1915. The bicameral system was abolished in 1953.

[15] Clemmensen, Niels. *Konflikt og konsensus i kommunen: det landkommunale selvstyre i Danmark i det 19. århundrede* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2011).

factories and increased urbanisation.[16] Its population had grown from just under 1 million in 1801 to almost 2.5 million in 1901.[17] People moved from the countryside to urban areas in increasing numbers, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[18] Despite the economic, demographic and political changes, the poor relief system remained based on a poor law dating back to 1803. The law had, however, been subjected to several alterations during the first half of the nineteenth century, which, among others, deprived recipients of the right to marriage and the right to private ownership.[19] Following T. H. Marshall's tripartition of citizenship, poor relief recipients would lose their political and civil citizenship after 1849.[20]

In the wake of the first constitution the elected government made several attempts to protect certain social groups from the legal and social stigmatisation associated with public poor relief. As in Iceland and Finland, emphasis was put on distinguishing the undeserving from the deserving poor, i.e. between those who were and those who were not to blame for their poverty due to a lack of character.[21] In the following years, several specific laws were passed which enabled what was considered the deserving poor to receive assistance without forfeiting their voting rights. These laws were all time-limited and were only enacted due to extraordinary situations, e.g. the civil wars between Denmark and the duchies and

[16] Hvidt, Kristian. *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie, bind 11: Det folkelige gennembrud og dets mænd, 1850–1900* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1990), 106.

[17] In 1801 Denmark had a population of 929.000 and in 1901 a population of 2.450.000. Danmarks befolkningsudvikling 1769–2021. Retrieved November12, 2023 from Danmarkshistorien.dk: https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/danmarks-befolkningsudvikling

[18] In 1850 about 80% of the population lived on the countryside, while almost 40% lived in cities by 1901. Danmarks befolkningsudvikling 1769–2021.

[19] According to the poor law of 1803, the poor committee gained the right to sell the properties of the deceased poor, in order to receive compensation for paid relief. In 1808, the poor committee were allowed to register the properties of the poor. In 1824, the poor committee were also allowed to refuse citizens who had not yet paid back their relief, the right to marry. In 1857, the law was changed so that women were exempted from restrictions on their marital rights, but the intervention remained in force for male citizens until social reform in 1933.

[20] Marshall, T. H., and Tom Bottomore. *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto, 1996), 8ff.

[21] See Harjula's and Kristjánsdóttir's chapters in this volume.

periods of scarcity, which indicates that the *Rigsdag* did recognise outside circumstances as a cause for poverty as opposed to poverty being seen as a sign of inner moral failings.[22] It also shows how war and scarcity could be a driving force in extending social and political rights, as in Finland.[23]

In 1868, the *Rigsdag* first attempted to reform the poor relief legislation by establishing a commission, which yielded no results.[24] In the subsequent period, *Venstre* (The Liberal Party) and *Socialdemokratiet* (The Social Democrats) tried to reform the outdated poor law of 1803. Yet, a constitutional struggle influenced the *Rigsdag*, preventing an agreement on a new poor law. The ongoing debates regarding poor relief, which led to the revision of the poor law in 1891, provide valuable source material that gives insight into the argument that portrayed poor relief recipients as incapable of being political citizens. As such, these discussions reflect how formal political citizenship was defined during the second half of the nineteenth century.

A recurring theme in the parliamentary debates was the question of independence and autonomy. Politicians deliberated whether the ability to support oneself reflected the independence and autonomy necessary to engage in political life. In 1871, *Venstre* proposed a measure to restore political citizenship for poor relief recipients by cancelling their debt to the municipality (who were responsible for managing poor relief) if they had not received relief for five years. Like other Nordic countries, poor relief was seen as a loan you were obligated to repay if you were capable.[25] During negotiations of the *Venstre* proposal, Arthur Hindenburg, a Conservative Party member, opposed it. He highlighted that, as per the Constitution, economic independence served as the foundation for possessing full citizenship status. According to Hindenburg, the proposal would "eliminate the essence of our current political landscape." He argued that in order to demonstrate the independence and autonomy

[22] Jørgensen, Harald. *Studier over det offentlige Fattigvæsens historiske Udvikling i Danmark i det 19. Aarhundrede* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1979).

[23] Obinger, Herbert, Klaus Petersen, and Peter Starke. *Warfare and welfare: Military conflict and welfare state development in Western countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also Harjula's chapter in this volume.

[24] Obinger, Peter, and Starke, *Warfare and Welfare*, 135ff.

[25] See Larsen's, Harjula's, Kristjánsdóttir's and Cottrell-Sundevall's chapters in this volume.

expected of a voter, individuals should be able to achieve success through their own efforts. [26] It is worth noting that Denmark did not implement the secret ballot system until 1901, which may have contributed to the emphasis on maintaining the independence and autonomy of voters since the lack of anonymity could potentially lead to coercion or manipulation.[27]

In connection to negotiations of a proposal regarding poor relief funds put forward by *Venstre* in 1874, Octavius Hansen, an independent member of *Folketinget*, emphasised that the reason behind the suffrage restrictions, mainly the exclusion of the recipient of poor relief, "has been that only those people who are truly independent and who could stand on their own two legs, should have the right to vote."[28] While the ruling party, along with Octavius Hansen, argued that political citizenship depended on economic independence, the opposition argued that receiving public poor relief did not necessarily compromise the beneficiary's autonomy, thus claiming that poor relief recipients could still be independent in a moral sense.

Ludvig Holstein-Ledreborg, a member of *Venstre*, argued that individuals receiving poor relief were not excluded from political citizenship "because they have received help, (…) but because they thereby find themselves in a particular state of dependence."[29] This same idea was later echoed by Holstein-Ledreborg's party colleague Henning Jensen during negotiations from 1887 to 1888. Jensen emphasised that it was not the relief itself that excluded poor relief recipients from political citizenship but rather how the relief was provided:

> Poor relief is associated with a high degree of personal and civic humiliation (…). It violates the personal sense of honour of those who rely on it. When a person has received poor relief, his self-esteem and power are broken.[30]

Instead, the relief, according to *Venstre*, should be given as self-help in order to maintain the recipient's self-esteem and independence:

[26] Rigsdagstidende, Folketingets Forhandlinger, 1871–72, 1794.

[27] Folketingsvalg, 1901–1939. Retrieved Mov 12, 2023 from Danmarkshistorien.dk: https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/folketingsvalg-1901-1939

[28] Rigsdagstidende, Folketingets Forhandlinger, 1874–1875, 1671–72.

[29] Ibid., 1710.

[30] Rigsdagstidende, Folketingets Forhandlinger, 1887–1888, 1315–1317.

> [O]ur starting point is that when relief really is to become a relief, it must be given without any humiliation, especially to honourable people (…). That the genuinely deserving poor may receive relief in such a way that serves his sentiments (…) it is not the fact that they are poor, that they require relief, which makes people bad people, but how they receive that relief.[31]

As these debates indicate, the opposition argued that it was not the relief that rendered individuals unworthy of political citizenship but rather how municipalities allocated the relief. Despite this argument, there was a consensus that political citizenship was inevitably linked to independence and autonomy, and this was in stark contrast to poor relief recipients perceived as stigmatised and degraded.

Stigmatisation and Degradation

Alongside the legal stigmatisation linked to poor relief after 1849, in the 1860s, poor- and workhouses became increasingly popular with Danish municipalities responsible for managing the poor law. Denmark had the highest number of poor- and workhouses in the Nordic countries. These institutions maintained the lowest strata of society by subjecting them to surveillance, discipline and control.[32]

The correlation between the constitutional allocation of rights and the municipal management of the national poor law, which involved the utilisation of poorhouses and workhouses, has prompted existing welfare state studies and research on poor relief and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Denmark to characterise poor relief recipients as humiliated,

[31] Ibid., 1315–1317.

[32] Kolstrup, Søren."Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803 til 1891." In *Dansk Velfærdshistorie, bind 1*., edited by Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen, and Niels Finn Christiansen, 159–99 (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2010).

213. For literature which focuses on poor- and workhouses, see for example: Villadsen, Kaspar. *Det sociale arbejdes genealogi: om kampen for at gøre fattige og udstødte til frie mennesker* (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel, 2004); Nørgård, Inger Lyngdrup. *Beskyt de værdige fattige!: opfattelser og behandling af fattige i velgørenhed, filantropi og fattigvæsen i København 1770–1874* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2017).

infringed and stigmatised individuals.[33] In addition, several studies have stressed that political exclusion, instituted with the 1849 constitution, relegated poor relief recipients to second-class citizens. These studies have pointed to the social reforms of the 1890s as the first signs of change and, as such, a small step towards the welfare state that would emerge in the twentieth century. The reforms changed the content and extent of social citizenship, thereby making it possible to access medical care (such as midwives and doctor visits) and to receive financial support for funerals, disabled children, compensation for sickness and during old age without losing political rights. Therefore, the reforms operated to integrate specific sub-groups into political citizenship.

The period between 1849 and 1891 has been described as stagnant, with a general reactionary attitude towards changing the poor legislation at the national level. However, as newer studies have underlined, citizenship should be understood both as a legal status and a social practice. Citizenship is not just a matter of introducing established sets of obligations and rights, but it is also something that is done, hence, something that can be done differently. These studies have also highlighted that citizenship should not be treated as an either-or-position but as a dynamic, porous and malleable relation between an individual and a given body politic. Formal citizenship is, therefore, not a precondition for a political voice.[34] Following this line of reasoning, the recipient of poor relief can be viewed as a potential political actor, even though they did not possess formal political citizenship.

Practising Social and Political Citizenship

The Danish poor relief system was rooted in the local self-governments, and it was the responsibility of the local poor commissions to assess who was entitled to receive aid, what the help should consist of and how

[33] E.g. Christiansen, Social- og familiepolitikkens rolle; Jørgensen, Harald. *Studier over det offentlige Fattigvæsens historiske Udvikling i Danmark i det 19. Aarhundrede* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1979); Nørgård, *Beskyt de værdige fattige!*

[34] Isin, Engin, and Greg Nielsen. *Acts of Citizenship* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2008); Siim, Birte. *Gender and Citizenship: Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

it should be distributed.[35] With a new law regarding urban municipalities in 1868, the administration of public poor relief was put in the hands of standing committees in the elected city councils. These were called poor committees. If we shift our focus from the political debates surrounding poor relief to the actual management of such relief by the poor committee, we see that it was not only possible for recipients of poor relief to act as political citizens, even before the 1890s, but the local practice of citizenship also preceded national formal citizenship in certain aspects.

This is evident in the municipality of Aarhus. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Aarhus was a small provincial town on the Jutland peninsula's eastern coast, but became the second largest city in Denmark by the end of the century. While the poor relief system in Copenhagen, the capital city, both legislatively and in practice, is not representative of the developments in the country's municipalities, Aarhus does, however, exhibit several similarities with other provincial cities. As such, Aarhus municipality can be used as an onset to explore a broader urban approach to poverty and serve as an example of how poor relief was organised and managed in larger provincial cities. Following the harbour's expansion from 1841 to 1861 and the inauguration of the railroad in 1862, Aarhus experienced economic growth. The population increased from 11,000 inhabitants in 1860 to 52,000 in 1901, and Aarhus became the fastest-growing provincial city in Denmark.[36] Similar to cities such as Aalborg and Odense, this fostered a massive migration from the rural areas to the urban centre. In the late nineteenth century, the city was marked by increasing social problems such as homeless families, unemployment and pressure on the housing market. While national legislation remained at a standstill, the municipality would provide various types of relief that did not deprive the beneficiaries of their voting rights. These types of relief included allotments (small plots of land aimed at assisting family breadwinners, usually fathers), almshouses (which offered free housing for elderly or single women and widows), and relief for parents with disabled children. In addition, the municipality would sometimes cancel paid relief based on applications, thereby giving the beneficiary his rights back. The right to relief cancellation was established in the Constitution of 1849 but

[35] Jørgensen, *Studier over det offentlige Fattigvæsens historiske udvikling*, 329.

[36] Gejl, Ib. *Århus: byens historie. Bind 3* (Århus: Århus Byhistoriske Udvalg, 1998).

administered by the municipality. Since female recipients were excluded from political citizenship based on gender until 1915, it is especially interesting to look at those types of poor relief, which targeted men, thereby allowing these beneficiaries to be both poor relief recipients and political citizens.

This is the case with the allotments, where being the head of the household regarding marital status was a prerequisite. While the municipality did not explicitly specify gender requirements for applicants, the focus on the head of the household for allotments resulted in them being predominantly granted to men. This allocation of relief reflects the constitutional division of political rights. Several studies have stressed that the 1849 constitution gave political rights not to the individual but to the household. Being a predominantly Lutheran country with the presence of a Lutheran state church, the Lutheran-Protestant authority figure, the family father and head of household, was placed as the rights-bearing subject in 1849. As Jytte Larsen has highlighted, political citizenship was associated with a bourgeois family pattern and a male breadwinner model, although the Constitution did not specify marital status as a formal criterion for voting.[37] Continuing this line of thought, Nina Koefoed also highlighted that the Constitution vested ultimate authority in this specific marital status. The requirement to be self-supporting was established as a prerequisite for suffrage, which led to political citizenship being not only limited to males but also constructed based on a specific masculine ideal.[38] The right to vote thus became a marker of masculine identity, and being unable to fulfil the duty of providing placed the male poor relief recipient at the bottom of a masculine hierarchy of citizens.[39]

As such, the allotments, which targeted the male provider without depriving him of his political rights, contested the general notion of who did and who did not have the right to exercise their political citizenship

[37] Larsen, Jytte. *Også andre hensyn. Bind 1: Dansk ligestillingshistorie 1849–1915* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2010), 23, 82.

[38] Koefoed, Nina Javette. "Demokrati og medborgerskab: sociale og kønspolitiske strategier i debatten om den almindelige kommunale valgret 1886–1908." *Fortid og nutid*, no 4 (2008): 251–78; Horstbøll, Henrik. "Politisk medborgerskab og junigrundloven: den almindelige valgrets begrebshistorie." *Den jyske historiker* Nr. 83/84 (1999): 168–180.

[39] Koefoed, Nina Javette. "Performing Male Political Citizenship: Local Philanthropy as an Arena for Practicing and Negotiating Citizenship in Late Nineteenth-Century Denmark." In *Gender in Urban Europe*, edited by Krista Cowman, Nina Javette Koefoed, and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, 162–77 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 163ff.

and shifted the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In applications for allotments, several keywords appear frequently, which are all characteristics associated with the role of a provider, suggesting that the applicants were aware of which character traits were favoured by the municipality. Some keywords were hard-working, diligent, trustworthy, industrious, respectable, conscientious, polite, independent, rational, sensible and careful.[40] For example, in his application dated 1887, Vilhelm Petersen emphasised the importance of his role as head of the household to procure an allotment, writing: "I, in my position as a provider for a wife and six children, could benefit from the help such plot of land would be able to give me."[41] Another applicant, Søren Mikkelsen, wrote in his application from 1883: "The undersigned hereby allows me to apply to the High Poor Committee for a small piece of land, of the so-called poor gardens, for cultivation, as I am living in difficult circumstances and have a large family (5 children) to support."[42]

In this way, the allotment application reflects how working-class men deliberately presented themselves as men striving for their family's economic survival and respectability by emphasising their willingness to work and their position as heads of households. Through the display of character traits such as independence, trustfulness, and reliability, which were favoured by the middle class and inevitably linked to the concept of political citizenship, the applicants fulfilled the masculine capacity of citizenship, using this as a stepping stone for demanding their right to exercise their social citizenship.

The same pattern is reflected in applications regarding the cancellation of paid relief. However, the applicant often explicitly referred to his constitutional rights in these applications. One example was carpenter Gert Jensen, who addressed the municipality in 1884 in the following way:

> At the election (…), I discovered I was not entitled to vote since my name was deleted from the electoral register (...). I lodged a complaint and was informed that I owed 120 Kr. for approved poor relief in 1878 (...) Therefore, I apply to the honourable city council that this relief (...)

[40] Aaerhus City Archives (*Aarhus Stadsarkiv*), Frihaverne ved Mølleengen. E.g. Jens Jockumsen 1879, Christian Bach 1881, J.B. Møller 1881, Christian Rasmussen 1881.

[41] Aaerhus City Archives, Sager vedr. Frihaverne 1867–1886.

[42] Ibid.

> should not be regarded as poor relief (…) and that, as a result, I will be in unrestricted possession of my right to vote.[43]

This connection between social and political citizenship is also articulated in several other applications: In 1888, weaver Christen Petersen wrote that he would like the city council to cancel his debt of 24 Kr. because, as he noted, "the loss of civil rights is weighing on me."[44] It should be pointed out that the Danish term for civil rights refers to the Marshallian concept of both civil and political rights. The same reasoning is reflected in shoemaker Jens Jensen's application from 1889, in which he stated that he would like the city council to cancel his debt of 14 Kr "since I would rather not lose my civil rights."[45]

The applications submitted to the municipality of Aarhus offer insight into how the Constitution served as a multi-dimensional discursive framework that provided citizens with the language, rhetoric, and formal categories for making claims, as Kathleen Canning and Sonya Rose articulated.[46] As such, the applications also demonstrate that recipients of poor relief could use the rhetoric of citizenship to position themselves as political subjects. By doing so, poor relief recipients also contested the constitutional distinction between social and political rights. While the dichotomy of dependence versus independence was central to conceptualising male political citizenship at the national level, rendering the simultaneous exercise of social and political rights unattainable, at the local level, this dichotomy was negotiated through the actual practices of citizenship. Here, social and political citizenship was shaped and negotiated to enable some citizens to exercise their social right to receive relief and their political right to vote.

The integration of social and political citizenship, partially recognised at the national level with the social reforms of the 1890s, indicates that the municipalities might have functioned as laboratories of modernity, affecting how national citizenship was later defined. As Søren Kolstrup

[43] Aaerhus City Archives, B-sager, ujournaliserede.

[44] Aaerhus City Archives, Jour. nr. 236–1888, journalsager til Aarhus Byråds Forhandlinger.

[45] Aaerhus City Archives, Jour. nr. 73–1889, journalsager til Aarhus Byråds Forhandlinger.

[46] Canning, Kathleen, og Sonya O Rose. "Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations." *Gender & History* 13, no. 3 (2001), 431.

has argued, concerning the development of the Danish welfare state in the early twentieth century, the municipality functioned as a sphere of experience and as a point of reference for the national social policy legislation.[47] The case of Aarhus exemplifies that a similar dynamic was also at play in the late nineteenth century. This relationship between the local and national levels also significantly expanded political rights in 1915.

The Constitution was revised for the third time in 1915. As reflected in Table 5.1, women and servants gained the right to vote. The rights-bearing subject shifted from the household to the individual, rendering it meaningless to exclude these two groups. The Constitution culminated in a longer inclusion process, where women and servants gained municipal suffrage in 1908.[48] Of the seven excluded groups that had been excluded from suffrage since 1849, women and servants were the largest. While the Constitution is frequently attributed to the introduction of universal suffrage, the economic limitations on voting remained unaffected.[49] Not until the enactment of the social reform in 1933 did recipients of poor relief experience changes in their legal status as citizens.

Equal Rights, But Not Equality for All

The 1933 social reform was the first large-scale reorganisation of social benefits enacted by *Socialdemokratiet*, who came to power in 1924. The reform is known for establishing the "rights-based principle." Most of those seeking public relief could now obtain relief without changes to their legal citizenship status. In contrast, a small minority would still be deprived of critical civil and political rights. As such, the social reform served as a mechanism of inclusion for the large group of citizens who were economically disadvantaged and had previously been excluded from enjoying full citizenship rights when receiving relief.

According to *Socialdemokratiet*, the "rights-based principle" replaced the "charity-based principle," wherein the municipalities had the sole responsibility of assessing who was entitled to relief, what the relief should

[47] Kolstrup, Søren. *Velfærdsstatens rødder: fra kommunesocialisme til folkepension* (Copenhagen: Selskabet til forskning i arbejderbevægelsens historie, 1996), 32–34; 66–68.

[48] Koefoed, Nina Javette."Vejen til lige og almindelig valgret." In *Før og efter stemmeretten - køn, demokrati og velfærd*, edited by Anette Borchorst og Drude Dahlerup(Frederiksberg: Frydenlund, 2015); Koefoed, Demokrati og medborgerskab.

[49] Christensen, *Borgerret i Danmark,* 316–317.

consist of, and how it should be distributed. *Socialdemokratiet* emphasised that the reform changed the foundation of social benefits, which were now based on objective requirements and fixed rates. Historians and social scientists have often characterised the reform as one of the cornerstones of the Danish welfare state due to these qualities.[50] However, the reform continued to exclude a smaller group of poor relief recipients from political citizenship.

According to the key architect of the reform, Minister of Social Affairs K. K. Steincke (1880–1963), the reform signalled a break from the previous poor relief system, where the distribution of relief was based on an arbitrary assessment conducted by local authorities. Steincke characterised this system as demoralising, humiliating and stigmatising, emphasising how it created dependence among poor relief recipients. Instead, independence should be placed as the pivotal point of the distribution of social benefits. Thus, it was important that the state allocated benefits without putting the recipient in a passive and incapacitated position: "[Social] rights are something you should demand, not something you should ask for," as Steincke put it. For Steincke, the "new" system (where social benefits were given as rights) and the "old" system (where social benefits were given as alms) were contradictory, painting a bleak and pessimistic picture of the public poor relief system before 1933.[51]

However, the new principle did not apply to all social groups. A smaller group of citizens described as "socially and biologically inferior" were not allowed to receive relief without the loss of rights. These citizens were categorised into four groups: the workshy, negligent providers, alcoholics and a mixed group of vagabonds, prostitutes and the destitute.[52] By excluding these citizens, *Socialdemokratiet* repeated precisely the logic that the nineteenth-century politicians had put forward when excluding all recipients of poor relief before the 1890s:

[50] E.g. Petersen, Jørn Henrik, Klaus Petersen, and Niels Finn Christiansen. *Dansk velfærdshistorie Bind 2: Mellem skøn og ret 1898–1933* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2011).

[51] Steincke, K K. *Fremtidens Forsørgelsesvæsen* (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz, 1920), 173–175; 271–279.

[52] Ibid., 408–411. Kolstrup, Søren, "Fra fattiglov til forsorgsliv," in Petersen et. al. 198–199.

> When the person in question has shown irresponsible and unsocial behaviour in his capacity as the breadwinner of his family (…) he cannot claim the respect of his fellow citizens in a society based on marriage and family life, where the parents' sense of responsibility towards the children they put in the world is of the utmost importance. Therefore, he should not have the right to exercise influence over the government of society either.[53]

Even as the reform modified the distinction between social and political citizenship set by the 1849 constitution, it also relied on nineteenth-century ideas about rights and obligations. When Steincke regarded men who neglected their obligations as providers as unworthy political subjects, he equated rights and responsibilities within the household with rights and duties towards the state. For Steincke, the ability to support oneself and one's family stood as a central element in the citizen's responsibilities. In this way, he dragged the Lutheran-Protestant allocation of rights into the building of the welfare state.

Concerning the assessment of deservingness, Steincke also maintained a nineteenth-century conception of rights and obligations in certain aspects. Even though he distanced himself from the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor, the reasons for excluding the "socially and biologically inferior" can be interpreted as an expression of this exact terminology. These social groups were not only excluded because they did not fulfil the requirement of being independent and autonomous but also because a lack of moral character caused their apparent need. This moral judgement is, for example, evident in Steincke's reasons for excluding negligent providers:

> There are exceptional circumstances where (…) the individual's conduct in their role as provider exhibits such pronounced irresponsibility, even recklessness, that society must intervene more effectively than merely depriving them of a suffrage (…) This pertains to cases in which a man or a woman (…) has a dozen or so children out of wedlock with *different* mothers or fathers, thereby callously indulging their impulses and passions while allowing the public to assume the financial burdens.[54]

[53] Ibid., 409.

[54] Ibid. 409–410.

Steincke's perspective, evident above, highlighted the necessity for more forceful actions than simply revoking suffrage when dealing with degenerate individuals. He considered their pronounced "irresponsibility" a "manifestation of a pathological predisposition," which prompted the need for interventions to shape their behaviour positively. Consequently, he advocated for an active sterilisation policy.[55] When serving as the Minister of Justice nine years earlier, Steincke had formed a "Sterilization Commission" to investigate the suitability of sterilisation for individuals deemed degenerate. This effort led to the enacting of the Sterilization Act in 1929, allowing intervention in the reproduction of socially undesirable individuals. This group encompassed the physically and mentally disabled, those convicted of moral offences, arsonists, people with epilepsy and alcoholics. While similar laws emerged in other Nordic countries in the 1930s, Denmark became the first country in Europe to enact a comprehensive sterilisation law. Two more sterilisation laws followed, introducing the possibility of involuntary sterilisation.[56]

The sterilisation laws highlight the extreme exclusion of specific social groups from civil and political citizenship—individuals who existed on the margins of citizenship, defining the boundaries around the ideal citizen. This group of excluded citizens constituted a counter-image to included citizens. They were dependent (both materially and figuratively), lazy, spontaneous, unpredictable and lacked self-control. Their exclusion constituted good citizens, who were responsible, conscientious, independent and reliable. These citizens had the right to demand help from the state without being subjected to stigmatisation. In this way, the expansion of social citizenship in 1933 was constituted by creating both an identity and an alterity. There existed a conformity in Steincke's understanding of citizenship, which drew a sharp distinction between "the good" and "the bad" citizen. The good citizen existed by being positioned against those not considered to possess the same virtues and, therefore, had no right to political citizenship. As such, the expansion of social citizenship in 1933 took place not only at the expense but also by excluding the "bad citizen." In other words, the progress of the many went hand in hand with the degeneration of the few, who now faced the possibility of losing a fundamental civil right, namely the right to reproduction.[57]

[55] Ibid., 237–266.

[56] Møller, Jes Fabricius."Socialistisk eugenik," *Arbejderhistorie: Tidsskrift for historie, kultur og politik,* no 1(2002): 1–15; Christensen, *Borgerret i Danmark;* Kolstrup, *Fra fattiglov til forsorgslov,* 200–202.

[57] Kolstrup, *Fra fattiglov til forsorgslov,* 199.

Economic Restrictions Lifted

In 1953, the Constitution was revised again, and the suffrage clause that had excluded poor relief recipients was fundamentally changed. The Constitution of 1953 now granted suffrage to:

> Every person who holds Danish citizenship has a permanent residence within the realm and has reached the voting age (…) unless they are legally declared incapable of managing their affairs (…) It is determined by law to what extent punishment and assistance, which is considered poor relief under the legislation, lead to the loss of the right to vote.[58]

Poor relief as a ground of disenfranchisement was no longer an absolute principle within the Constitution; instead, it was assigned to general legislation to establish specific regulations. In March 1954, Minister of Social Affairs Johan Strøm proposed a law which would remove provisions linking suffrage loss to poor relief. However, the law did not gain support.[59] In December 1960, Julius Bomholt, now Minister of Social Affairs, proposed a similar law with better reception. One year prior, the *Rigsdag* had already agreed to remove suffrage loss provisions for convicted individuals, creating an "unjustified disparity between the influence of punishment and public assistance on access to suffrage," according to Bomholt.[60] In June 1960, a universal pension was adopted, applying to all regardless of their social standing, reflecting a society that, as Bomholt stated, "forgives the elderly but punishes the young."[61]

Bomholt's primary argument was that denying suffrage was an expression of ethical condemnation and social discrimination, which clashed with the European Social Pact. This pact, which was in the process of being drafted, prohibited the restriction of citizens' social and political rights based on their receipt of relief. Denmark, one of the founding countries of the Council of Europe, would then be prevented from

[58] Danmarks Riges Grundlov, 5. juni 1953. Retrieved Nov. 12, 2023 from Danmarkshistorien.dk:
https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/danmarks-riges-grundlov-af-5-juni-1953
The voting age was lowered to 25.

[59] Folketingstidende, 1953–1954, 3886; 4431–4458.

[60] Folketingstidende, 1960–1961, 509–510.

[61] Folketingstidende, 1960–1961, 731–731.

ratifying the pact.[62] During the negotiations, it became clear that approximately 4,000 to 5,000 citizens were impacted by these limitations.[63] The proposed law, which also simplified the public welfare system, received a positive reception from both sides of the political spectrum, and on May 16, 1961, the law was passed.[64] The law marked the conclusion of over a century of formal political exclusion of poor relief recipients and, thus, the end of the conflict between two constitutional rights. Yet, it is essential to note, that it was not until 1970 that voters admitted to public or private hospitals, nursing homes and care facilities were allowed to vote on-site. This further improved the chances of economically disadvantaged individuals exercising their right to vote.[65]

In Conclusion

This chapter has examined the evolution of political and social citizenship in Denmark from 1849 to 1961 through the figure of public poor relief. I have analysed the formal status of citizenship, how citizenship was practised and how notions of gender and marital status were embedded into the conception of citizenship to understand why poor relief recipients were excluded from political citizenship and how they gradually became included.

Based on an analysis of citizenship negotiations leading up to the social reforms in the 1890s and the social reform of 1933, this chapter has shown that it was possible for recipients of poor relief to express a political voice and to exercise their constitutional right to relief, even though this constituted a break with national policy. By arguing for their right to receive relief without losing their rights, recipients of poor relief would argue that they were doing their best to provide for their families, even though they needed relief. This suggests that the 1849 constitution functioned as both a force of exclusion and as a mechanism of inclusion for recipients of poor relief who were capable of using the language and rhetoric of citizenship to make claims about rights. In this way, poor relief recipients contested the general notion of who did and who did not have

[62] Folketingstidende, 1960–1961, 509–510.

[63] Folketingstidende, 1960–1961, 3461.

[64] Folketingstidende, 1960–1961, 3802.

[65] Folketingstidende, Tillæg C, 1969–1970, 772.

the right to exercise their political citizenship and pushed the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Moreover, the chapter has shown that the Lutheran conception of rights and obligations, which placed authority in the hands of the male head of the household, not only played a vital role in the nineteenth century, as previous research has stressed, but that it also affected how *Socialdemokratiet* granted rights at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though the reform involved a transition from a vertical "charity-based principle" to a horizontal "rights-based principle" in 1933, the reform contained elements of continuity concerning its allocation of rights. This meant that the promise of a "rights-based principle" did not allocate equal rights to all citizens but excluded those citizens who were deemed "socially and biologically inferior" from enjoying full citizenship.

Although the exclusion of poor relief recipients from political citizenship appears straightforward, the situation becomes "muddier" when we examine national legislation and the practice of citizenship at the local level, where formally defined hierarchies are enacted and challenged daily. While public poor relief recipients had been able to use the discourse and rhetoric of the 1849 constitution to make claims about rights even before 1933, citizens in need of social assistance were still being judged on their ability to fulfil their role as the family provider, as well as on their moral character after 1933.

CHAPTER 6

Money and the Vote: Economic Suffrage Restrictions in Sweden, Before and After the Introduction of "Universal Suffrage" in 1921

Fia Cottrell-Sundevall

Introduction

In the waning years of the nineteenth century, a certain political poem (Fig. 6.1) gained notable traction in the northern European state of Sweden. This verse narrated the predicament of a farmer who, having lost his primary source of income—his pig livestock—to an epidemic of hog fever, saw his voting rights withdrawn. These circumstances prompted

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_6

the farmer to contemplate the true beneficiary of suffrage: Was it he or his pigs?[1]

The poem, rich in wit and criticism, sheds light on the intricate interplay between suffrage and economic standing in Sweden. Across the evolving Swedish landscape—transitioning from a predominantly agricultural society, where wealth was often synonymous with land and livestock ownership, to burgeoning urban industrial centres—the right to vote was tied to taxable income and property. The depiction of the farmer, stripped of his political rights following the demise of his livestock, mirrored the predicament many urban male factory workers faced. While they both met the gender prerequisite for suffrage, they lacked the economic qualifications to partake in the political process.

The intersection of economic status and voting rights was by no means unique to Sweden, as detailed by the other chapters in this volume. Numerous nations worldwide established voter eligibility and exclusion based on income levels and property values (censitary suffrage systems), alongside criteria such as gender, age, national citizenship, and residency or registered domicile. However, due to the censitary suffrage system and significant economic disparities, Sweden had a higher proportion of disenfranchised adults than most of its European counterparts in the late 1800s. Although Sweden would later be celebrated for its high levels of economic and gender equality, its economic disparities exceeded those of many European counterparts during this era.[2]

[1] The poem, signed "Saxon" (the pen name of a prominent publisher and author of the period), was frequently republished in various media such as newspapers and leaflets. Besides the image from *Ströblad för folket* (Fig. 6.1), see, for instance, *Nerrikes Allehanda*, May 26, 1888, p. 3. The theme of livestock ownership equating to wealth was also echoed by several contemporaries, including the socialist agitator Kata Dalström, who in 1909 was sentenced to prison for defaming the Swedish parliament by declaring that its upper chamber was elected by "oxen, sheep, goats, pigs, and money bags." See, for instance, "Kata Dalströms smädelse," *Dagens Nyheter*, Jan. 22, 1909, p. 3; Gunnela Björk, *Kata Dalström: Agitatorn som gick sin egen väg* (Lund: Historiska media, 2017), 186–187.

[2] Bengtsson observes that from 1750 to 1900, wealth inequality in Sweden intensified, driven in part by the expansion of the impoverished rural proletariat and the wealth accumulation of growing number of non-noble merchants and capitalists. These major disparities in wealth distribution continued into the early twentieth century. Erik Bengtsson, "The Swedish Sonderweg in Question: Democratization and inequality in comparative perspective, ca. 1750–1920," *Past & Present* 244, no. 1 (2019), 135–136. See also Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2020), 185–192.

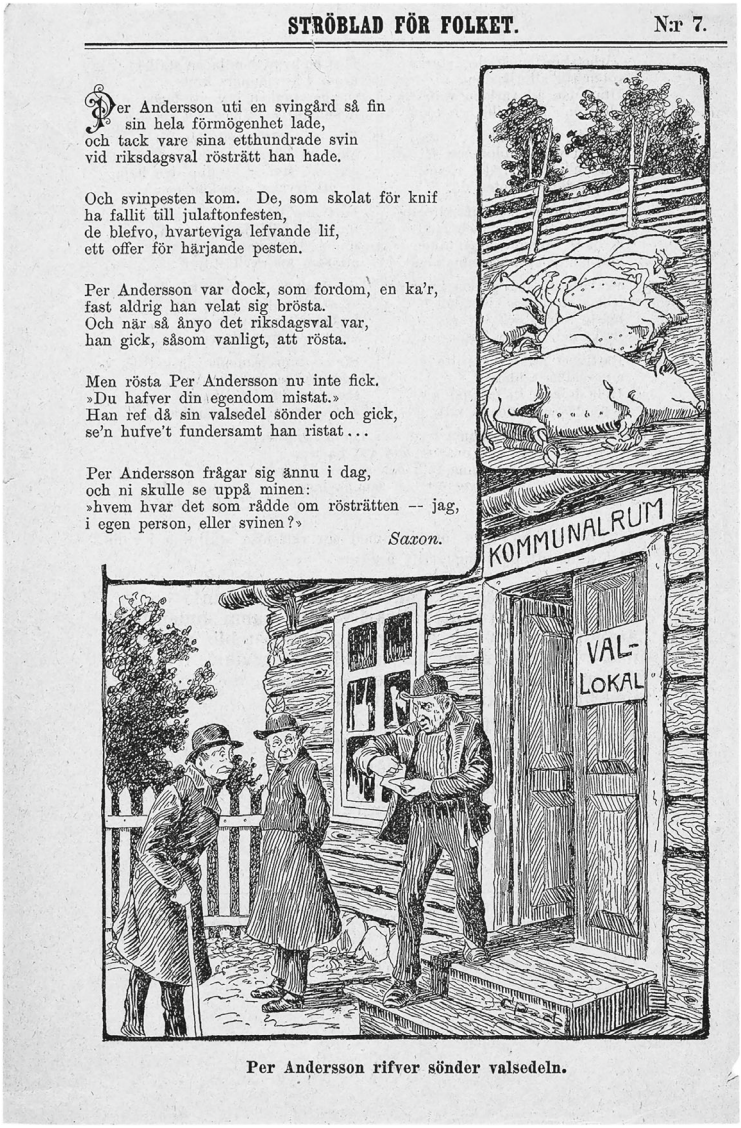

Fig. 6.1 An illustrated print of the poem features the farmer Per Andersson, depicted in a state of fury as he tears up his ballot upon leaving the polling station. This scene is complemented by the sombre imagery of his deceased pig livestock.
Source: *Ströblad för folket*, no. 7, 1889

While suffrage reforms in the early twentieth century gradually weakened the link between wealth and suffrage in Sweden, they did not eliminate it. Even with the advent of so-called universal suffrage in 1921, certain financial circumstances could still deprive citizens of their voting rights. Although these exclusions were no longer directly tied to income—as exemplified by the livestock reference—they were connected to issues like tax arrears, bankruptcy, and specific conditions for poor relief recipiency. Hence, remnants of wealth-based voting disparities persisted.

This chapter explores the complex interplay between economic standing and voting rights in Sweden before and after the 1921 introduction of "universal@ LE: Both double and single quotes are used throughout the chapter and retained as per author's usage. Please check and amend if necessary.@suffrage". Central to this exploration is the economic restrictions to suffrage—formal barriers to voting rights intrinsically associated with elements of an individual's financial status, such as level of income or unsettled tax obligations. I will detail what these barriers entailed, track their developments over time, review the rationale of the lawmakers who designed them, and discuss their ramifications for societal classes and interconnected dimensions like gender, age, and ethnicity.

Drawing in part on empirical findings and theoretical perspectives from a recent study on post-1921 voting barriers in Sweden, the chapter offers an account of Sweden's suffrage trajectory that challenges oversimplified tales of linear progress and triumph.[3] Further, it critically re-evaluates the prevailing narrative that 1921 marked the end of the contestation over suffrage in Sweden—a view echoed in the Swedish parliament's recent centennial commemorations of the introduction of universal suffrage.[4]

[3] The research project in question was funded by the Swedish Research Council (grant no. 2017–00,778) and was led by the author, Fia Cottrell-Sundevall (formerly known as Fia Sundevall). The present chapter partly builds on two texts previously published in Swedish within that project, namely: Fia Sundevall, "Pengar och medborgarrätt: om rösträttens ekonomiska diskvalifikationsgrunder," *Arbetarhistoria*, no. 2–3 (2019), and Fia Sundevall, "Ekonomi och rösträtt: Skatteskulder, konkurs och fattigvård som rösträttshinder", In *Allmän rösträtt? Rösträttens begränsningar i Sverige efter 1921*, eds. Annika Berg & Martin Ericsson (Stockholm: Makadam, 2021), 87–119.

[4] For a more thorough discussion on this, see: Fia Sundevall, Annika Berg, and Bengt Sandin, "An Unfinished Suffrage Reform. Voting Rights in Sweden after the 'Democratic Breakthrough'," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 49, no. 3 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2024.2322433.

Suffrage Requirements in Late-Modern Sweden

In 1866, the earlier four-estates system[5] of the Swedish parliament was replaced by a bicameral model, with an upper and a lower chamber.[6] This persisted until 1970, when a unicameral structure supplanted it. Membership in the upper chamber was determined through elections conducted by local councils. These councils were, in turn, elected by franchised municipality members following the guidelines of the 1862 municipal reform. Conversely, the lower chamber was filled by direct public elections.[7]

Cited in Swedish academic literature as "the society-preserving reform", the 1866 constitutional alteration was characterised by its conservative disposition designed to restrain further reform and safeguard the interests of the ruling elite (including estate owners, capitalists, and nobles), thus preserving the existing socio-political order.[8] Central to this was the censitary suffrage regime.

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate the features of this suffrage model. Not only did it allow citizens with significant financial means to exert substantial political influence, but it also permitted corporate entities to participate in municipal elections—thus strengthening and reproducing the political domination of the propertied classes.

Another prominent feature of this model was its plural voting structure, which granted increased representation based on the quantity of taxable income or capital owned, with the number of votes being proportionate to this value. In rural municipalities, where there was no limit on the number of votes a single entity could hold, this system allowed a singularly wealthy individual—or private company—to wield significant

[5] The four estates, namely the Nobility, Clergy, Burghers, and Peasants, represented the commonly recognised lines of stratification within Swedish society during that period.

[6] In Sweden, the upper chamber was referred to as the first chamber (*första kammaren*), and the lower one as the second chamber (*andra kammaren*). However, since some countries, such as the U.K., use the terms first/second in the opposite manner, I will use the terms upper and lower in this text.

[7] Torbjörn Nilsson, "The Swedish Senate 1867–1970. From Elitist Moderniser to Democratic Subordinate." In *Reforming Senates. Upper Legislative Houses in North Atlantic Small Powers, 1800-Present*, eds. Nikolaj Bijleveld we. al. (London & New York: Routledge, 2020), 133–135.

[8] Göran B. Nilsson, "Den samhällsbevarande representationsreformen," *Scandia* 35, no 2, (1969); Bengtsson, "The Swedish Sonderweg in Question", 137.

Table 6.1 Evolution of Suffrage Requirements for the Swedish Parliament, 1866–1970 (Lower Chamber) and Since 1970 (Unicameral)

Gender	*Age*	*Basic requirements besides age, national citizenship, and census registration*	*Grounds ofdisenfranchisement**
1866: Men only 1921: Men and women	1866: 21+ 1909: 24+ 1921: 23+ 1945: 21+ 1965: 20+ 1970: 19+ 1975: 18+	1866–1909: Minimum income and property value thresholds: yearly income of minimum 800 Swedish riksdaler (SR) *or* owner or tenant of property with a tax assessment value of min. 1000 SR (for owner) or 6000 SR (for tenant) 1967: Voting rights granted to expatriate citizens for five years after their last registration in the Swedish population census. (Extended to seven years in 1976. Time limit removed in 1977.)	1866–1920: Tax debts 1866–1937: Loss of civil rights (from 1909: felony) 1909–1922: Incomplete military service training 1909–1945: Poor relief 1909–1945: Bankruptcy 1909–1989: Guardianship

control over the votes. This was not a merely theoretical consideration; in the 1871 elections, a single individual or business company held the majority of the votes in 54 out of Sweden's nearly 2,400 municipalities. By 1892, this number had slightly reduced to 44 municipalities.[9] Notably, in one of these municipalities, it was the Swedish prime minister who controlled the majority of the votes.[10]

The underlying premise for this system was, as will be further developed later in this chapter, that entities making significant economic contributions to the community, therefore, purportedly having heightened interest in its well-being, ought to exercise increased influence over the decision-making processes.[11]

[9] Bengtsson, "The Swedish Sonderweg in Question", 138; Einar D. Mellquist, *Rösträtt efter förtjänst?* (Stockholm: Stadshistoriska institutet, 1974), 137–138. For the Swedish case in comparative perspective, see Piketty, Capital, and Ideology, ch. 5.

[10] The prime minister in question was Erik Gustaf Boström (in office from 1891–1900 and then again from 1902–1905), who owned large amounts of estate in several municipalities. Mellquist, *Rösträtt efter förtjänst?*, 243.

[11] This has also been referred to as the stakeholder criteria. See Ludvig Beckman, *The Frontiers of Democracy. The Right to Vote and its Limits* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 38–41.

Table 6.2 Evolution of Suffrage Requirements for Municipal Councils in Sweden, since 1862

Gender	*Age*	*Basic requirements besides gender and age*	*Grounds of disenfranchisement**
1862: Women* and men * Until the 1910s: only unmarried or widowed women	1862: 21+ 1919: 23+ 1941: 21+ 1965: 20+ 1975: 18+	1862–1919: Registration in the municipality census (as individual or private company) + income, property, or other capital taxed over 700 rds 1919: Swedish citizenship 1976: Swedish citizenship, unless residing in the country for at least three years. (In 1997, the three-year limit was removed for citizens of the EU and Norway.)	1866–1937: Loss of civil rights (from 1909: felony) 1866–1945: Tax debts 1909–1945: Bankruptcy 1909–1989: Guardianship 1918–1945: Poor relief

*It should be noted that each disenfranchisement criterion encompassed a complex set of rules—the intricacies of which cannot be conveyed in tabular representation. Some of these details are, however, outlined in this chapter

Comment and References for Tables 6.1 and 6.2: The tables were created by the author using information from the following sources: Berling Åselius, *Rösträtt med förhinder*; Martin Ericsson, "Rösträtt, migration och nationellt medborgarskap", In *Allmän rösträtt?*, eds. Annika Berg and Martin Ericsson (Stockholm: Makadam, 2021); Ericsson, "Rösträtt, migration och nationellt medborgarskap"; Karlsson Sjögren, "Taxpaying, Poor Relief and Citizenship"; Bengt Sandin and Jonathan Josefsson, "Age as a Yardstick for Political Citizenship: Voting Age and Eligibility Age in Sweden During the Twentieth Century", *Continuity and Change* 37, no. 2 (2022); Sundevall, Berg & Sandin, "An Unfinished Suffrage Reform"; Swedish Parliament, Parliamentary Communication no 56 (1968).

Following the introduction of the bicameral system in 1866, a mere 5.8 per cent of the Swedish population had voting rights during the first elections for the lower chamber (1867). Among the men who met the age requirements of 23 and over, 12 per cent were deemed eligible. Approximately four decades later (1908), the figure had risen to 19 per cent.[12] This gradual expansion of the electorate can be ascribed to the combined effects of inflation and wage increases, especially given that the income qualifications for suffrage remained static during the period.[13]

[12] For quantitative data regarding suffrage rights, encompassing both raw population numbers and their corresponding percentages, see the dataset compiled by Mattias Lindgren, published 2020 by the Swedish Royal Library, retrieved June 3, 2023 from: http://libris.kb.se/bib/bp87qpl18p7xpdkf.

[13] The average annual inflation in Sweden (measured by the consumer price index) was 0.22 per cent per year during the period 1866–1902. Additionally, the wage index experienced an average annual increase of 2.38 per cent during the same period. See Rodney

Nevertheless, when juxtaposed against the European backdrop, Sweden's percentage of enfranchised individuals remained comparatively low.[14]

The 1909 Suffrage Reform: Inclusion and Exclusion

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sweden underwent a profound political, economic, and societal transformation, including the intensification of industrialisation, urbanisation, and large-scale emigration. Concurrently, the country began the development of its welfare state and saw the emergence of various social movements, the formation of new political parties and alliances, the dissolution of the Norway–Sweden union, and the initiation of mandatory military service for men. Inextricably tied to these changes was the enactment of the suffrage reform in 1909, which brought about substantial modifications to voting rights in the lower chamber elections.

The 1909 suffrage reform has frequently been referred to as the inception of universal male suffrage in Sweden. However, this description obscures that a considerable portion of the male population either remained or became excluded from voting.[15] This seemingly contradictory outcome stemmed from the multifaceted nature of the reform, which simultaneously introduced proportional representation and abolished income and property thresholds while raising the voting age and establishing four new grounds for disenfranchisement (as detailed in Table 6.1).[16] Consequently, the 1909 reform serves as an example of

Edvinsson, "Historical Currency Converter," retrieved June 2, 2023, from: http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html.

[14] Bengtsson, "The Swedish Sonderweg in Question", 139. See also Piketty, *Ideology & Capital*, 187.

[15] SCB, *Riksdagsmannavalen åren 1909–1911* (Stockholm: Statistiska centralbyrån, 1912), 32. See also Lindgren, Dataset.

[16] The design of several of these disenfranchisement criteria was influenced by the criteria of other Nordic countries. For a thorough examination of the context and design of the 1909 voting requirements, refer to: Ebba Berling Åselius, *Rösträtt med förhinder: rösträttsstrecken i svensk politik 1900–1920* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2005). For more information, specifically on the age requirements, see Bengt Sandin, *Politikens åldersgränser: rösträtt och valbarhet i Sverige från 1840-tal till 1920-tal* (Göteborg & Stockholm: Makadam, 2024). See also the Chapters 2, 5, 8, and 10 in this collection on the other Nordic countries.

the intricate interplay of inclusion and exclusion within suffrage rights, as well as demonstrating the non-linear historical development of suffrage in Sweden.

Upon examining the electoral data from the first lower chamber election following the reform, and removing age as a variable, it is revealed that disenfranchisement due to tax debts accounted for more than half of the total decrease in the electorate. Disenfranchisement attributed to poor relief, in turn, made up approximately one-fifth of the reduction, while bankruptcy—the third distinct economic reason for disenfranchisement post-1909—comprised less than 1 per cent.[17] To comprehend why tax debts and poor relief (and not bankruptcy) were the two primary economic suffrage restrictions that led to the decrease of the male electorate following the 1909 reform, it is essential to examine how disqualification related to the Swedish poor relief and tax systems of the time.

Firstly, concerning disenfranchisement related to poor relief, it must be emphasised that receiving public poor relief did not automatically lead to voter disqualification. Instead, and influenced by analogous voting legislation in neighbouring Denmark and Norway, the criterion targeted individuals who had not *repaid* such relief.[18] The provision of poor relief as a loan rather than a grant stemmed from the notion that poverty was indicative of moral shortcomings, often ascribed to a lack of discipline or deviation from societal expectations. By conditioning material aid on moral stipulations, such as the eventual repayment of the relief, society aimed to deter perceived negative behaviours and cultivate a sense of individual responsibility and accountability.[19] However, given that most of those seeking poor relief lacked substantial income or capital—precisely the reasons for their dependence on such relief—repayment was seldom

[17] SCB, *Riksdagsmannavalen åren 1909–1911*, 34. See also Lindgren, Dataset.

[18] On the influence of Danish and Norwegian legislation, see Berling Åselius, *Rösträtt med förbinder*, 83. It is noteworthy that this system diverged from practices in other countries, such as Finland. For further details on the Finnish context, consult the chapter by Minna Harjula in this volume.

[19] Anders Berge, *Medborgarrätt och egenansvar* (Lund: Arkiv, 1995). See also, e.g., the report of the Poor Relief Legislation Committee (*Fattigvårdslagstiftningskommittén*), attachment to minutes of the Parliament's extraordinary session, vol. 7, part 2, Sect. 2 (1918); Fia Sundevall," Fattigvård och rösträtt: Motsättningar mellan sociala och politiska rättigheter i den tidiga välfärdsstatens Sverige", *Socialmedicinsk Tidskrift*, 99, no 4 (2022).

a realistic expectation. Consequently, a notable portion of poor relief recipients found themselves disenfranchised.[20]

Secondly, concerning the tax system, individuals were required to allocate portions of their income for tax payments due in the ensuing one or two years.[21] Such a provision presented a considerable hurdle for those with irregular or low incomes, disproportionately impacting working-class men. In response, socialist suffrage advocates campaigned to abolish tax debt-related disenfranchisement as a critical aspect of their suffrage agitation post-1909.[22]

This campaign over the tax debt criterion and other economic suffrage restrictions further illustrated the disparate objectives of socialist and liberal suffrage proponents, particularly in the context of women's suffrage. Whereas liberals sought to expand women's suffrage rights to be equal to those of men, socialists championed an equal suffrage model for the sexes, devoid of any grounds for disenfranchisement.[23]

The economic grounds for disenfranchisement (poor relief, tax debts, and bankruptcy) and incomplete military service were collectively called "orderly behaviour thresholds" [*ordentlighetsstreck*]. This terminology was rooted in the notion that political rights were the preserve of individuals who fulfilled specific obligations indicative of orderly behaviour, such as self-support, prudent management of personal affairs, punctual settlement of debts and taxes, and fulfilment of military service obligation.[24]

[20] Among the relatively few poor relief recipients who held an occupation, it disproportionally effected crofters, constituting one-fourth of the disqualified. SCB, *Riksdagsmannavalen åren 1909–1911*, 33.

[21] Mikael Stenkula, "Swedish Taxation in a 150-Year Perspective," *Nordic Tax Journal* 1, no 2 (2014), 16.

[22] See, e.g., lower chamber motion, no 341, 1911, 4–5. According to the 1911 election statistics, one-fourth of male workers were disenfranchised due to tax debts. Other groups particularly affected by tax debt-related disenfranchisement included sailors, fishermen, craftsmen, commercial assistants, certain agricultural workers, and lower-ranking officials. SCB, *Riksdagsmannavalen åren 1909–1911*, 34.

[23] See, e.g., speech held by Social Democratic Party member Agata Östlund at a women's suffrage meeting in 1912, cited in "Rösträttskvinnornas stora möte," *Dagens Nyheter*, Stockholm edition, April 15, 1912, p. 1. See also Berling Åselius, *Rösträtt med förhinder*, 181.

[24] For an in-depth discussion on "orderly behaviour" as ground for suffrage rights in early twentieth-century Sweden, see Berling Åselius, *Rösträtt med förhinder*, 59–102.

This discourse was not confined to isolated legislation but was entwined with a recurrent debate prevalent in Sweden and its Nordic neighbours. Central to this debate was the differentiation between the so-called "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, a distinction instrumental in shaping the legal and societal perspective of poverty.[25] During the 1910s, lawmakers attempted to distinguish between individuals needing poor relief or saddled with tax debts due to unforeseen circumstances outside their control and those perceived to have caused their economic situation through their actions. According to their reasoning, only the former group should lose their suffrage rights.[26] This idea accentuates a concept of citizenship where principles and ideas about economic responsibility and moral conduct were closely tied to political participation.

The Introduction of "Universal Suffrage"

Following the 1909 reform, the campaign for women's suffrage intensified. Notably, the Swedish Social Democratic Party (founded in 1889), which had earlier prioritised voting rights for working-class men over those of women through a stepwise strategy, began to align with the campaign for women's suffrage. Alongside this support, the party simultaneously advocated for reducing or eliminating various grounds for disenfranchisement.[27]

[25] On deserving/undeserving poor, and its relation to suffrage disenfranchisement, see the respective chapters by Leonora Lottrup, Minna Harjula, Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir, and Eirinn Larsen in this volume. On the Swedish case, see, e.g. Mikael Sjögren, *Fattigvård och folkuppfostran: liberal fattigvårdspolitik 1903–1918* (Umeå: Umeå University, 1997).

[26] The issue was meticulously examined by a state committee, which ultimately concluded that establishing such differentiation was unfeasible. Instead, the committee advised abolishing tax debts as a reason for disenfranchisement and refining the poor relief restriction to exclude only those individuals enduringly reliant on institutional support from poor relief entities. This recommendation was subsequently incorporated into the 1921 suffrage reform. *Betänkande med förslag till revision av fattigvårds- och utskyldsstrecken* (Stockholm: Justitiedep., 1918), 52–55. See also Report of the Poor Relief Legislation Committee, attachment to minutes of the parliament's extraordinary session, vol. 7, part 2, Sect. 2 (1918), 252–255.

[27] On the party's step-wise strategy, see Christina Florin, *Kvinnor får röst* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2006). Its post-1911 advocacy can be referenced in the party's motion in the lower chamber, no 243, 1911.

By the latter part of 1918, a parliamentary majority had agreed to move in this direction. Scholars often link this agreement to the relentless efforts of the suffrage movement, coupled with fears within the political establishment of potential worker uprisings, influenced by events like the Russian Revolution and spurred by hunger riots in numerous Swedish towns.[28]

The enactment of what became known as the universal suffrage reform transpired in two stages: the first at the municipal level in 1919, with the abolition of private companies' suffrage rights and the termination of the plural voting system, and the second at the national level in 1921, when voting rights for women were introduced in lower chamber elections.[29] Contrary to what one might retrospectively expect, women's suffrage was not the focal point of discussions in chambers on that decisive day, 26 January 1921, when "universal suffrage" was ultimately enacted. As a women's movement magazine noted, "Our right to vote was [situated] outside – or perhaps one should say above – the debate'".[30] Instead, the discussions predominantly revolved around the proposed elimination of tax arrears as a basis for disenfranchisement.[31]

The reform was adopted by the end of the day and removed tax arrears as a disenfranchisement criterion at the national level (though it continued to apply in municipal elections) and alleviated suffrage disqualification related to poor relief. Poor relief disenfranchisement shifted from disqualification based on unpaid debts to disqualification based on residing in long-term institutional care in public poor houses. In practice, this change effectively targeted senior citizens, as poor houses were the primary form of elderly care during that period.[32]

[28] See, e.g., Carl Göran Andrae, *Revolt eller reform: Sverige inför revolutionerna i Europa 1917–1918* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1998).

[29] Owing to the fact that the second stage necessitated a constitutional amendment, parliamentary procedure mandated two identical decisions, separated by a general election. The initial decision was made in 1919, with the subsequent one occurring in 1921.

[30] "Den 26 januari 1921", *Hertha* 8, no 2 (1921), 17. This and all other quotes from Swedish sources are translated by the author.

[31] Minutes of the Swedish parliament, upper chamber, no 5, 1921, 4–55, and lower chamber, no 8, 1921, 5–31.

[32] Swedish Code of Statues (*SFS*) 1921:20 §26. See also Sundevall, "Ekonomi och rösträtt", 97. Cf. the municipal homes in Finland, as discussed in the chapter by Minna Harjula in this volume.

Despite the eligible voter pool expansion, a significant segment of the Swedish population continued to be disenfranchised even after 1921. In the first lower chamber election after 1921, only 55 per cent of the population had voting rights. Age remained the primary exclusionary factor, followed by tax debts and poor relief disenfranchisement in municipal and national elections. These conditions persisted until the mid-1940s, when the latter two were abolished alongside bankruptcy-related disenfranchisement.[33]

Debates over voting rights in Sweden extended beyond 1921. Throughout this period, parliament members—particularly those affiliated with the farmer's league and conservative parties—tabled multiple motions seeking to reinstate disenfranchisement on the grounds of tax debt in lower chamber elections. They also tried to tighten the regulations surrounding tax debt-related disenfranchisement in municipal elections.[34]

A recently completed research project highlighting the post-1921 evolution of suffrage rights in Sweden reveals that this period was markedly different from earlier twentieth-century efforts. Unlike previous suffrage expansions, which were driven by broad movements for suffrage rights, changes following 1921 were not. Instead, fragmentation and a lack of determination to eradicate voting restrictions prevailed. Rather than representing a broader democratic struggle, suffrage became a concern for more minor, disjointed groups.[35]

[33] Regarding age: as detailed in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, the new age threshold was set at 23 (a decrease from 24 in lower chamber elections and an increase from 21 in municipal elections), to be compared to the then-current life expectancy of just above 60 years old. *Historisk statistik för Sverige. D. 1 Befolkning 1720–1967* (Örebro: SCB, 1969), 118. For quantitative data on suffrage exclusions, see Lindgren, Dataset; Sundevall, "Ekonomi och rösträtt", 96–97.

[34] See, e.g., motions in the Swedish parliament, lower chamber no 28–29, 1928, and upper chamber, no 7–8, 1921, no 158, 1926, and no 171, 1936.

[35] Sundevall, Berg, and Sandin, "An Unfinished Suffrage Reform".

Justifying Suffrage Exclusion: The Link Between Financial Self-Sufficiency and Economic Contributivism

Academic research on voting rights and their expansion or contraction across different national contexts has underscored the influence of distinct principles on these changes. These principles typically include community membership (national, regional, or local), vested interest, self-governance, and autonomy.[36] I have already addressed how the principle of orderly behaviour justified the removal of voting rights for persons with tax debts or reliance on poor relief. I will delve further into the justifications underpinning economic suffrage restrictions in late-modern Swedish history, mainly through self-sufficiency and economic contributivism, and how these influenced the voting rights of various social groups.

However, before proceeding, it is imperative to acknowledge that some restrictions, as detailed in Tables 6.6.1–2, may not initially appear connected to economic positioning but were grounded in such considerations. For example, scholars Sandin and Josefsson posit that the 1921 decision to set the voting age at 23 was driven, in part, by the anticipated financial independence of voters at that age. At the same time, this age restriction reflected emerging concerns about—and a desire to curb—the political sway of growing numbers of young working-class men in urban and industrial communities.[37]

Moreover, although the revocation of voting rights due to legal guardianship was primarily associated with incapacitated seniors and persons with intellectual disabilities, legal guardianship could, until the 1970s, also be assigned to individuals deemed likely to risk their own or

[36] See, e.g., Richard. S. Katz, *Democracy and elections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 216; Beckman, *The frontiers of democracy*, 36–38; Annika Berg, and Martin Ericsson, "Rösträttens skiftande gränser," in *Allmän rösträtt*, 17–23.

[37] Sandin and Josefsson, "Age as a yardstick for political citizenship," 262–263. Intriguingly, in Finland—a nation with close geographical and cultural ties to Sweden—the decision to raise the voting age in 1906 was also aimed at excluding young voters. However, it primarily targeted women who were perceived to be more prone to political unrest. On the Finish case, see Minna Harjula's chapter in this volume.

their family's welfare through "profligate or other gross neglect of their property".[38]

In both situations, the voting eligibility stipulations can be interpreted as attempts to preserve political power for those deemed economically responsible and capable of making informed decisions. This interpretation corresponds to the principle of self-governance—frequently defined during the period as having "mastery over oneself and one's properties"—which argued for voting rights only for those viewed as capable of independent decision-making.[39] Therefore, adults under legal guardianship, as well as minors, were barred from voting. Likewise, individuals perceived as dependent on the decisions of others, such as those in a legal state of bankruptcy, were also denied voting rights. In the legal groundwork leading up to the 1921 reform, arguments suggested that individuals receiving long-term care and economic aid in poor houses could also be considered subject to others' decisions, thus justifying disenfranchisement.[40] Unlike in the other Nordic countries, however, household servants were not explicitly denied voting rights in Sweden, thereby illustrating the arbitrary nature of some of the economic restrictions on suffrage.

The autonomy of individuals experiencing bankruptcy, particularly those in institutional poor relief care, emerged as a contested subject among members of parliament in the 1940s. The debate centred on whether individuals in such states could genuinely be considered less self-governing than others, such as university students financially supported by their parents. However, these objections alone cannot explain the lawmakers' decision to abolish these grounds for disenfranchisement. Instead, abolishment resulted from a comprehensive review of the various economic grounds of disenfranchisement (bankruptcy, poor relief, tax debts), motivated by diverse critiques aimed at these justifications. The

[38] Quote from *SOU 1970:62. Förmynderskap* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1970), 56. See also Annika Berg,"Det sista strecket: omyndigförklaring som rösträttshinder," in *Allmän rösträtt?*, 122–125.

[39] See, e.g., Swedish parliament's constitutional committee statements, no 36 (1917), 5 and 12 (1933), 1.

[40] Before 1918, individuals receiving poor relief were under the guardianship of the poor relief authorities. In other work, I have argued that the 1919–21 decisions to disenfranchise those in care at poor relief houses stemmed from this pre-1918 legislation, although it was modified concurrently with the design of the new suffrage reform. See Sundevall, "Fattigvård och rösträtt.".

Social Democratic and Liberal majority further influenced this process in parliament at that time, although it should be noted that those parties were initially divided on the matter.[41]

Examining historical precedents, the concept of self-governance also played a role in the challenges to women's demands for voting rights during the nineteenth century.[42] Women encountered difficulties fulfilling the self-governance criterion for suffrage, owing to a higher legal age of majority than men (until 1884) and the legal guardianship of married women by their husbands (which persisted until 1921). Additionally, the principle of self-governance was frequently linked with financial self-sufficiency, creating further obstacles for women due to a combination of formal and informal constraints. Formal constraints included legal restrictions on women's property ownership (until 1874), limited access to education and professional opportunities (particularly before the 1920s), and other policies that perpetuated their economic reliance on and subordination to men. Informal barriers, in turn, encompassed societal norms and expectations, defining women's roles within the family, workplace, and public sphere, constraining their access to financial resources, and hindering opportunities for economic autonomy.[43]

The provision of voting rights based on economic self-reliance was in part aligned with what suffrage scholars have referred to as the competence principle.[44] In terms of personal economy, this principle is anchored in the presumption that individuals who are financially autonomous and responsible are more inclined to make informed and rational decisions. This perspective is, in turn, connected to the notion that economic

[41] See Minutes of the Swedish parliament, upper chamber, no 18, 1939, 34–37, lower chamber no 18, 1939, 30–41.

[42] Karlsson Sjögren, "Taxpaying, Poor Relief and Citizenship," 22-23. For further reference on self-sufficiency as a cornerstone for the justification of political rights internationally, see, for instance, Ruth Rubio-Marín, "The Achievement of Female Suffrage in Europe. On Women's Citizenship," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 12, no. 1 (2014), 18; Ingrid Steine. "A Universal Right to Vote? Children's Suffrage in a Comparative Historical Perspective," *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 37, no. 1 (2019), 68.

[43] For a chronological overview of significant developments in women's rights in Sweden, see Klara Arnberg, Fia Sundevall, and David Tjeder, "Könspolitiska årtal 1810–2018", in *Könspolitiska nyckeltexter: Från "Det går an" till #metoo*, Eds. Arnberg et. al. (Stockholm: Makadam, 2019), 12–17.

[44] On this principle, see, e.g., Beckman, *The frontiers of democracy*.

competence can indicate an individual's broader capabilities and sense of responsibility, highlighting another instance where voting rights have been tied to conceptions of "orderly behaviour".

The principles of financial self-sufficiency and economic competence were intrinsically interconnected to economic contributivism, which stipulated that political rights should be reserved solely for those making economic contributions to society. In the context of the Swedish voting system at the turn of the twentieth century, this principle manifested in two primary ways: by requiring economic contributions as a precondition for suffrage and by awarding a more significant number of votes proportionate to the magnitude of these contributions.[45]

As detailed earlier, Sweden's political system at that time employed a censitary suffrage model that tied voting rights to the amount of taxable income and the assessed tax value of owned property. Additionally, the number of votes allocated to an enfranchised entity—whether an individual or public company—was proportionate to these values: the higher the value, the more votes they could cast.[46] As noted by Piketty, this type of suffrage system resembles the voting mechanism in corporate shareholder meetings, where vote distribution is based on the number of shares an individual holds.[47] This comparison is particularly relevant given that lawmakers in late nineteenth-century Sweden often likened municipalities to joint-stock companies.[48] Thus, suffrage was built on the premise that voting rights—and the volume of votes an entity could cast, should reflect one's fiscal contributions to society, as evident through tax payments.

The profound influence of economic contributivist ideology on the Swedish suffrage system is underscored by instances where it could circumvent prevailing gender-related voting barriers. For example, in 1862, affluent single and widowed women were granted municipal

[45] Jonas Rosenberg Hultin, and Fia Sundevall, "Contributivist views on democratic inclusion: on economic contribution as a condition for the right to vote," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (2022/online first) https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2022.2104552.

[46] Ibid. See also, Mellquist, *Rösträtt efter förtjänst?*, 48–63.

[47] Piketty, *Capital and Ideology,* 191.

[48] Ylva Waldermarson, and Kjell Östberg, "Att styra en stad. Kommunalpolitiken 1850–2002″, in *Staden på vattnet*. vol. 2, eds. L. Nilsson & T. Hall, (Stockholm: Stockholmia, 2002).

voting rights, provided they could financially contribute to society.[49] Moreover, even after the abolition of the censitary voting system (in 1909 for national elections and 1918 for municipal elections), economic contributivist arguments remained instrumental for both inclusion and exclusion in Swedish suffrage, most notably at the municipal level through the disenfranchisement of individuals with unpaid taxes (until 1945). However, it is essential to note that the contributory prerequisites for voting rights extended beyond *economic* contributions. This is evident in the association of political rights with military service at the turn of the twentieth-century Swedish political discourse and suffrage legislation.[50] The latter disenfranchised men who had not completed compulsory military training, underscoring a broader understanding of civic duty beyond financial contributions.

Logistical and Administrative Voting Barriers

While formal voting rights are indisputably crucial for suffrage, it is crucial to examine them in conjunction with the logistical and administrative processes that enable their exercise. Drawing on the research of historian Julia Nordblad, this section looks at the various logistical and administrative factors that affected the ability to exercise voting rights in Sweden, with a particular emphasis on their implications for specific demographic groups.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, voters in Sweden were required to cast their ballots in person at designated polling stations within their home municipality on election day.[51] This stipulation presented considerable logistical challenges for diverse demographic

[49] This right was subsequently extended to married women (albeit under their husbands' guardianship) in the early 1900s. This shift came after the women's movement identified and effectively leveraged a loophole in the 1862 Municipal Act, thereby enabling married women to vote in municipal elections. However, the stringent economic prerequisites meant that only a minuscule fraction of women could fulfill the eligibility criteria. Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, "Voting women before women's suffrage in Sweden 1720–1870.", in *Suffrage, gender and citizenship: international perspectives on parliamentary reforms*, eds. Irma Sulkunen, et. al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 56.

[50] Anders Ahlbäck, and Fia Sundevall, "Värnplikt, rösträtt och kön. Värnpliktsstrecket i debatt och praktik," in *Allmän rösträtt?*

[51] Julia Nordblad, "Förtidsröstningen väcker demokratins grundfrågor," in *Arbetarhistoria*, no. 2–3 (2019), 55–59.

groups, including but not limited to women with childcare responsibilities, individuals with mobility constraints, and those whose employment was located a significant distance from their municipality.[52]

Discussions in the early twentieth century about expanding suffrage did, to some extent, acknowledge such challenges, especially highlighting the impact on workers in certain occupations and specific groups of women. For the latter, there were concerns that voting rights for women might disproportionately favour urban and unmarried women. This was based on the perception that married women, especially those in rural areas with potentially remote polling stations, faced greater challenges in balancing their domestic roles with voting.[53] These discussions highlighted a broader tension within the suffrage debate, underscoring the complex interplay between occupational, geographical, and gender factors in determining voting accessibility.

In response to the aforementioned concerns, the 1921 suffrage reform introduced measures such as permitting spouses to cast ballots on behalf of their partners and allowing absentee voting for specific occupations, such as railway workers, fishermen, and lighthouse keepers.[54] Although these changes marked a significant departure from the norm of in-person voting on election day, many groups remained ineligible for absentee voting, perpetuating existing barriers to participation. Notably disadvantaged were the Swedish Sámi population, the indigenous inhabitants of Sápmi, encompassing the northern reaches of Scandinavia and vast portions of the Russian Kola Peninsula. Due to many Sámi being engaged in semi-nomadic reindeer herding as their primary livelihood, the requirement to appear at a polling station on a specific date rendered their exercise of voting rights virtually unfeasible, especially given their migratory movements during the autumn, which coincided with Swedish election periods.[55] Not until 1982, when a more inclusive absentee voter system was established, all voters experienced increased flexibility in where

[52] Voters who were referred to as having physical defects were in 1909 permitted to choose an assistant to aid them at the polling station, as detailed in Swedish Code of Statutes (*SFS*) 1909:36 §50. Nevertheless, they still had to appear at the polling station.

[53] Julia Nordblad,"Praktiska rösträttshinder: Exemplet de svenska samerna", in *Allmän rösträtt?*, 228–230.

[54] Ibid. See also Swedish Code of Statues (*SFS)* 1921:20 §24.

[55] Nordblad, "Praktiska rösträttshinder,", 227–228.

and when to cast their ballots.[56] Nonetheless, studies on late 1900s voting patterns indicate that specific demographics, such as workers and farmers, did not exercise their absentee voting rights as frequently as other groups like officials, entrepreneurs, and students.[57]

On the administrative side, Sweden's long-existing policy of automatic voter pre-registration (as opposed to a process where prospective voters had to go and pre-register themselves) simplified the voting process for citizens. However, for the Sámi community, this system, too, posed particular challenges. The dual administrative division of Sweden into municipalities and the Sámi into territorial parishes, resulted in registration discrepancies, especially in the Swedish county of Jämtland. As a result, numerous Sámi individuals in Jämtland were left out of electoral rolls, inhibiting the exercise of their formal voting rights. This oversight persisted into the 1930s, with the knowing and, arguably, tacit approval of the governing authorities.[58]

Final Remarks

In 2018, to commemorate the centenary of the 1918–1921 suffrage reforms, the Swedish Parliament launched a web portal titled "Celebrate Democracy" (*Fira demokratin*). On this platform, it declared that 1921 was the pivotal year when "Sweden transitioned to a democracy with by universal and equal suffrage".[59] Besides emphasising suffrage as the sole determinant of democracy—thus inadvertently downplaying other

[56] Ibid. 229.

[57] Martin Brothén, "Absentee Voting and Postal Voting in Europe," in *Svenska poströstare*, Eds. Martin Brothén & Mette Anthonsen (Göteborg: Dept. of Political Science, Göteborg University, 2003), 95; Brothén, "Socioekonomisk poströstning," in *Svenska poströstare*, 60.

[58] Nordblad, "Praktiska rösträttshinder," 225–226.

[59] Swedish Parliament, "Fira demokratin", Retrieved Jan. 3, 2021 from: https://firademokratin.riksdagen.se. For a critical analysis of the Swedish parliament's commemoration of suffrage, arguing that also women's suffrage was largely obscured, see: Manns, Ulla. "Memory Work, Memory Politics, and the Centennial of Women's Suffrage in Sweden." *L'Homme*, 31, no. 1 (2021): 73-87. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14220/lhom.2021.32.1.73.3.

crucial components, such as access to information and education and the establishment of transparent and accountable governance structures—the portal's centenary terminology obscured many of the suffrage restrictions that remained in place after 1921.

CHAPTER 7

Exclusion in Fine Print: Antidemocratic Ideals and Strategies for Electoral Exclusion in Brazil, 1881–1930

Felipe Azevedo e Souza

The Period with the Lowest Electoral Participation in Brazil's History

At the turn of the twentieth century, several countries worldwide implemented procedures to expand their democratic franchises.[1] Brazil did not follow this trend. Consequently, between 1881 and 1930, the country experienced its lowest voter turnout, with the number of voters ranging from 0.8 to 5% of the total population. Historical studies have attributed these small numbers to normative impositions that excluded women and

[1] This chapter is a translated and thoroughly revised version of: Felipe Azevedo e Souza, "A dissimulada arte de produzir exclusões: as reformas que encolheram o eleitorado brasileiro (1881–1930)," *Revista de História*, no. 179 (2020): 1–35.

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_7

those defined as "illiterate" from their right to vote.[2] Additionally, until 1890, suffrage was restricted to individuals who met a specific income threshold (i.e. census suffrage). Although these aspects provide an overall view of how political citizenship was shaped, they are not enough to explain variations in the electorate from one election to another.

This chapter focuses on the final decades of the Brazilian Empire (1822–1889), particularly the 1880s. During this time, the political structures established by the 1824 Constitution were being reevaluated due to the impending abolition of slavery, which was officially realised in 1888. There was a popular demand for the expansion of political rights during this decade; however, this was avoided by a well-established political elite determined to enact electoral reforms that created barriers to the voting rights of the poor, illiterate, and formerly enslaved individuals. I will examine how some of the democratic fervour was integrated into the early days of the Republican period, which began in 1889. Due to the limited availability of data on the total number of registered voters in Brazil before 1930, studies examining political rights during this period primarily rely on general electoral participation data. This study adopts the same approach to gain insights into the fluctuations of the electorate over time. During the First Republic, some presidential elections increased the engagement of diversified urban groups, raising enrolment rates due to circumstances that will be presented in this chapter. As a rule, however, these upward trends were halted by electoral reforms aimed at maintaining an oligarchic order with minimal electoral participation.

As a containment barrier to the expansion of suffrage, Brazilian legislators implemented reforms that reduced the electorate at three specific points: first in 1881, during the Second Empire, then in 1904 and 1916, during the First Republic.

It is important to highlight that the aforementioned reforms upheld by the parliament did not overlap with the constitutional principles that determined which citizens would have the right to vote. Those who read the final version of the bills may get the impression that the reforms

[2] In this period, literacy levels increased from 15% to about 25% of the total population, of which approximately half were women. See Directoria Geral de Estatistica, *Sexo, raça e estado civil, nacionalidade, filiação, culto e analphabetismo da população recenseada em 31 de dezembro de 1890* (Rio de Janeiro: Officina da Estatistica, 1898); and Directoria Geral de Estatistica, *Recenseamento do Brazil realizado em 1 de Setembro de 1920: população*, vol. 4. (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Estatistica, 1928).

were primarily aimed at regulating the election organisation process and not necessarily driven by issues related to changes in political citizenship. They were essentially ordinary laws that reassessed the electoral rolls and reestablished the documentation needed to prove the electorate's income-generating activities. However, analysing parliamentary debates, it becomes evident that the core intention of those changes was to decrease the number of those who were allowed to vote. This happened through the creation of bureaucratic mechanisms that hindered access to political rights even for people already considered able to vote according to the Constitution.

From a formal perspective, these reforms were intended to improve an electoral system discredited by fraud and corruption. Many within the political elite believed that the flaws of the electoral system were linked to the perceived moral and intellectual shortcomings of a significant portion of the population in what was described as a "country of rudimentary civilisation," by a congressman in 1904.[3] To a large extent, it can be said that popular participation was seen as a pernicious element for conducting public affairs, and this idea was strong enough to shape the electorate, seeking to shield the political system from the influence of the vast majority of Brazilians.

According to political scientist Christian E. C. Lynch, the continuous criticism of broad electoral participation during the Republican period was part of a systematic effort by dominant sectors of the political class to establish an oligarchic federative regime. Contrary to being a stumbling block or a mistake, it was a deliberate state policy rooted in an ideology of "conservative liberalism resistant to democratisation" formulated in the early 1880s.[4] This represents a pivotal stage in Brazil's political rights history since the establishment of the Republic: the period of lowest electoral participation (between 1881 and 1930) coincided with the highest continuity of regular elections. This chapter analyses key justifications that structured the three major electoral reforms, examining how and why implementing mechanisms to combat electoral fraud impacted the voter

[3] Statement of Deputy Elói de Miranda Chaves. *Annaes da Camara dos Deputados* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1904), t.1, 10.

[4] Christian Edward Cyril Lynch, "'A multidão é louca, a multidão é mulher:' a demofobia oligárquico-federativa da Primeira República e o tema da mudança da capital," *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* 20, no. 4 (October–December 2013): 1496.

demographics range, mainly by imposing procedural difficulties for electoral enlistment. This will be demonstrated here by examining electoral data from some of the main cities in the country.

Fluctuations in the Brazilian Electorate: An Overview

The data in the first two lines in Table 7.1 during the imperial period refers to the electorate as a whole. At that time, the requirements to become enfranchised were determined by the Constitution of 1824. It established that elections for deputies, senators, and other members of provincial legislatures should be carried out indirectly, thus creating two degrees of enfranchised: the voters (*votantes*) participated in the primaries in which they could choose electors (*eleitores*). The latter, then, participated in the second phase of elections, where they voted for candidates for political office.

Enslaved people and women were excluded from the process. Regarding racial criteria, the legislation imposed barriers on formerly enslaved people, who only had the right to participate in the first level of voting; they could not vote directly nor be candidates for political office. The censitary suffrage system also barred some free and adult men. To become a voter (*votante*), an annual income of two hundred *mil-réis* was required, and twice as much for electors (*eleitores*), who had the right to participate in the second level of the electoral process.[5]

However, there were no restrictions for the illiterate, which meant the electorate was considerably broad for that time; until 1881, more than ten per cent of the total population had the right to vote. Nonetheless, most of these people could only vote in the first round. The number of those who participated in the second stage of elections (directly choosing names for political office) was much lower. In 1873, this was just over twenty thousand people or 0.2% of the total population in the country. The 1881 reform established direct elections, thereby imposing a massive

[5] A significant portion of the Empire's poor population had incomes far exceeding those established by the pecuniary census established by the electoral law. According to Mircea Buesco, among the workers who received between 220 and 420 *mil-réis* annually were: wet nurses, porters, charcoal burners, coachmen, butlers, cooks, gardeners, and washer women. BUESCO, Mircea. *No centenário da Lei Saraiva*. Rio de Janeiro, CEPHAS, 1991.

Table 7.1 Fluctuations in the Brazilian Voter Turnout, 1873–1930

Regime Type	*Year*	*% of population*	*% winning votes for president*	*Excluded from voting*
Monarchy	1873	10.9		All women. All enslaved men (formerly enslaved men could vote in the first, but not second level). Free men under twenty-five years of age and/or with an annual below above 200 mil-réis. Specific jobs and functions were considered harmful to freedom of choice due to the high degree of subordination, lack of political freedom, or independence of opinion. People holding these positions would not have the autonomy to participate actively in the political society. Persons holding the following positions were not entitled to vote: domestic servants and the administrators of rural farms and factories. Religious individuals living in a cloistered community. Enlisted members of the army, navy, and police forces. Public attendants working in service or administrative roles for the government
Monarchy	1882	1.2		

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Regime Type	*Year*	*% of population*	*% winning votes for president*	*Excluded from voting*
Republic	1894	2.2	84.3	All women and illiterate men. Beggars, enlisted members of the army, navy, police forces, and religious individuals living in cloistered communities
Republic	1898	2.7	90.9	
Republic	1902	3.4	91.7	
Republic	1906	1.4	97.9	
Republic	1910	2.8	64.4	
Republic	1914	2.4	91.6	
Republic	1918	1.5	99.1	All women and illiterate men. Beggars, enlisted members of the army, navy, police forces, and Religious individuals living in cloistered communities. According to the electoral reform of 1916, electoral enlistment requires the presentation of documents attesting to employment or source of income
Republic	1919	1.5	71	
Republic	1922	2.9	56	
Republic	1926	2.3	98	
Republic	1930	5.7	57.7	

Lamounier, Bolívar; Amorim Neto, Octavio. Brazil. In.: Nohlen, Dieter (ed.). *Elections in the Americas: A data handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, v. 2, 2005.; Jairo Nicolau, *A participação eleitoral no Brasil* (Oxford: Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford, 2001); J. P. Favilla Nunes, *A representação nacional do Brasil comparada com a de diversos países do mundo* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1889)

reduction in the electorate (the biggest ever seen in the history of Brazil), and as such, only around 1% of the population could vote during the last decade of the imperial period.[6] This decrease was due to the imposition

[6] In the 1881 and 1885 legislative elections, the voter turnout was only 1% of the total population, and the 1886 elections delivered an even lower rate of 0.9%. See: Directoria Geral de Estatistica. *Sexo, raça e estado civil, nacionalidade, filiação, culto e analphabetismo da população recenseada em 31 de dezembro de 1890*. Rio de Janeiro: Officina da Estatistica, 1898.

of stricter criteria for proving income in compliance with the pecuniary voting system.

The establishment of the First Republic in 1889 led to the abolition of income-based suffrage; however, illiterates were still strictly prohibited from voting. These changes doubled the electorate's number compared to the imperial period's final years, as shown in lines 2 and 3 concerning the Republican period in Table 7.1. However, it is essential to note that this data only refers to the turnout in the presidential elections during the First Republic; it does not represent the total electorate. This also explains the participation peaks in the 1910, 1922, and 1930 elections, which (as indicated in the last column of Table 7.1) were more competitive, implying more significant mobilisation from state party structures and bringing more people to the polls. Part 4 of this chapter will thoroughly analyse how the reforms of 1904 and 1916 objectively influenced the electorate in subsequent elections. Such reforms obstructed cycles of expansion of political citizenship by imposing procedural obstacles to access the right to vote. Jointly with the restrictive legislation excluding from the franchise to women and illiterates, these modifications objectively influenced limiting the electorate.

The Creation of a Diminutive Electorate: The 1881 Reform

In the early 1880s, Brazilian lawmakers assumed that indirect elections existed only in a few countries.[7] Intending to switch to a direct-elections model, the Brazilian parliament discussed at length, between 1878 and 1880, how to remodel the discredited electoral system and regenerate the representative mechanisms of a monarchical regime facing an institutional crisis. However, the intention to establish direct elections in the country led to another question: Would the new system include the thousands of voters who only participated in the first phase of the process?

[7] During the parliamentary debates of 1880, two different lists of countries were featured, according to their voting system. The biggest roll was formed by twenty-eight countries using direct voting systems and greater representative traditions, against only seven countries operating with indirect elections: Bavaria, Prussia, Saxe Weimar, Norway, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Peru. See *Annaes do Parlamento Brazileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Nacional, 1880), t.1, 327.

The answer to this question was a resounding no. Since the start of the debates, parliamentarians stated that the structural change in the elections was directly related to the intention of restricting the electorate. Legislators echoed a perspective that correlated the improvement of the electoral system with refining who was eligible to vote.

Throughout the 1870s, several representatives of the intellectual and economic elite criticised the fact that the Brazilian electorate was vastly dominated by impoverished and illiterate individuals, considered unfit to perform the noble social function of voting. During two agricultural congresses held in 1878, which brought together Brazil's crème de la crème of landowners representing the nation's most powerful socioeconomic class, a firm stance was taken by pressing the government to restrict the electorate: "Thousands of vagrants and idle men […] must be considered as a corroding cancer that ruins both private and public wealth, […] direct election might be able to contribute to the purpose [of] excluding the scum of the people from the ballots."[8] Similarly, literature and press publications argued that the vast and crude mass of individuals, who were ill-prepared to exercise the vote ultimately undermined the impact of qualified citizens—those allegedly with freedom and independence.[9] Parliamentarians, such as Francisco Belisário de Souza of the Conservative Party and the renowned Tavares Bastos from the Liberal Party, regarded the participation of thousands of people who voted in the initial stage of the elections as a blemish that fuelled electoral corruption and incited disorder and violence on election days.[10]

The electorate should not reflect the broad spectrum of society but only its most enlightened sectors—this was the underlying principle behind the propositions that led to the 1881 reform. During a Senate speech, José Antonio Saraiva (then president of the Council of Ministers

[8] *Congresso Agrícola*, facsimile of the first edition of *Anais do Congresso Agrícola no Rio de Janeiro em 1878*, with an introduction by José Murilo de Carvalho (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1988), 47–48.

[9] See *Reforma Eleitoral – Observações de um Liberal* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia do Apostolo, 1874), 18.

[10] These perspectives were reasoned in works with great repercussion at the time. See Francisco Belisário Soares de Souza, *O sistema eleitoral no Império*, first published 1873 (Brasília: Gráfica do Senado Federal, 1979); Aureliano Cândido Tavares Bastos, *Os males do presente e as esperanças do futuro*, 2nd ed, manuscript 1861 (São Paulo: Companhia Editôra Nacional, 1976).

and in charge of drafting the reform) pointed out that changes in electoral rules should strive to create an "electorate that considers and reflects on public affairs."[11] To achieve this, it would be necessary to "eliminate, for reasons of social interest, [...] the men who do not have the means to live, and among whom the slightest intelligence and independence are not presumed in choosing a deputy or senator."[12] Consequently, there was a growing demand for more rigorous "principles of distinction"[13] which would select for an electorate composed of individuals with greater economic independence (proven by ownership) and demonstrated intellectual capacity as proven by showing proficiency in reading and writing.

The idea of limiting the electorate, particularly prominent among representatives and influential social groups, emerged as the predominant notion during discussions about electoral reform in the years leading up to 1881. However, there was a strong normative obstacle for applying these designs. Political rights were enshrined in the Constitution, and their withdrawal could only be done through constitutional reform. However, convening a Constituent Assembly was an unrealistic alternative when the monarchical regime was in crisis. To avoid violating Article 179 of the 1824 Constitution, which grants the "inviolability of Civil and Political Rights,"[14] the only viable solution available to legislators was the implementing exclusionary changes under the guise of changes in the sections of the law concerning enlistment regulations rather than the sections dealing with citizenship rights and voter profiles.

The electoral reform was approved as an ordinary law at the beginning of 1881. It became known as the Saraiva Law in reference to its primary author, Councillor Antonio Saraiva. The final version did not alter a single word of the electoral law that discriminated between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised. Instead, the many restrictions that eliminated almost

[11] *Annaes do Senado do Imperio do Brazil* (Rio de Janeiro, Typographia Nacional, 1880), vol. 1, 223.

[12] *Annaes do Senado* (1881), vol. 3, 196.

[13] Bernard Manin calls "principles of distinction" the concept that designates the set of attributes that define whether a citizen is eminent or not, within a determined hierarchical representative system. See *The Principles of Representative Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[14] Constituição Politica do Imperio do Brasil (1824).

ninety per cent of the electorate in the subsequent election were incorporated into the regulatory devices of the voting-enrolment process. The law mainly concerned new paperwork requirements to attest that a citizen's income met the threshold, which had been too lenient before. The earlier legislation only had one article on the matter, which detailed document requirements in four points. The 1881 reform, however, strengthened this aspect of the legislation by introducing thirty additional articles, each of which was further elaborated upon in sections containing specific document requirements. Additionally, the Saraiva Law eliminated a clause from 1875 that reduced the need for supporting documentation. As a result, the deleted passage gave electoral qualification boards the authority to "assume" the legal income of any citizen, therefore dismissing, in practical terms, the need to examine each voter's and elector's paperwork. Many citizens who previously met the required income threshold could no longer prove their earnings: most simply did not have the necessary contracts and records, while others, such as those without education, had difficulty handling the bureaucratic red tape.[15]

At the same time, legislators decided that some social groups should be included in the electorate regardless of whether they met the income demanded by the reform. Thus, the law waived the proof of income requirement for various offices related to civil service, scientific diploma holders, sacred order clerics, and citizens enrolled as jurors at the Jury Court. The sources below demonstrate that, in reality, the number of electors meeting this privileged criterion was very high, suggesting that most of the electorate likely consisted of precisely those citizens who had no obligation to handle the complex bureaucratic processes required to prove their finances.

One year after the Saraiva Law was enacted, Senator José Bonifácio gave a speech at the Parliament expressing indignation at the "diminutive number of electors" enrolled after the reform. For him, the reason many were eliminated from the voting process was precisely the strict requirement of income proof:

> What causes could have contributed to the enrollment of such a small number of electors? Either political indifference or the difficulty of proving

[15] Felipe Azevedo e Souza, *O eleitorado imperial em reforma* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco; Editora Massangana, 2014), chapter 2. The electoral data mentioned until the end of this section is taken from this book.

> income. There was no indifference: the parties were excited, they battled, and if they could not enlist more of their supporters, it was because they could not. The cause was, therefore, the strictness of the law concerning the documents for proof of income.[16]

Bonifácio exposed enrolment numbers in Rio de Janeiro to support his arguments. In that province, a total of 10,662 electors were registered in 1881. Out of this number, only 2,446 provided documentation to prove their income as required by the new law. The remaining 8,216 citizens were granted voting rights based on exemptions from provided documentary evidence.[17] It is challenging and rare to find electoral lists specifying the number of voters exempted from the documentation requirement. Throughout the research process, I could only access two of these documents from small inland locations in the province of Pernambuco, far from the capital. In the jurisdiction of Vila Bela, only one individual among the 279 registered electors had successfully proven their income, with the vast majority of citizens benefiting from the exemption for being part of the jury. A similar situation was found in the jurisdiction of Brejo da Madre de Deus, where 220 out of the 243 electors were also jurors.[18] This data reveals how required bureaucracy was insurmountable for most Brazilians. Even in Rio de Janeiro (the central province of the Empire, where state bureaucracy was concentrated), only 23 per cent of voters were registered with proof of income; in remote rural areas, this number tended to be much lower.

Councillor Saraiva believed that the electorate in the country's interior was mainly composed of men without political autonomy; in his words, they were electors "without independence who vote as ordered by the village bossy-boots."[19] In the discussions surrounding the law's enactment, Saraiva presented his case in the Senate and defended the complex bureaucratic procedures for proof of income, with the explicit aim of intentionally hindering residents in rural areas from exercising

[16] *Annaes do Senado* (1882), vol. 3, 254.

[17] *Annaes do Senado* (1882), vol. 3, 284. For a similar situation on the other side of the globe, see Kristiansdottír's chapter on the case of Iceland.

[18] Alistamento Eleitoral da Comarca de Villa Bella, ano de 1881; Alistamento da Comarca de Brejo da Madre de Deus, July 12, 1881. State Archive Jordão Emerenciano (APEJE), Recife, PE.

[19] *Annaes do Senado* (1880), vol. 1, 223.

their right to vote: "This adamancy regarding proof of income made me convinced that a higher income requirement would considerably diminish the electorate inland."[20]

Until recently, many scholars believed that the immediate contraction of the electorate after the Saraiva Law was due to the prohibition of illiterate electors,[21] but this is a flawed hypothesis. Illiterate people were the social group to suffer the most significant decrease in their electors, but at first, this was primarily due to documentation requirements. Illiterates could still be found in minimal numbers in electoral lists after 1881. As I have pointed out, legislators made a law that, in theory, did not exclude any social group from those who already enjoyed the right to vote before the reform—under Article 179 of the 1824 Constitution. Regardless, they included a provision demanding the electors know how to "read and write" to apply for enrolment after September 1882. However, illiterate electors who already had the electoral card before that date would not lose their right to vote.[22] Not a word was registered in the parliament annals regarding the provision that maintained the right to vote for enrolled illiterates but excluded those who later came to request enrolment. It is very likely that this decision was made within the context that would later lead to slavery abolition in the country. In November 1880, while the Senate was discussing the electoral reform bill, Parliament was debating emancipation, where many of the arguments related to enslaved

[20] *Annaes*, 229. Data from the 1872 census indicate that more than 80% of the population lived in rural areas, and the inhabitants of the capitals of the Empire represented 10.41% of the total population. Almost half of this urban mass was concentrated in three capitals: Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Recife.

[21] See, among others, José Murilo de Carvalho, "Introdução," in *Congresso Agrícola*, 39; Letícia Bicalho Canêdo, "As listas eleitorais e o processo de nacionalização da cidadania no Brasil (1822-1945)," *Revista Pro-Posições* 6, no. 3 (1995): 30–46; Décio Azevedo Marques de Saes, "A questão da evolução da cidadania política no Brasil," *Revista Estudos Avançados* 15, no. 42 (2001): 379–410; Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, "Sociabilidades sem história: votantes pobres no Império, 1824–1881," in *Historiografia brasileira em perspectiva*, ed. Marco Cezar de Freitas (São Paulo: Contexto, 2003), 71; and Alceu Ravanello Ferraro, "Educação, classe, gênero e voto no Brasil imperial: Lei Saraiva – 1881," *Educar em Revista* 50 (October–December 2013): 181–206.

[22] See Electoral Reform 1881, art. VIII. Nonetheless, art. 15, § 19 gave instructions to the illiterates who would continue to participate in the electoral process: "When the elector does not know or cannot sign his name, other indicated by himself will sign in his name, and will be invited, for this purpose, by the president of the polling station."

and formerly enslaved persons were based on racial theories that considered them outcasts incapable of being included among Brazilian citizens. For example, Deputy Antonio Felício dos Santos labelled the enslaved as "a retrograde and savage race," expressing his "fear of an invasion by these unassimilated atoms in the social organism." For Felício dos Santos, the assimilation of the millions of enslaved and formerly enslaved people into Brazilian civilisation could only be adequately achieved within a few generations, after successive breeding between the "African race" and the "white race."[23]

The data clearly show that a literacy requirement for voting would disproportionately impact the enslaved population, especially as they were gradually emancipated throughout the 1880s. In practical terms, it was evident that formerly enslaved men who gained their freedom in the final decade of the imperial era did not have access to the ballots. They experienced a significant disparity in citizenship compared to other free men, which disadvantaged them. These sources show how the decrease in the electorate led to a sweeping trend of voting elitism in Brazil, which can also be seen in Table 7.2, which is organised by voters' income brackets in Recife, capital of the province of Pernambuco (the third most populous city in the country at that time, with approximately one hundred thousand inhabitants).

The composition of the electorate that participated in the 1884 elections was the opposite of the 1876 electorate. In 1876, the income distribution formed a pyramid of voters and electors, characterised by a broad base of low-income labourers, with numbers tapering as income levels rose. However, in 1884, the situation was the opposite: most of those registered for voting fell into the two highest income brackets. Consequently, citizens with higher incomes started to dominate the voting process, resulting in a configuration that resembled the inverse of the 1876 pyramid. In this new structure, the electorate's size diminished as suffragists' income decreased.

The national electorate decreased by 87%, whereas in Recife, the decline was comparatively less steep at 60.3%. This difference can be attributed to Recife's urban profile in contrast to the predominantly

[23] *Annaes do Parlamento* (1880), t. VI, 302. The 1872 census was the only one that calculated the number of enslaved people in the country. At that time there were still 1.5 million of them, or 15.3% of the country's total population. It should also be noted that there were 4.2 million free people of color (Black and brown [called *pardos*]).

Table 7.2 Electorate Income Range in Recife, Pernambuco (PE), Brazil, years 1876 and 1884

	1876		*1884*	
Annual income (in mil-réis*)*	*Number of voters/ electors*	*%*	*Number of electors*	*%*
200 < 400	2186	47.6%	55	9.3%
400 < 800	1189	25.9%	131	22%
800 < 2000	704	15.3%	206	34.5%
> 2000	515	11.2%	204	34.2%
Total	4594	100%	596	100%

"Qualificação dos eleitores da Boa Vista,1884," *O Tempo* (July–August 1876). Collection Folhetos Raros, State Archive Jordão Emerenciano (APEJE), Recife, PE

rural layout of Brazil. The parish located farthest from Recife, almost entirely composed of farmers, experienced a steep decrease of 91.5%. In contrast, the central district had a decline of only 13%. The sudden decrease in voting participation among segments of the impoverished population and rural residents supports the assertion that changes in the electorate's composition were primarily linked to the documentation required for proof of income. Poor people working with trades and crafts in an informal economy and job market experienced notable losses in their voting participation. For instance, small-scale farmers, artists, and newsboys combined comprised almost half of those who voted in the second district in 1876 (48.2% of the total), whereas, in 1884, they made up only 11% of the electorate.

Obstructing Electorate Expansion: The Reforms of 1904 and 1916

In 1891, two years after the 1889 coup that overthrew the monarchy and established the Republican regime in Brazil, a new Constitution was introduced, accompanied by changes in electoral rules. In an environment filled with the "founding euphoria"[24] of creating a new political community, the Deputies of the National Constituent Assembly expanded the electorate by abolishing income-based suffrage and the bureaucracy required to implement this regulation. However, the literacy requirement and several other restrictions were kept (See Table 7.1). Statistics show that the electorate had doubled in size. Still, in practical terms, actual voting numbers remained extremely restricted: voter turnout rates in the first three presidential elections fluctuated between 2.2% and 3.4%. Nevertheless, the brief increase in voter turnout registered in these first elections was interpreted by parliamentarians as a consequence of fraud in the enrolment procedures. The argument that linked broad voting participation to corruption in the system returned to dominate political debates, giving rise to a new reform that once more reduced the size of the electorate.

Senator Francisco de Assis Rosa e Silva, who had recently left the post of vice-president of Brazil, took on the mission of ending fraud in electoral enrolment through an electoral reform discussed at the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate between 1902 and 1904. From his first statements, he confessed feeling nostalgia for when the Saraiva Law regulated elections and corruption was curbed by raising the "moral level of the electorate."[25] His peers fully accepted this argument. One of the senators lamented that due to "inexperience or democratic fetishism," the Republicans had excessively amplified the right to vote. In contrast to actual electoral data, Rosa e Silva further stated, "Today the electorate is as numerous as in the time of indirect elections," and, as in that period, formed by "mostly of incapable people."[26] Some parliamentarians, such as the skilled politician Joaquim Catunda, argued that if no action were

[24] Cristina Buarque de Hollanda, *Modos da representação política: o experimento da Primeira República brasileira* (Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG; Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ, 2009), 174.

[25] *Annaes do Senado Federal* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional,1904), vol. 1,119.

[26] Statement of Senator Coelho e Campos, *Annaes do Senado* (1904), Apêndice, 4.

taken, the situation would reach "the limits of universal suffrage," adding that "in a country like ours, with a backward civilisation, of dubious political morals, the extension of this suffrage always results in fraud and violence."[27]

The discursive correlation between popular participation and electoral fraud becomes evident in those debates. Most of these perspectives were based on a hierarchical worldview, which held that Brazilian social reality reflected the perceived incapacity of its people, who were almost always represented as a monolithic entity or an "amorphous mass" without any sign of complexity.[28] From this standpoint, political representation should not mirror the "brutalised population"; to the contrary, according to the prevailing logic, "common men are objects, not agents of political representation."[29]

Recognising the challenges that altering the constitution would pose for the 1904 reform, Rosa e Silva chose not to revise the sections of the text about the definition of citizenship. He claimed that even if parliamentarians were to establish the "most stringent requirements and [sought] to restrict a voter's ability to prove their qualifications as much as they wanted," the final determination of who would be included in the electoral register would remain with the corrupt registration boards.[30] He asserted that a substantial portion of electoral registers in Brazil were fraudulent and decided to focus resources on the electoral commissions to curtail the proliferation of fraudulent practices. As a result, he instituted new authorities to oversee the enrolment process and invalidated all prior registrations.

A new enrolment process began from scratch. Thousands of voters were required to personally visit the registration boards operating within the municipal offices and request the re-issuance of their electoral cards to retain their political rights. In a primarily rural country with precarious means of transportation and communication, Rosa e Silva admitted that such a measure "could be a nuisance," adding that "it is possible that some will miss the enrollment for this reason."[31] This did happen, but

[27] *Annaes do Senado* (1905), vol. 2, 158.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Hollanda, *Modos da representação política*, 81.

[30] *Annaes do Senado* (1905), vol. 2, 163.

[31] *Annaes do Senado* (1905), vol. 1, 303.

the "some" who failed to enrol in time for the 1906 elections were not so few. The 1906 election had the lowest voter turnout in the history of the First Republic. Table 7.1 shows that the decrease was from 3.4% in the 1902 elections to 1.4% in the 1906 elections. In certain villages within the state of São Paulo, the election did not even happen due to "the lack of organised polling stations" or "because a large part of the electorate [was] deprived of their cards."[32] Newspapers across the country reported the "reduced number" of the electorate, as summarised in an article published in *O País* from Rio de Janeiro:

> Many eligible citizens (those who can read and write and are over twenty-one years old) did not want to bother travelling and registering to vote in person. On the other hand, here in the Republic's capital, with a population of at least 850,000 souls, there was only a single electoral board, and it was naturally impossible to accommodate everyone who sought it out: the constituted electorate does not exceed 20,000 names. Thus, the first effect of the law was to create a reduced electorate, not only in relation to the previous electorate, [...] but in proportion to the number of inhabitants.[33]

The 1904 reform, as such, did not change the criteria for voter eligibility but instead imposed objective procedural difficulties, not only requiring the elector's physical presence at municipal headquarters but also offering an inadequately equipped structure that did not meet the electorate's demand to obtain their voting cards. In the end, few succeeded in voting, and almost absolute peace reigned in that election—a fact that, as interpreted by some parliamentarians, signalled the success of the reform.

Over the years, electors gradually managed to enrol (or be enrolled), and the size of the electorate in absolute numbers increased from 1,016,807 in 1908 to 1,291,548 in 1912.[34] Considering the data concerning the total population, the voter turnout during this period

[32] "Eleições," *Correio Paulistano*, February 6, 1906. The issue refers specifically to the villages Cerqueira César, Óleo, Salto Grande, and Ilha Grande.

[33] "A semana política," *O País* (Rio de Janeiro), January 8,1906. Still in 1908, Deputy Bulhões Marçal reported to the press on how the Rosa e Silva Law made the enrolment of new electors difficult. See "O Banquete," *O Século* (Rio de Janeiro), February 10,1908.

[34] Directoria Geral de Estatistica, *Annuario Estatistico do Brazil.1908–1912* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Estatistica, 1916), t.1, vol. 1, 41. In principle, voters would only

amounted to roughly 4.5% to 5.5% of the entire population. Legislators again interpreted this brief increase as a result of enrolment fraud. Between 1913 and 1916, calls against extensive suffrage resurfaced within the National Congress, prompting another electoral reform. As in previous occasions, the fairness of the process was cited as the pretext to place the issue on the agenda.

Similar to the contexts surrounding previous electoral reform projects, parliamentarians found they could not modify the voter's social profile as this was determined by the Constitution, which had established that illiterates, beggars, and men under twenty-one years old, among others, were prevented from voting.[35] To overcome this limitation, the representatives responsible for the 1916 electoral reform examined each aspect that defined who could vote and demanded corresponding documentary evidence. For instance, as the Constitution denied voting rights to beggars, the legislators determined that starting in 1916, individuals seeking to enrol should demonstrate that they were not beggars by presenting documents confirming employment or source of income. From that point onward, the income requirement for exercising the right to vote was indirectly and covertly reinstated. As observed by a representative who was critical of the reform, the law considered "all citizens as beggars in theory, until they prove otherwise,"[36] which essentially disenfranchised those working in the informal economy.

There was no evidence connecting the gradual increase in the electorate to the massive enrolment of beggars. Inventing this bureaucratic barrier was a way to reduce the volume of voters without violating the Constitution, under the guise of upholding fairness and improving electoral institutions.

Data referencing the electorate in Salvador, the second most populous city in the country, illustrate the impact of these reforms. As previously stated, both the 1904 and 1916 reforms were enacted during

need to register once in their lifetime; however, after each electoral reform, parliamentarians invalidated electoral registers based on the fraudulence argument. As such, voters had to register after each reform.

[35] The Constitution also denied the right to vote to the army's "*praças de pret*" (recruits and soldiers with no rank), and to "religious of monastic orders, companies, congregations and communities of any denomination, subject to a vow of obedience, rule or statute that imply renunciation of individual liberty.".

[36] *Annaes da Camara* (1914), t. XIII, 374.

cycles of modest expansion of the electorate; these new laws immediately halted these upward trends. As the reforms concerning procedural issues did not modify citizenship criteria for enrolment, their reductive effects were short-lived, with citizens gradually resuming their demand for voting rights. However, a crucial fact was that the recovery of electorate numbers in large cities (mainly state capitals) occurred at a swifter place due to multiple factors. Some of these factors can be listed as easier access to registration boards, the large number of people with access to formal documents meeting the requirements of electoral laws (such as civil servants), and the urban population growth of the period. It is also important to highlight how political and social disputes stimulated the population's interest in electoral participation and increased electoral enrolment. In contrast, the constraining effects of the 1904 and 1916 reforms lasted longer in remote villages in rural regions, where most of the population resided (Fig. 7.1).

Data from Salvador further demonstrates the impact of electoral campaigns on the development of political citizenship, especially among urban voters. Institutional politics during the First Republic was, for a long time, approached as a theme only valued by elites. Low electoral

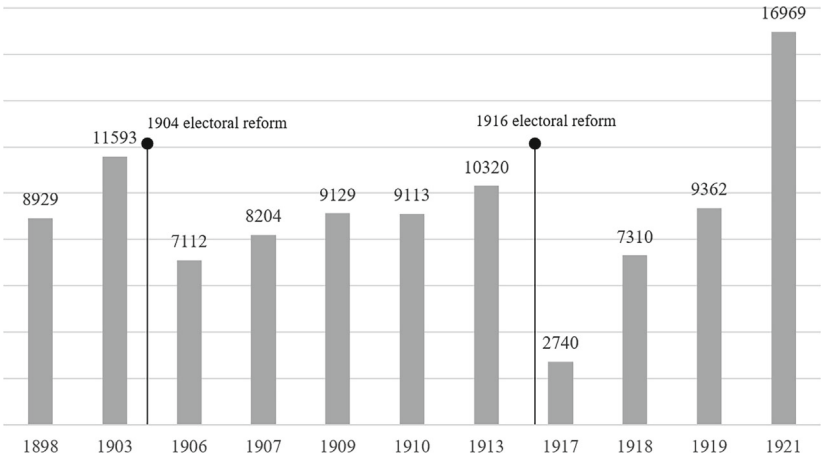

Fig. 7.1 Electorate of Salvador, BA, Brazil, 1898–1921
Source: Special Fonds/ Elections. Municipal Historic Archive of Salvador at the Gregório de Mattos Foundation (AHMS–FGM).

rates, little social mirroring among elected representatives, and high levels of corruption ended up influencing academic interpretations that established a perspective that paid little attention to the political participation of the poorest classes since, until the last decade, no studies focused on electoral behaviour and political participation among subaltern groups in the pre-1930 period. A series of recent studies currently refutes the widely disseminated and accepted indifference of the popular classes, highlighting how subaltern groups interacted with politics and identifying complex layers of meanings that people from these classes attributed to their electoral participation.[37]

During the First Republic, enrolment and voter turnout rates increased precisely during the most disputed elections. This happened in the Salvationist Campaigns (*Campanhas Salvacionistas*) that, between 1910 and 1912, transformed the capitals of several states into actual war zones. Enrolment squads were one of the main mechanisms of electoral campaign mobilisation in those elections.[38] Civic centres, political clubs, trade associations, recreational societies, and various social clubs were also converted into enrolment centres in the elections of 1919.[39] Similar events also happened in 1930, during the final election of the First Republic, when the regime's highest participation rates were registered.

[37] See, among others: Castellucci, *Trabalhadores e política no Brasil: do aprendizado do Império aos sucessos da Primeira República* (Salvador: Eduneb, 2015); Castilho, Celso Thomas Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations in Brazilian Political Citizenship* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016);; Ângela de Castro Gomes, and Martha Abreu. "A nova 'Velha' República: um pouco de história e historiografia," *Revista Tempo* 13, no. 26 (January–June 2009): 1–14; Felipe Azevedo e Souza, *Nas ruas: abolicionismo, republicanismo e movimento operário no Recife*. (Salvador: EDUFBA, 2021); and James Woodard, *A Place in Politics: São Paulo, Brazil, from Seigneurial Republicanism to Regionalist Revolt* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

[38] See Vera Lúcia Borges, *A batalha eleitoral de 1910: imprensa e cultura política na Primeira República* (Rio de Janeiro: Apicuri, 2011); and Oscar Mello, *Recife Sangrento*, 3rd ed. (Recife: n.p., 1953).

[39] For advertisements promoting enrolment in various capitals organised by social groups such as industrialists, pharmacists, university students, trade employees, and evangelicals, see, respectively: "Aos industriais paulistas," *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), August 10, 1929; "Na liga republicana de farmacêuticos paulistas," *O Momento Político* (São Paulo), August 24, 1929; "Peço a palavra," *A Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), September 1, 1928; "Comitê Central pró-Júlio Prestes," *O Momento Político* (São Paulo), August 29, 1929; "Campanha Universitária pró-alistamento," *Diário Nacional* (São Paulo), August 3, 1929; and "Candidaturas presidenciais," *A Província* (Pernambuco), September 11, 1921.

This type of civil society mobilisation doubled the number of electors in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, whereas twelve thousand new voters were registered in just one day in the city of São Paulo. Newspapers reported that thirty-three thousand people had been enrolled for the first time in the federal capital, Rio de Janeiro.[40]

Enrolment offices and squads worked as instruments of informal mediation for access to political rights in that period—and certainly not an unbiased sort of mediation. Organising these electoral structures entailed more expenses for an already costly process that weighed heavily on the candidates' pockets amidst sums involving vote buying, personnel expenses for those involved in the campaign, and payment to printers and the press for distributing posters, and other paraphernalia. Such factors "considerably" influenced the lack of interest "in expanding the number of voters, as this would require the availability of resources and benefits to distribute."[41]

Shrouded in verbose language that praised an ideal type of sovereign elector, the regulatory changes in the Republican period provided circumstances for the increase of enrolment offices in the cities. They also promoted a greater dependence among rural voters by encouraging the action of mediators who often facilitated access to voting through personal interactions that operated within a favour economy. These reforms impacted voter turnout rates, inhibiting the minor periods of electoral expansion.

[40] "A sucessão presidencial," *Jornal Pequeno* (Pernambuco), February 25, 1930; "O alistamento que se faz hoje em São Paulo é um lábil indelével da nossa história," *Diário Nacional* (São Paulo), December 31, 1929; "O alistamento eleitoral no Distrito Federal," *A Província* (Pernambuco), January 8, 1930.

[41] Surama Conde Sá Pinto, "Sobre a lógica do funcionamento dos partidos políticos nos sistemas oligárquicos: o caso do Rio de Janeiro na Primeira República," *Lusíada*, no. 9–10 (2013): 247.

Final Considerations

In the parliamentary debates that gave Brazil the electoral reforms analysed here, it is possible to find the fingerprints of an antidemocratic strain of conservative thought that was critical of the liberal constitutionalism that shaped the political institutions of that time. Formally, the reforms sought to redress electoral corruption. Still, in practical terms, they only supported measures to remove significant portions of the poorest population from the electoral process by labelling them as unfit for political participation.

As ordinary legislators did not have the power to suppress constitutional norms related to the right to vote and to electorate profiles, they opted to impose covert ways of creating procedural and bureaucratic restrictions. In fine print, they made it impossible for certain social groups to have the right to vote. In doing so, they successfully carved out an elitist profile for the electorate and effectively halted minor periods of electoral franchise expansion.

A study of Brazil's history of social inequalities lists the lack of access to constitutionally granted rights (or the imposition of obstacles to the enjoyment of these rights) as a foundational element in perpetuating racial disparities produced within the context of a slave society. These structural inequalities, *mutatis mutandis*, have been preserved throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Fischer, Grinberg, and Mattos have pointed out that "direct evidence is often lacking that these characteristics were explicitly devised to promote racial differentiation, but they disproportionately impacted Afro-descendant populations."[42]

The singularity of Brazilian structural racism has been extensively studied, and one of the main aspects is the absence of a racially discriminatory legislative corpus. However, the population's access to rights and enjoyment was profusely and systematically experienced through hierarchical and racialised methods. How the electoral reforms discussed in this chapter were implemented, and their implicit meanings are an intrinsic part of the history of the vulnerability of rights and political participation among the poorest in Brazil. It should also be noted that

[42] Brodwyn Fischer, Keila Grinberg, and Hebe Mattos, "Direito, silêncio e racialização das desigualdades na história afro-brasileira," in *Estudos afro-latino-americanos: uma introdução*, ed. George Reid Andrews, and Alejandro de la Fuente (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2018), 189.

public poor relief was unavailable in Brazil during the period in question. Therefore, unlike several European countries, there was no practice of disenfranchisement based on poor relief in Brazil.

Overall, this extended period marked by political exclusion resulted in the fragility of democratic institutions and is part of a more extensive process of political instability. The First Republic was overthrown in 1930 by an armed movement with an agenda of expanding rights. Women won the right to vote in 1932; however, just five years later, the Estado Novo dictatorship was established, and the country did not hold elections until 1945. Following two decades of regular elections and an initial experience of mass democracy, another coup resulted in a military dictatorship in 1964, which continued until 1985. This regime's eventual opening up through a broad coalition of social forces gave the country the 1988 Constitution that remains in force today. Illiterate individuals remained unable to vote in Brazil until 1988.[43]

[43] José Murilo de Carvalho. *Cidadania no Brasil: o longo caminho* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001).

CHAPTER 8

The Politics, Practices, and Emotions of Suffrage Exclusion in Iceland, 1915–1934

Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir

Introduction

Sometime in the 1920s, a woman turns up at a polling station in *Reykjavík*, only to find that she has been stripped of her voting rights.[1] Her daughter would later tell this story to explain why her mother had been a fervent supporter of the Labour Party (i. *Alþýðuflokkur*), unlike most of the women in the neighbourhood who had voted for the conservative Independence Party (i. *Sjálfstæðisflokkur*):

[1] This chapter stems from my collaboration with Þorgerður H. Þorvaldsdóttir (1968–2020). For her contribution, see her article: ""Því miður eruð þér ekki á kjörskrá." Samtvinnun sem greiningartæki í sagnfræði," *Saga* 55, no. 1 (2017): 74–102. I am also grateful for support from the Icelandic Research Fund (RANNÍS) for the project "In the Wake of Suffrage," as well as a grant from the University of Iceland Research Fund that made it possible to recruit Kristjana Vigdís Ingvadóttir at the National Archives to gather sources for this project.

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_8

> Perhaps it was understandable that her views were radical and empathetic towards workers and the underprivileged. For example, she could never forget the time she lost her voting rights after she had accepted relief from the municipality one year … for my dad had been sick then at the National Hospital [i. *Landspítali*] operated on because of a gastric ulcer, and there was no money in the house. When my mother arrived to vote in the next election, she found out that her name had been struck out from the voting register.[2]

The daughter explains that this was an emotional ordeal. Her mother became furious, berating everyone at the polling station before being escorted out, and she never forgot the shame. What had "embittered her the most" was that they had already paid back the relief, or loan, but the municipal authorities had forgotten to put her name back on the voting register.

The development of political, economic, and social citizenship is a salient strand in international historiography and theorising about the political Left. In addition to the extensive literature on the transition from poor relief to social security in the Nordic countries, Europe, and beyond, many historians have shown that "forging democracy" was an essential aspect of European working-class and socialist politics.[3] Yet, it seems that little attention has been given to the correlation between the development of legislation on suffrage on the one hand, and social care ("poor relief" and later "welfare") on the other, how the intersection of the two sets of laws played out in practice, or the emotions associated with being disenfranchised.[4]

This chapter focuses on the politics of poor women and men who were denied voting rights due to their dependency on poor relief. By analysing contemporary political discourses and drawing on the testimonies of excluded individuals, voting registers, and poor relief records, I demonstrate how the citizenship of the poor was contested not only at the national level but also at the local and individual levels, even at the polling

[2] Bernskuár mín á Bergþórugötu 7. Female born 1928. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands. Þjóðháttasafn. [National Museum of Iceland, Ethnographical Department]. My translation.

[3] See, e.g. Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Stefan Berger, "Democracy and Social Democracy," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 13–37.

[4] This is true for Iceland and many other countries as noted in other chapters in this book, as well as the introduction.

station. In effect, this was a quest to uproot prejudice against those living in economic insecurity and to establish a new notion of citizenship that protected the poor from the shame associated with disenfranchisement and acceptance of social relief.

First, I will outline the rationale behind suffrage exclusions in Iceland. Next, I explore how the labour movement fought to include the "deserving poor" in the electorate. Then, I describe the development of the legal framework that culminated in a 1934 constitutional amendment, which enfranchised (most) of the people dependent on poor relief. Finally, I provide examples illustrating how these legal changes impacted the political citizenship of individual voters.

Icelandic Democracy and Social Legislation Before 1915

The thinkers at the forefront of the democratic debate in Europe and North America during the revolutionary era emphasised the importance of voters being financially and intellectually fit, rational, independent, and morally responsible.[5] In Iceland, the nineteenth-century debate about voting rights followed a similar course. It revolved around the relationship between taxation, property, respectability, and financial independence, with a strong emphasis on preserving the interests of the traditional farming community.

Iceland was part of the Danish realm throughout the nineteenth century until it gained sovereignty in 1918. The principles of modern Icelandic citizenship were thus constructed within a Danish political framework. However, some of the laws and practices, old and new, were uniquely Icelandic. Notably, the poor relief system traced back to mediaeval Icelandic Commonwealth law, which was carried out according to *Jónsbók*, a legal code adopted in 1281.[6]

[5] See, e.g. James Thompson, "Modern Liberty Redefined," in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 726; Andrew Geddis, "Liberty and the rule of law," and Andrew Sartori, "Economic and Social Democracy," in *A Cultural History of Democracy in the Age of Empire*, eds. Tom Brooking and Todd M. Thompson (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 52 and 85.

[6] Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson, *Family and Household in Iceland 1801–1930* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1988), 93–95.

Consultative assemblies were established in Denmark in the 1830s, and in 1848, absolute rule was abolished. The 1849 Danish constitution created the most inclusive parliamentary body in the Nordic region.[7] While voting rights to consultative assemblies had previously been based on strict property requirements, the 1849 constitution expanded voting rights for the lower house (d. *Folketing*) to encompass all economically self-sufficient males aged 30 and older. But while suffrage in Denmark was not based on wealth and financial standing, two groups of male voters were excluded: "dependents" (persons privately employed and not having a household of their own) and "paupers" (those who had received and not paid back poor relief).[8]

Still a part of the Danish realm during the nineteenth century, Iceland was granted a separate consultative assembly (named *Alþingi*) in the 1840s. In 1874, the assembly received limited legislative powers in domestic affairs.[9] The consultative assembly's first electoral laws were strict. Based on criteria such as age, tenure, and property ownership, it granted voting rights to only about 2% of the population. The requirements for standing for office were likewise stern; in the inaugural elections of 1844, no individual met the eligibility requirements in the *Vestmannaeyjar* constituency.[10]

A more inclusive franchise with no property requirements was introduced through an 1849 election law to the National Assembly (i. *þjóðfundur*) convened in Iceland to discuss the country's constitutional status within the Danish Kingdom. As in Denmark, the introduction of

[7] Torkel Jansson, "The Constitutional Situation," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, vol. 2, eds. E. I. Kouri and Jens E. Olesen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 914.

[8] See Leonora Lottrup Rasmussen's chapter in this volume and: Jørgen Elklitt, "The Politics of Electoral System Development and Change: The Danish Case," in *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries*, eds. Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart (New York: Agathon Press, 2002), 20–21. I will use the term "pauper" as it was defined in the legislation at each time.

[9] Any bill passed could be vetoed by the crown.

[10] Gunnar Karlsson, "Alþingiskosningarnar 1844," *Ritið* 4, no. 1 (2004): 36; Guðmundur Hálfdanarson, "Defining the Modern Citizen: Debates on Civil and Political Elements of Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century Iceland," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 24, no. 1 (1999): 106.

more inclusive voting laws was counterbalanced by introducing a clause that disenfranchised those in debt of poor relief.[11]

In 1853, *Alþingi*, still a consultative body, requested the Danish government to enact a new electoral law. Prioritising rural interests, members of the *Alþingi* advocated for universal franchise to all farmers (i. *bóndi*), including the poorest, while proposing significantly stricter economic restrictions for individuals living in towns and villages.[12] In 1857, a new electoral law was enacted based on the above principles. The law granted voting rights to the following groups of males aged 25 and above, without requiring property ownership: (i) Farmers who paid some form of tax (effectively including all but the very poorest farmers) (ii) public officials (iii) individuals who had obtained a degree from a university or the seminary in Iceland (iv) town burghers (i. *kaupstaðaborgarar*) who paid a significant sum to the local municipality (v) town cottagers who paid an even higher amount to the municipality. All women, servants, most town cottagers, and paupers were excluded.[13] The voting law reflected apprehension towards those who lived outside the rigidly structured farming community and those requiring social assistance.

Traditionally, poor relief in Iceland had been distributed by communal authorities, not the church. There were no poorhouses or workhouses, and relief was granted either by giving paupers food and shelter in households within the commune (i. *hreppur*) or by providing families needing temporary aid with goods or money. Disciplinary measures were written into the poor law. Paupers who received relief were deprived of economic and political rights and were obligated to follow the directives of local authorities until they had repaid the estimated value of the assistance they had received. Thus, relief was defined as a debt that required repayment, and local authorities had the authority to seize property to secure payment. Safeguards against poverty were also built into the labour legislation. Strict laws on vagrancy and compulsory service (i. *vistarband*) were

[11] *Lovsamling for Island,* vol. 14, eds. Oddgeir Stephensen and Jón Sigurðsson (Copenhagen: Höst, 1868), 348.

[12] *Tíðindi frá Alþingi Íslendinga* (1853), 975–982.

[13] Einar Arnórsson, *Réttarsaga Alþingis* (Reykjavík: Alþingissögunefnd, 1945), 398–402; *Lovsamling for Island,* vol. 17, ed. Jón Sigurðsson (Copenhagen: Höst, 1877), 3–9.

meant to keep the number of persons unable to sustain themselves or their dependents to a minimum.[14]

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Icelanders had suffered a colder climate, poor fish catches, livestock epidemics, and disruptive volcanic activity. These strains on the socio-economic system led to more strict social legislation regarding "paupers," cottars,[15] lodgers, and boarders. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, the older paternalistic social legislation was gradually replaced with rules and practices based on more "liberal and individualistic ideas of self-help, prudence and hard work." This period also saw the introduction of the idea that a distinction could and should be made between the "deserving" (i. *verðugur*) and "undeserving" (i. *óverðugur*) poor.[16]

More liberal views towards the urban poor also allowed for an extension of voting rights. In 1903, *Alþingi* decided to lower the tax qualifications and, at the same time, abolish the disparate requirements that had previously existed between the agricultural and non-agricultural communities. This resulted in the enfranchisement of more male voters residing in villages and towns.

When examining the inclusion of women voters, we can see that the prevailing notion of suffrage being tied to the paternalistic farming household was gradually replaced with political citizenship as an individual right.[17] In 1881, *Alþingi* decided to allow farming widows and unmarried female heads of households to vote in local elections, and twenty

[14] Gunnlaugsson, *Family*, 90–117; Vilhelmsson, Vilhelm. "Contested Households: Lodgers, Labour, and the Law in Rural Iceland in the Early 19th Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2023.2197916.

[15] I.e. people residing by the seaside and living off fisheries (i. *búðsetufólk, þurrabúðarfólk*).

[16] Guðmundur Jónsson, "The Icelandic Welfare State in the Twentieth Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26, no. 3 (2001): 250–254; Guðmundur Jónsson, "The Evolving Concept of the Welfare State in Icelandic Politics," in *The Changing Meanings of the Welfare State. Histories of a Key Concept in the Nordic Countries*, ed. Nils Edling (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 278–279.

[17] Hálfdanarson, "Defining"; Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir and Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir, "Practising the Right to Vote. Female Voters And Male Inertia in Iceland, 1915–1944," in *Suffrage and Its Legacy in the Nordics and Beyond. Gender, Institutional Constraints and Feminist Strategies*, edited by Josefina Erikson and Lenita Freidenwall, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 157–77.

years later, this small group of women was also allowed to stand for election.[18] By 1909, the right to vote and stand as candidates had been extended to the wives of male voters, i.e. to women as individuals, not as heads of households. Being financially competent and paying tax to the municipality was a requirement for suffrage, so the law specified that only the husband had to fulfil these requirements.[19] From the 1880s onwards, a few constitutional bills were presented at *Alþingi,* extending the franchise to women in parliamentary elections. However, disputes with the Danish crown and government regarding other constitutional issues (mostly home rule) meant that these bills were never ratified in Copenhagen. Thus, it was not until 1915 that women were granted these rights in Iceland. Simultaneously, servants were granted suffrage, and all remaining tax requirements were abolished.[20]

However, the new voters, women, servants, and those who had not met the tax requirements, still faced two intersecting voting restrictions. The first was based on age. Instead of admitting these new voters into the electorate all at once, it was determined that the age limit would initially be 40 years. This limit would then be gradually lowered, one year at a time, until it reached the general voting age of 25 years. This clause was changed, and the voting age for everyone was standardised at 25 years when the Icelandic constitution was amended in 1920 following Iceland's establishment as a sovereign state in 1918. The second and longer-lasting restriction was based on the provision that individuals who had received, but not repaid, poor relief were not allowed to vote. Economic class and gender continued to be stumbling blocks towards political citizenship.

There was a different rationale behind restricting women's voting rights compared to poor relief recipients. From parliamentary debates about the extension of suffrage, we can see that the decision to make younger—and potentially more independent—women wait to participate in the electoral process stemmed from the essentialist view that women lacked the rational masculine intellect necessary for political involvement.

[18] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1882) A, 70–71; *Stjórnartíðindi* (1902) A, 118–119. These women were subject to the same restrictions as men.

[19] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1909) A, 242–245. Until 1968, the constitutional clause on suffrage for parliamentary elections contained a similar clause (see Table 8.1).

[20] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1915) A, 19. From this date onwards the general rule was that there was little or no difference between voting rights in local and parliamentary elections. See, e.g. law on local elections adopted in 1926. *Stjórnartíðindi* (1926) A, 122.

Table 8.1 Suffrage requirements and grounds of disenfranchisement in parliamentary elections as stated in the Icelandic constitution from 1874*
Sources: Lovsamling for Island, vol. 21, eds. Hilmar Stephensen and Ólafur Halldórsson (Copenhagen: Höst, 1889), 736–737; *Stjórnartíðindi* (1903) A, 70; (1915) A, 19; (1920) A, 14; (1934) A, 71; (1968) A, 25; (1984) A, 112

Basic requirements		
Icelandic citizenship, residency in Iceland past 5 years	1874–1984	
Icelandic citizenship and legal residency	1984–	
Gender	1874–1915:	men only
Minimum age	1874–1915:	25
	1915–1920:	25**
	1920–1934:	25
	1934–1968:	21
	1968–1984:	20
	1984–	18
Enfranchised on the basis of tax or status		
(a) All tax paying farmers; (b) town burghers paying at least 8 krónur to commune per year; (c) town cottagers (i. *þurrabúðarmenn*) paying at least 12 krónur to commune per year; (d) public officials; (e) persons holding a degree from university or seminary	1874–1903	
(a) All tax paying farmers; (b) all independent men (i.e. not servants) paying at least 4 krónur in extra municipal tax (i. *aukaútsvar*) per year; (c) public officials; (d) those holding a degree from university, seminary, medical school or comparable, if not dependent on others as servants	1903–1915	
Grounds for disenfranchisement		
Unpaid poor relief	1874–1934	
Loss of civic confidence due to crime (blemished reputation)	1874–1984	
Loss of financial competence (i. fjárræði)***	1874–1968	
Loss of legal competence (i. lögræði)	1968–1984	

* Broadly speaking suffrage requirements and restrictions in local elections were similar or the same as for parliament. The most important exceptions, such as the gradual enfranchisement of women in local elections from 1882, are mentioned in the main text of this chapter

** Gradual inclusion of new voters (women and male servants) beginning with those 40 years and older

*** Until 1968 the law contained clauses that ensured that this requirement did not automatically disenfranchise married women who did not have finances separate from their husbands

Moreover, the parliamentary debates clearly show that the all-male political elite feared that women would disturb the existing social and political

order.[21] While the urban poor and their representatives caused similar concerns about social and political disruption among the ruling political elite, their exclusion was rooted in social views and practices that emphasised economic responsibility and morality. Finally, even though the clause on poor relief may have been constructed to exclude "inappropriate" male voters, women were in a more vulnerable economic position and presumably more likely to be subject to this clause.

The Labour Party Opposes the Practice of Shaming the Poor

Research about the development of modern party politics in Iceland has emphasised that the labour movement, unlike in neighbouring countries, did not engage in the struggle for universal suffrage. When the Labour Party and the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (*Alþýðusamband*) were established in 1916, most of the measures to equalise the political and civil rights of Icelandic citizens had already been taken.[22]

However, as epitomised in the story of the woman who had been taken off the voting register, the struggle for unconditional access to the polity was not over in 1915. During the first half of the twentieth century, the critical issues for Icelandic labour were finding ways of protecting the urban poor against economic insecurity and uprooting prejudice towards those who needed social aid. This struggle can be traced back to the very first labour newspapers launched at the beginning of the twentieth century to represent the interests of the urban poor. These newspapers indicate that their publishers and contributors were enthusiastic about being acknowledged as fully integrated nation members. The establishment of the Labour Party (*Alþýðuflokkur*) and the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (*Alþýðusamband*) in 1916 saw the emergence of a political discourse that emphasised recognising workers as a group worthy of respect and with a legitimate claim on society (and the

[21] Halldórsdóttir and Kristjánsdóttir, "Practicing the Right to Vote".

[22] See: Ólafur Th. Hardarson, "The Icelandic Electoral System 1844–1999," in *The Evolution of Electoral and Party Systems in the Nordic Countries*, eds. Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart (New York: Agathon Press, 2002), 122; Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir, "For Equality or Against Foreign Oppression? The Politics of the Left in Iceland Leading up to the Cold War," *Moving the Social* 48 (2012): 16.

state) to provide the possibility to earn a decent living and lead a secure and independent life.[23]

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, labour papers and periodicals presented many cases where individuals who had received poor relief experienced feelings of injustice and shame. As an example, in October 1919, *Alþýðublaðið*, the primary paper of the Labour Party, featured an article about a father who had been disenfranchised because one of his children had been hospitalised. Claiming that one of the main aims of the Labour Party was to transform the Poor Laws from punitive measures to laws that secured the well-being of all, the paper recounts how a man had shown up at their editorial office the day before. He had gone to the voting register and could not find his name. When the editorial staff asked him why, he explained: "I have six children, and last year one of them got sick and had to go to hospital and stayed there for several months. Due to my low salary, I could not afford the resulting expenses and had to seek assistance from the municipality."[24]

In her memoirs, Labour Party member Margrét R. Halldórsdóttir (1896–1981) describes the humiliation she experienced when applying for poor relief in the autumn of 1927. Telling her story in 1962, during the "golden age of the welfare state," she claimed that "nowadays" hardly anyone, especially young people, understood what was at stake at the time: "It was almost a deadly sin to go down this path. Not only did those receiving help lose their 'human rights in society,' but they also incurred the damnation of their peers – or their sympathy– which more or less amounted to the same thing." Margrét had sought support because her husband was terminally ill. He died the following year, leaving her alone with their four children, aged eleven, nine, six, and four. Later in her memoirs, she recounts how applying for poor relief curtailed her political citizenship when she arrived at the polling station to vote. Her account bears a striking resemblance to the one presented at the beginning of this chapter:

> I strolled in, stating my name and address. They looked through their registers and asked me whether I had another name or whether I lived

[23] I discuss this in my book about labour politics and national identity in Iceland: Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir, *Nýtt fólk. Þjóðerni og íslensk verkalýðsstjórnmál 1901–1944* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2008).

[24] "Fátækralögin hegningarlög," *Alþýðublaðið,* October 31, 1919, 3.

> elsewhere. I realised that something was not right. Suddenly, it dawned upon me, and I started trembling. I should have known, and I did know, but it had escaped my mind.
>
> I turned away … and said, 'It is all right. I am not on the register.'
>
> 'No,' they responded. 'Unfortunately, you are not on the register.'
>
> And I walked out. I felt like I had been punched in both cheeks. I deserved it for being so forgetful. But when I strolled out to the passageway, I was hurt more because of anger rather than pity for myself. To this day, I blame myself for forgetting about my position and for heedlessly going to the polling station.[25]

Such stories of harshness and injustice towards the poor became a vital strand in narratives about the accomplishments of the Labour Party. "When I was a child," wrote a male journalist on the party's fiftieth anniversary in 1966, "there was no social security, and asking for poor relief was almost regarded a crime on a par with stealing sheep. The only difference was that sheep-thieves were given due process, while the poor were stripped of their human rights without a fair trial."[26] In this text, the author does not mention the loss of suffrage, which reflects that in addition to losing suffrage, the poor law had clauses subjecting poor relief recipients to discipline by local authorities.[27]

Suffrage Extension with Poor Law Amendments

The initial efforts to expand the franchise to individuals dependent on social assistance involved modifying clauses within the poor law. During the 1920s and 1930s, the labour movement and the Left actively campaigned to eliminate all legal clauses curtailing the poor's civil, political, and social rights.[28] Calling for changes to the electoral law and the replacement of the poor law with a system of social security (i. *alþýðutryggingar*), the aim was to ensure that the poor and especially

[25] Vilhjálmur S: Vilhjálmsson, *Fimm konur* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Setberg, 1962), 110 and 116. One of Iceland's most prominent labour feminists, Jóhanna Egilsdóttir, also tells this story in her memoirs. See Gylfi Gröndal. *Níutíu og níu ár. Jóhanna Egilsdóttir segir frá* (Reykjavík: Setberg, 1980), 76.

[26] Hannes á horninu, "Draumur fólks og veruleiki," *Alþýðublaðið*, March 12, 1966, 4.

[27] See previous section.

[28] For the period discussed here, the parliamentary bills and resolutions proposed by members of the Labour Party (*Alþýðuflokkur*) in *Alþingistíðindi* (1920–1934) A.

the "deserving poor"—those who were not viewed as responsible for their circumstances—were granted social and political rights that allowed them to become free and equal members of Icelandic society. It was a piecemeal, complex, and longwinded process, a source of confusion for both academics in hindsight and, presumably, for those who were on the margins of political citizenship, as illustrated by the experiences of the two aforementioned women who went on a wild-goose chase to the polling station.

As early as 1917, parliament had acknowledged that certain aspects of the existing restrictions in the Poor Law were excessively severe. The same year, a resolution was adopted declaring the Poor Law be modified so that despite receiving aid, certain groups (such as the infirm resulting from illness, accident, or old age, as well as individuals with many dependents) should maintain their civil and political rights (i. *borgaraleg réttindi*), at least for a few years.[29]

Notably, initial measures were taken in a separate law specifically intended to prevent the spread of tuberculosis. Adopted in 1921, it stated that social assistance for patients with tuberculosis should not be defined as poor relief. The bill had been prepared by a specialist committee of three doctors who wrote in the *travaux preparatoires* that people should not be stripped of their "human rights" due to catching a disease.[30] The doctors' sense of unfairness towards those who happened to be infected with a disease reflected a shift in sympathy towards the "deserving poor" and an increased emphasis by authorities on distinguishing them from the "undeserving poor" (those perceived as responsible for their need for poor relief). Encapsulating the moral principles of the social legislation, the tuberculosis law also stated that if patients did not adhere to isolation and hospitalisation rules and regulations or demonstrated negligence in preventing the spread of infection to others, the aid provided would be categorised as a type of poor relief.[31] However, in 1921, revisions were made to the Poor Law, explicitly stating that aid granted for hospitalisation should not be considered poor relief.[32]

[29] *Alþingistíðindi* (1917) A, 923.

[30] *Alþingistíðindi* (1921) A, 286.

[31] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1921) A, 147. Discussing the bill in parliament, few parliamentarians commented on this clause, but those who did were in favour. See: *Alþingistíðindi* (1921) A, 271–286 and *Alþingistíðindi* (1921) B, 439–492.

[32] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1921) A, 198.

However, getting further changes to the Poor Law through parliament proved difficult. Several bills were proposed, but none passed until 1927 when *Alþingi* finally modified aspects of the Poor Law. One of the changes included the provision that local authorities were required to determine within three months whether the relief granted should be defined as "not redeemable." The authorities were to decide whether this was fair in the following instances: (i) old age, (ii) a high number of dependents, (iii) illness affecting either the individual or their dependents, or (iv) other forms of misfortune. The 1927 amendment to the Poor Law also specified that local authorities were not permitted to seek reimbursement from relief recipients for aid granted for (i) necessary books and school supplies for children younger than 14 or (ii) funeral costs of paupers.[33] The former reflects increased interest in children's wellbeing, education, and upbringing. Hence, a 1933 modification to child protection legislation enabled the provision of social assistance to poor families with children with the stipulation that if it was guaranteed that the aid provided would primarily benefit the children, it should not be categorised as poor relief.[34]

Although these changes to social legislation allowed for an extension of the electorate, corresponding changes had not been made to the constitution or voting legislation. In 1929, new laws governing local elections considered the 1927 amendments to the Poor Law. Previously, local voting rights had largely mirrored parliamentary voting rights. However, a significant shift occurred with the decision that only the "undeserving poor" would be barred from voting in local elections. The new law specified that this group included individuals who had received relief due to their laziness (i. *leti*), leading a dissolute life (i. *óregla*), or their negligence (i. *hirðuleysi*).[35]

The importance of differentiating between the "deserving" and "undeserving" paupers was reiterated in a law concerning the establishment of a "correction house" and workhouse where "idlers" (i. *slæpingjar*) who were unwilling to provide for themselves, or their dependents would engage in "wholesome" and "useful" work.[36] Likewise, the emphasis on

[33] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1927) A, 127.

[34] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1933) A, 144.

[35] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1929) A, 199–200.

[36] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1928) A, 71.

disciplining the "workshy" was incorporated into a new clause that was added to the penal laws in 1928. It stated that a man could be imprisoned if he became dependent on relief due to leading a derelict life, if he, for the same reason, failed to sustain those dependent on him and refused to accept jobs allotted to him by the authorities.[37] The idea of a workhouse had often been discussed in Iceland, but it was not until 1929 that it was implemented by establishing a prison and workhouse in Litla-Hraun near the town of Eyrabakki on the south coast.

In 1934, when the clause barring individuals dependent on poor relief from voting in parliamentary elections was removed from the constitution, it was done without significant opposition or disagreement. This change, part of more comprehensive and hotly contested changes to the electoral system, was hardly discussed in parliament.[38] By then, most politicians had accepted that it was unjust to strip the sick, the elderly, and working people of political citizenship whenever they needed financial assistance. However, as discussed in the last section of this chapter, parliament was not ready to extend citizenship to those who needed poor relief because of their heavy drinking, "laziness," or "leading a dissolute life."

[37] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1928), 126.

[38] *Alþingistíðindi* (1933) B, 2720–2870.

Two Widows and a Man with a Deceased Son

While numerical data on the paupers who lost their voting rights in Iceland is not readily available and difficult to construct, archival sources allow us to build up examples of how the restrictive clauses affected specific individuals. By examining the archives of local authorities, municipalities, and communes, which were responsible for distributing poor relief and compiling handwritten voting registers, we can see how individuals lost their voting rights in the event of illness, accidents, or unemployment. This examination also reveals how changes to the law could lead to poor individuals eventually being granted the right to vote.

The selection of the following three cases aims to illustrate how the legislative changes outlined above gradually paved the way for including the "good paupers" while also providing insight into the institutional framework governing the administration of poor relief. Moreover, these cases give us a sense of the emotional and material circumstances under which people were disenfranchised.[39]

The first case pertains to Sigurlaug, a widow residing in Reykjavík. Sigurlaug was born in 1876, which made her eligible to vote in 1916 when she reached the age of 40. But on the 1916 parliament voting register, she is listed as a "pauper," meaning she was not allowed to vote. A report on poor relief from that same year states that she lived in housing for the poor with her six children. Further information about her family's circumstances can be found in an archive containing the personal files of poor relief recipients in Reykjavík. Sigurlaug's husband had drowned in 1913 while working on the construction of Reykjavík harbour. In 1916, Sigurlaug approached the authorities, explaining that she was in good health but unable to work due to her responsibilities at home caring for her children. By 1917, before any of the amendments mentioned above to the Poor Law were enacted, she had contracted tuberculosis and was admitted to a sanatorium along with her daughter. She died that year without ever being granted the right to vote.[40]

The second case involves Guðmundur, born in 1880 or 1881 in the Westfjords, who had relocated to Reykjavík in 1906 and primarily worked

[39] These examples were collected by my late colleague Þorgerður H. Þorvaldsdóttir, Kristjana Vigdís Ingvadóttir, and myself.

[40] Þorvaldsdóttir, "Því miður," from archival material at the Reykjavík Municipal Archives (*Borgarskjalasafn Reykjavíkur*).

on cargo ships. In late September 1916, Guðmundur's son was hospitalised and died three days later. He was responsible for providing for his wife and their children, their sixth born a few weeks after the loss of their son. Due to his inability to cover the expenses for his son's hospitalisation and funeral, the authorities in Reykjavík assumed the financial burden.

This was before the 1921 amendments to the Poor Law, which specified that aid granted for hospitalisation should not be defined as poor relief. Nevertheless, a dispute erupted between local authorities about the aid provided to Guðmundur. From official records, we can see that by the time his case was discussed, Guðmundur had paid back the cost of the hospitalisation (but not the funeral) and had not received any poor relief prior to his son's death. The point of contention was which municipality should pay the cost. Was it Reykjavík, where the family lived, and where Guðmundur's son had been hospitalised and buried, or Mýrarhreppur where Guðmundur was born?

Following the existing law, the Mýrarhreppur commune was responsible for covering the expenses if it was deemed poor relief. If not, the commune was exempt from payment and would not be responsible for any poor relief Guðmundur and his dependents might need.[41] In essence, this was a financial dispute. Officials in Reykjavík, eager to recover the funds and avoid providing ongoing poor relief to the family, argued in favour of defining the funeral and hospital cost as poor relief. On the opposing side, the argument against this classification likely stemmed from a desire to evade the financial burden of the disputed amount and any potential future poor relief obligations. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the communal overseer (i. *hreppstjóri*) claimed that the Reykjavík authorities had been unduly swift in taking a decision that stripped Guðmundur "of his human rights."

The dispute over the allocation of funds for hospital and funeral costs was eventually escalated to the highest administrative level (the government level), where it was ultimately determined that these expenses should be classified as poor relief.[42] Guðmundur was unable to repay the

[41] The dispute is about what in Icelandic was called *sveitfesti*, i.e. about which municipality was responsible for granting the person poor relief.

[42] Stjórnarráð Íslands II. skrifstofa 214/1 (1918), Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands (The National Archives of Iceland).

relief, resulting in the loss of his voting rights. His wife was already disenfranchised, as she was born in 1884 and not old enough to vote because of the specific age limit for women.

The third example is Ingveldur, a woman born in 1866 or 1867, whose husband was hospitalised due to leprosy and died in 1920. In the poor relief records from 1916, we can discern that Ingveldur faced difficulties supporting herself and her daughters, who were 11 and 9 years old. A letter she wrote to the Reykjavík Poor Relief Committee in 1917 gives us an insight into her desperate situation and how paupers addressed the authorities during this period:

> Once again, I am obliged to seek recourse with the honourable Poor Relief Committee …
>
> To cut a long story short, I do not see how I can secure the subsistence of my children and myself this winter as everything you need to survive is now so expensive …
>
> If the hon. Poor Relief Committee, for some reason, finds itself unable to answer my request and give me the allowance that both I and my children can live off, I will be obliged to urge the committee to take my girls from me because I will not bear looking at them dying of hunger or cold, and hope that no conscientious man reproaches me for that.[43]

Typically, the head of the household, the husband, applied for relief. Therefore, Ingveldur was not registered as a pauper until she became widowed; previously, only her husband was listed.[44] However, neither of their names appears on the Reykjavík voting registers, indicating that the loss of suffrage affected both. Not surprisingly, Ingveldur was still dependent on poor relief after her husband died in 1920. However, the changes introduced in the Poor Law in 1927, which granted local authorities the power to decide which poor relief recipients were worthy of political citizenship, significantly impacted Ingveldur. Subsequently, the local

[43] My rough translation. For the original text in Icelandic: Þorvaldsdóttir, "Því miður," 104.

[44] In Reykjavík, when the head of household was considered unreliable, the Poor Relief Committee granted the aid directly to their wives or the mother of their children. See: Finnur Jónasson, "Heiðraða fátækranefnd," in *Híbýli fátæktar. Húsnæði og veraldleg gæði fátæks fólks á 19. og fram á 20. öld*, eds. Finnur Jónasson, Sólveig Ólafsdóttir and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2019), 80.

authorities in Reykjavík opted to absolve the debt owed by a substantial number of "deserving" paupers in Reykjavík.[45] Ingveldur was on the voting register for parliamentary elections in 1932, which means that she was among those defined as deserving of poor relief.

Consequently, towards the latter part of her life, Ingveldur, who passed away in 1941 at the age of 74 or 75, had ultimately acquired the right to vote.[46] Whether or not she voted is unknown. Initially, the voter turnout among women in parliamentary elections was low but gradually increasing. The turnout was 30% in 1916 and 72% in 1931. The corresponding figures for male voters were 69% in 1916 and 85% in 1931.[47]

Gender, Politicised Voting Registers, and the Fate of the "Undeserving" Poor

Focusing on the interplay between laws and practices on suffrage, on the one hand, and welfare policies, on the other, offers a deeper understanding of citizenship. The sources in Iceland allow for an in-depth analysis of how welfare decisions were made, contested, and negotiated and how they affected the citizenship of individual voters. Sigurlaug, Guðmundur, and Ingveldur's stories were chosen to illustrate how clauses in pertinent laws and law reform could affect those struggling with their and their families' subsistence. Moreover, these stories demonstrate how women were more precarious than men and presumably more likely to depend on poor relief.

The disenfranchisement of paupers predated female suffrage. It was not explicitly conceived as a punishment for women unable to sustain themselves. On the contrary, the clause was gendered in the sense that it was intended to disenfranchise male heads of households that "failed" to provide for themselves and their dependents. But poor women, single

[45] Jónasson, "Heiðraða," 83–84. Apparently, the decisions made were entirely up to the Poor Law Committee.

[46] Þorvaldsdóttir, "Því miður," 104–105.

[47] *Hagskinna. Sögulegar hagtölur um Ísland,* ed. Guðmundur Jónsson and Magnús S. Magnússon (Reykjavík: Hagstofan, 1997), 877.

mothers, and widows were often in the most vulnerable economic positions.[48] Thus, in practice, the constitutional clause on paupers was one of many impediments faced by women voters. Various norms, practices, and discourses on women as incompetent political citizens and the design of the political and party system made it more difficult and less feasible for them to cast their ballot. Like women in other countries, they were not readily welcomed in the political sphere as independent political agents, voters, or potential candidates.[49]

Allowing local authorities to define Poor Relief as non-redeemable in 1927 was essential in defining poor men and women as legitimate citizens. However, the authorities maintained power over paupers as the law contained disciplinary clauses. Moreover, deciding which individuals should be relieved of their debt could be highly politicised. In effect, representatives could decide which constituents could vote in the next elections, and the practice could differ from one municipality to another. Research about the execution of elections in the 1920s shows the lengths political parties were willing to go to gather support for their candidates. Several electoral fraud and misconduct complaints were filed during this period, some of which went to court.[50]

As such, it was not unexpected that political interests would influence the implementation of this new Poor Law clause. A 1934 newspaper article authored by a member of the Labour Party who would later become one of the co-authors of a revised bill concerning the Poor Law serves as an illustrative example. It states that when the Labour Party gained control of the *Neskaupstaður* town council in the Eastfjords, a decision was made to "strike out all existing debts owed to the municipality and reinstate the voting rights of all those who had previously

[48] Jónasson, "Heiðraða," 102 ff.

[49] This argument is substantiated in: Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir and Ragnheiður Kristjánsdóttir, "Ósjálfráðu atkvæðin. Viðhorf til kvenkjósenda og heimakosningarnar 1923 og 1944," *Saga* 60, no. 1 (2022): 77–115 and Halldórsdóttir and Kristjánsdóttir, "Practicing the Right to Vote".

[50] Halldórsdóttir and Kristjánsdóttir, "Practicing the Right to Vote"; Sigurður Pétursson, *Vindur í seglum. Saga verkalýðshreyfingar á Vestfjörðum,* vol. 1 (Ísafjörður: Verkalýðssamband Vestfjarða, 2011), 292–298.

lost them." The article's author claimed that representatives of the other parties had been opposed to this but could not do anything about it.[51]

Further analysis of archival sources on the implementation of voting and records related to the provision of poor relief could give us a clearer picture of how the 1927 change affected the citizenship and politics of the poor. This includes whether women were handled the same way as men and how the women's movement, the labour movement, and political parties discussed who should be deemed "deserving" of poor relief. Of particular interest is also the agency of individuals: to what extent they advocated for their eligibility for financial assistance without forfeiting their political privileges. Recent research on paupers in Reykjavík suggests that they became more confident and less submissive when making claims to the authorities during the late 1920s and early 1930s (an indication of the increasing strength of the political Left). In the 1930s, social aid recipients went so far as to establish a union focused on advancing their interests and began publishing their paper, *Fulltrúinn*.[52]

The 1934 constitutional change eliminated the clause disenfranchising "paupers" and lowered the voting age from 25 to 21. But it left intact two conditions that could result in the disenfranchisement of those living on the margins of society: (i) voters were required to maintain an "unblemished reputation" as stated by the law (i.e. loss of civic confidence due to crime) and (ii) they needed to be "financially competent."[53] Parliament had acknowledged the injustice of revoking the political citizenship of individuals with large families, those who were ill, and the elderly. Denying the franchise to everyone who had received social aid regardless of their circumstances may have seemed natural when it was introduced into the electoral law in the nineteenth century, but changing notions about economic and social democracy had called for reconsidering the terms of inclusion and exclusion from the polity.[54]

[51] Jónas Guðmundsson, "Lygastarfsemi Kommúnista," *Jafnaðarmaðurinn*, January 4, 1934, 1–3. For a short discussion on the redemption of debts in Reykjavík following the changes made in 1927 see Jónasson, "Heiðraða," 83–84.

[52] *Fulltrúinn* was published in 1935–1936 with 7 issues in total. Even though the paper steadfastly denied being a Communist Party organisation, the discourse and the images it published reveal a close connection to the Communist movement.

[53] *Stjórnartíðindi* 1934 A, 71.

[54] For the development of such notions in the twentieth century see, e.g. James. T. Kloppenberg and John Gee, "Social and Economic Democracy," in *A Cultural History of*

Meanwhile, the idea of some individuals being "undeserving" of political citizenship because they failed to stand on their own feet lived on. In 1935, a new centre-left coalition government introduced the first wide-ranging social security legislation (i. *alþýðutryggingar*), recognised as a significant turning point in Iceland's welfare history, setting the foundation for the post-war welfare state. At the same time, the Law on Social Assistance (i. *framfærslulög*) replaced the Poor Law but still contained disciplinary and punitive clauses reminiscent of earlier attitudes towards the poor. A special section was dedicated to "the power of local authorities" over those who are social aid recipients. It was extensive and detailed and, for example, allowed imprisoning "unruly" recipients. The clause granting authorities the right to strip those guilty of "reckless spending" of their financial competence (i. *fjárræði*) was most important regarding political citizenship.[55] As voting in both local and parliamentary elections was subject to being financially competent, the "unruly" "squanderers" were disenfranchised.

If we focus solely on the constitutional side of the story, the 1934 amendment seems to have abolished the last remnants of the nineteenth-century principle that political citizenship was reserved for economically independent males. In other words, it may appear to mark the formal acceptance of the poor as equal citizens. In fact, the boundaries had been redrawn to include only those who could not be held responsible for their poverty. Arguably, this was one of the principles on which the Icelandic welfare state was founded.

Democracy. Vol 6: In the Modern Age, eds. Eugenio F. Biagini and Gary Gerstle (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 81–106.

[55] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1935) A, 346.

It would take decades for the legislature to invite those deemed by society as "contemptibly leading a destitute life" to cast the ballot. In 1968, a constitutional amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 20 in parliamentary elections. An unblemished reputation remained a prerequisite, but instead of the financial competence requirement, it was now stated that no one could vote if they had been stripped of their legal majority (i. *lögræði*).[56] Since 1984, the constitution has permitted all individuals with Icelandic nationality and a permanent domicile in the country, aged 18 years and older, to vote in parliamentary elections. All conditions of competence, formal or informal, have been removed. The only reference to moral character is a clause stating unblemished reputation as a condition for being allowed to stand for election.[57]

At the time of the 1984 constitutional amendment, Icelandic newspapers featured the story of Þorgeir, a man who had spent nearly two decades fighting to reclaim his political citizenship. In an interview, he explained that in 1953, his voting rights had been revoked, and in 1967, he was declared legally incapacitated (i. *sviftur sjálfræði*) because of dipsomania (i. *ofnautn áfengis*) and mental disorder (i. *geðveiki*). Asserting that he was an alcoholic but not mentally ill, Þorgeir had fought for the annulation of the declaration of his incompetence. In 1985, he successfully regained his voting rights after providing a statement from a psychiatrist indicating that he suffered from *alcholismus chronicus* but not from mental illness. The ruling was based on the premise that according to the evidence presented to the court, Þorgeir was not a "burden on others," nor had he repeatedly "harmed the public interest."[58] To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the exclusion of "vagabonds" and the

[56] *Stjórnartíðindi* (1968), A, 25.

[57] The clause also restricts Court Judges from standing as candidates. For the constitution after the changes in 1984 see *Stjórnartíðindi* (1984) A, 112.

[58] For his story see Kristín Svava Tómasdóttir, *Farsótt. Hundrað ár í Þingholtsstræti* 25 (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2022), 286–287. For the court ruling and interview with Þorgeir see: Ingólfur Margeirsson, "Er nú öruggari í umhverfinu," *Helgarpósturinn,* March 13, 1986, 20–21. It is in order to mention that Tómasdóttir points out that Þorgeir had in 1965 been sentenced for an assault and sexual offence against a young girl and that this is not mentioned in the papers.

"destitute" until 1984, it is thus essential to not only examine practices and laws related to social relief but also look into criminal justice practices and the historical categorisation of individuals with addiction and mental illness.

CHAPTER 9

The Limits of Citizenship: Economic Barriers to Suffrage in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Canada

Joan Sangster

Marking the 100th anniversary of some women's suffrage victories in Canada in 2018, the government's promotional website lauded the 1920 Dominion Voting Act as a landmark victory for universal suffrage. However, race, Indigeneity, and economic status still limited voting rights. In the latter case, economic, class-based voting restrictions remained well into the mid-twentieth century in the form of property and taxpayer qualifications and as exclusions of those receiving state or public assistance, including the aged, sick, or poor, with these people sometimes grouped legally with "criminals and the insane." Voting prohibitions based on class and wealth were intertwined with changing gender-based, racial, and colonial structures of inequality. The longest voting exclusion, based on incarceration, resolved in 2002, had race and class implications since poor, working-class (and later racialised and Indigenous) peoples were a disproportionate element of the prison population.

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_9

The progress narrative of an ever-expanding democracy through peaceful means is an idealised version of voting rights that fits a liberal, optimistic narrative in which democracy is best achieved with superior Western ideas in Canada's British-influenced parliamentary system (See Table 9.1). Certainly, voting rights gradually expanded over two centuries, but this paper explores how entrenched and long-lasting economic and class-based exclusions were. While I focus on voting laws and their embeddedness in social and economic relations of power, we should not forget another "history from below": protests over economic restrictions and demands for a universal franchise were a recurring theme in suffrage history.

Identifying the ideological threads underpinning economic voting exclusions is a complex project since they involve multiple, intersecting power structures. However, we can start with two basic themes: the persistent emphasis on property and income-based qualifications and, second, "pauper" exclusions.[1] Finally, we should reference the longest barrier to voting, namely incarceration, which reflected race and class inequalities.

Property and a "Stake in the Community"

The emphasis on property and wealth as requirements of political citizenship was deeply embedded in British and European history and political economy. Even the Enlightenment-inspired, revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man in France venerated property holders as "active" citizens, while those who were servants or did not pay taxes were non-voting "passive" citizens.[2] British legal traditions, imported into the US and Canada, similarly saw property holding as a sine qua non of political participation since only these men had a long-lasting "stake in the community." According to foundational legal expert William Blackstone, persons without property had "no will of their own"; they could be easily manipulated and were deficient in the requisite liberty, freedom, and political independence required to vote. As political philosophers put

[1] I use this nineteenth century term, not to stigmatise the poor, but as a reminder that barring the poor *was* the legacy of nineteenth-century thinking.

[2] Kenan Malik, *Not So Black and White: A History of Race from White Supremacy to Identity Politics* (London: Hurst and Company, 2023), 100.

it, the propertyless lacked the "self-possession" necessary to act independently.[3] In a paternalistic vein, propertied men represented women, families, and those without property in their communities, though they might need to protect their wealth from the ignorant menace of the less affluent, poor, and propertyless.

Private property was also a bedrock of the settler colonial project of Indigenous dispossession in Canada, as it was in the Antipodes and the US: it was tied to the doctrine of terra nullius, the idea that superior, Christian, European settlers could claim "unoccupied" land since, following John Locke, property was only "held" once more "civilised" humans mixed their labour with it to develop agriculture, surplus, and profit. Indigenous peoples, portrayed by settlers as non-agricultural (though some were) and nomadic, thus did not own the land, and indeed, many Indigenous peoples had a more collective understanding of the land, its uses, and protection. Private property, notes Patrick Wolfe in his influential exposition on settlement and race, centred the "fundamental logics" of two colonial projects: slavery and dispossession, the latter necessitating the "elimination" of Indigenous peoples.[4] Brenna Bhandar similarly argues that the European ideology of land "improvement was grafted onto emerging ideas of racial difference": "primitive" Indigenous peoples lacked the qualities to be economic, rational, self-possessing, political sovereign subjects.[5]

Given the centrality of property to British legal traditions and colonial nation-building, initial discussions over male suffrage in Canada, both for the federal and provincial governments, centred on how *extensive* property requirements would be—not whether they should exist at all. At the time of Confederation in 1867—the first amalgamation of four British-Canadian colonies—all political parties assumed democracy for all was not conducive to peace and stability; universal suffrage was a dangerous idea that led to anarchy, "mob rule" and had perhaps prompted the civil war

[3] Brenna Bhandar quoting C.B. Macpherson in *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 163–64.

[4] Patrick Wolfe, "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race," *American Historical Review*, 106, No. 3 (June 2001), 905.

[5] Bhandar, *Colonial*, 46, 48.

in the US.[6] Competing political parties vied for control over the franchise (with its corollary sway over patronage) to manage the electorate and maintain their power in the majoritarian parliamentary system. All bourgeois parties, however, agreed on a franchise of property owners and affluent leasers; as newspaper publisher, politician (and anti-trade-unionist) George Brown stated, such limits on suffrage protected owners from the acquisitive demands of "ragged and penniless demagogues" with "glib tongues" and "illimitable impudence."[7]

The emphasis on wealth varied between Britain's Canadian colonies, (later provinces), due to different economic and social conditions and regional political cultures. In small Prince Edward Island, where there was little new property to be had, relaxations of property prerequisites came sooner; one could prove one's "stake in the community" through donated labour or money for road building.[8] Only a few years after the pacific-coast colony of British Columbia joined Canada in 1871, property qualifications were abandoned, a reflection of a racial and economic strategy of development. With a large Indigenous population, the government attempted to build a white majority population through the promise of cheap land and universal male settler political rights, a strategy similar to that of western US states where elites used relaxed property requirements to attract white settlers, enlarge land values, and generate a tax base.[9]

With the growth of urban centres by the later nineteenth century, both provincial and federal voting requirements recognised different measures of wealth, such as property leased or the amount of taxes paid: these were also signs of political independence and an economic stake in the community.[10] Reforms that widened the vote to more men were both a

[6] Colin Grittner, "A Statesmanlike Measure with a Partisan Tail: The Development of the Nineteenth Century Dominion Electoral Franchise," MA Thesis, Carleton University, 2009), 62.

[7] Grittner, "A Statesmanlike," 71.

[8] Colin Grittner, "Privilege at the Polls: Culture, Citizenship, and the Electoral Franchise in Mid-Nineteenth-Century British North America." PhD Diss, McGill, 2015.

[9] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the US* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 38; Stanley Engerman and Kenneth Sokoloff, "The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World," *Journal of Economic History*, 65,4 (Dec. 2005): 891–921.

[10] This included those "who owned real property of a minimum value, those who leased or occupied a property of a minimum value or paid an annual rent of a minimum

response to demands from below for a widened democracy and a tactic of political inclusion by elites who saw these measures as conducive to their interests. By the late nineteenth century, some politicians also put forward other rationales for the vote. John Stuart Mill was invoked to argue for liberty, equality, and fairness; the "natural rights of man" were referenced by some liberal politicians as early as the 1885 federal debate on voting reform, which also discussed enfranchising unmarried women and some Indigenous men.

Yet, property was critical to both debates. Only single, unmarried women (including widows) who were British subjects and fulfilled property requirements were proposed as voters: they were deemed economically self-sufficient and not under the protective umbrella of family patriarchy. Whether Prime Minister Macdonald was serious or not about proposing this female "spinster" vote (since some doubt he was), his proposal was easily defeated in parliament.[11]

Property also figured in the debate about Indigenous voters. Since the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the later (1869) Indian Act, Indigenous men could only vote if they gave up their official Indian status—similar to the US policy.[12] The 1885 proposed reforms allowed "Indians" in the eastern provinces to keep their status *and* vote, but *only if* they held individual property and made improvements of a certain value. The inclusion of the many Indigenous peoples residing in the newer Western provinces was not part of this voting reform proposal; politicians had acquiesced to settler pressures to create a predominantly "white" settler west). Moreover, the property requirements for Indigenous men were almost impossible to meet: "Indian" reserve property was held communally, so residents, paternalistically designated "wards" of the government through treaty payments, did not qualify. In keeping with the project of assimilation, "Indians" were urged to "forsake communal

value, those who owned personal property or a combination of personal and real property of a minimum combined value, and those who earned a minimum annual income." See Elections Canada, *A History of the Vote in Canada*, chap 2: https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=his/chap2&document=index&lang=e.

[11] On the 1885 debate, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Citizenship Debates: The 1885 Franchise Act," in Robert Adamonski, Dorothy Chunn, Robert Menzies, eds. *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 69–94.

[12] Daniel McCool, Susan Olson, Jennifer Robinson, *Native vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the right to vote* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

cultures for individual property holding," though even if they did so, it is unlikely they would have "escaped the racial hierarchy" pervading Canadian society.[13] Not until 1960 were Indigenous peoples included as federal voters, though many were added provincially in the late 1940s.[14]

If property-holding was the sole measure of a voter, racial exclusions would make no sense. Yet, race, class, and gender, defined who was an upstanding, "self-possessed" citizen. Well into the twentieth century, those of East or South Asian origin were denied the vote.[15] Though a few politicians pointed out in the 1885 debate that "the Chinese," if naturalised and had property, should have rights, the majority were quick to exclude these "non-progressive" foreigners with "no British instincts, feelings or aspirations."[16] As with Indigenous cultures, their sexual and familial morality was portrayed as inferior to an upstanding, white, British moral code. These racial voting exclusions remained in federal law until the 1920 Dominion Voting Act, even longer in British Columbia, where they were not rectified until 1947.

Though rationalised differently, social-economic relations played some role in these two racial exclusions: while Asian-Canadians were resented for their economic roles, Indigenous Canadians were designated economic "wards" receiving state funds and, therefore, not eligible for voting citizenship. Property, colonial, and racial exclusions revealed a shared understanding of state formation, animating the political elites who devised voting laws. The state should enfranchise, regulate, and legislate to protect the values they held dear: economic development, private property, British morality, white settlement, and the patriarchal family. Economic qualifications set clear class limits on political participation; gendered and racial power structures were interwoven with these restrictions, establishing who was worthy of political citizenship.

As in other industrialising capitalist economies, suffrage debates were intertwined with class and ethnic conflict. As Denis Pilon's comparison of

[13] Jarvis Brownlie, "A Persistent Antagonism: First Nations and the Liberal Order" in Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme, eds., *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 298–321.

[14] Joan Sangster, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of Women and the Vote in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 251–58.

[15] Unlike the US, though, African-Canadians were not officially excluded from the vote.

[16] Parliament of Canada, Hansard *Debates*, 4 May 1885, 1582.

Western democracies argues, struggles over voting reform were contests over the nature of democracy itself and "what it might do and for whom."[17] Class figured prominently in these struggles: in Canada, some of the strongest voices of opposition to property and wealth-based voting came from socialists, labour parties, and trade unionists. As early as the 1880s, the Knights of Labour, a fraternal and union organisation that supported the organisation of *all* workers, declared that denying women the vote was "just as stupid and unreasonable" as arbitrary distinctions made between men according to "race, creed, birth, or property."[18] Socialist suffragists especially called out the undemocratic nature of any wealth qualification. The working-class women's BC Suffrage League declared that property should not determine voting for men or women: "Let us learn to be a true democracy," they said, "and register the person, not the property."[19] By World War I, even the moderate, crafts-based Trades and Labour Congress supported universal suffrage, though some unions undoubtedly remained sympathetic to race-based exclusions.

The Contradictions of Gender and Property

Property qualifications were contradictory: they could be welcoming mats for women's inclusion in voting elites, but also the cause of their exclusion. As early as the 1830s and 1840s, some women voted in Quebec elections by virtue of their property holdings, though, by 1851, all the Canadian colonies closed legislative loopholes that had permitted property-holding women to vote. Across the country, fights for women's voting rights in local elections (both municipal and provincial) based on their property or tax-paying status took place from the 1870s through to the mid-twentieth century; all these struggles were complicated by different city charters and provincial voting rules.

Suffragist activism often began at the local level: there was no imperative to travel far to campaign, and women made a compelling "stake in the community" argument, claiming local government's responsibility for waste, welfare, public health, education, and social provision affected

[17] Dennis Pilon, *Wrestling with Democracy: Voting Systems as Politics in the 20th Century West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 11.

[18] Sangster, *One Hundred*, 56.

[19] Lara Campbell, *A Great Revolutionary Wave: Women and the Vote in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2020), 55.

families and necessitated women's input. Using such arguments, Montreal women reformers secured voting rights for unmarried women in the city, including property holders and those paying a certain level of rent, before World War I—though, paradoxically, *all* Quebec women lacked the provincial vote until 1940. Faced with an effort by the city government to remove some women from the voting rolls in 1910, suffragists formed a successful coalition with elite male reformers intent on replacing the corrupt local government. Middle-class women, argues one historian, drew working-class women into their campaign due to reformers' previous charitable efforts, such as free milk depots for working-class families.[20] However, this coalition was anchored in middle-class leadership, suggesting class remained important to many suffrage battles.

Economic requirements were also a point of contention in the women's suffrage movement, which included oppositional political streams, ranging from conservative to socialist. Using property as a measure for voter eligibility was originally welcomed by many nineteenth-century middle-class suffragists, even though it originally applied only to widows and unmarried females, a relatively small number of voters. However, reforms to give propertied widows and single women the municipal vote were claimed as an important foot in the door, a recognition that women were included with men in the democratic principle of "no taxation without representation."[21] This same claim was made for women's inclusion in local School Board elections, though feminists also argued that women's intimate experience with children and the family necessitated the inclusion of their important perspective. Property qualifications were originally criticised by more radical feminists committed to fulsome gender equality, though they might alter their position. Toronto feminist Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen began her career by opposing property qualifications as discriminatory; she joked that it might lead to women murdering their husbands to get on the voting rolls. As the suffrage movement was increasingly dominated by more moderate, if not

[20] Elizabeth Kirkland, "Citizens of the City: Women and Montréal's Municipal Election of 1910," *Histoire sociale / Social History*, 54/ 110 (May 2021): 43–67. In other cities, women suffragists found maintaining their local voting rights on ongoing tussle. See Campbell, *A Great*, 48–49.

[21] "Why Canadian Women Should Vote," *The Champion*, Jan. 1914, 8.

conservative, reformers, she followed their lead and supported property qualifications.[22]

Race, as well as class, shaped suffragists' views on property and wealth-based voting rights. Some white suffragists supported exclusions based on race, no matter any property holding; this was especially so in British Columbia, where anti-Asian sentiment was strong. In the Western prairie provinces, a site of massive European immigration from the 1890s to 1914, suffragists garnered political support due to two controversial property issues: dower and homestead laws. Unlike other areas of the country, there were no dower laws ensuring wives a share of their deceased husband's estate, nor did they have any legal say over the financial fate of the farm when their husband was alive. Women were incensed that this patriarchal legal regime discounted their labour and rendered them economically dependent. Second, unlike women in the US, women in Canada could not secure government grants of free homesteading land as white men could.[23]

These two property issues cannot be separated from colonialism and racism. First, free homesteads were the product of Indigenous dispossession: white women were arguing for a benefit that disadvantaged both "Indian" and Metis women. Second, the campaign for women's homesteading rights was justified initially with the rationale that "good" white, British women could not secure land, whereas inferior, illiterate, central and southern European immigrant men could. This argument was not universal: it was challenged as inflammatory and ethnocentric by the Winnipeg *Voice*, a labour paper.[24]

While the homestead campaign shifted its rhetoric away from ethnicity, similar rationales for contingent voting rights were sustained by some white, middle-class suffragists. As in the US, literacy tests were suggested, essentially a method of stymying immigrant, working-class votes. Labour and socialist men and women opposed literacy tests, but sometimes to no avail. In early twentieth-century Manitoba, voters had to be able to read the Manitoba Elections Act in English, French, German, Icelandic,

[22] Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877–1914," in L. Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s to 1920s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 23.

[23] Sarah Carter, *Ours By Every Law of Right and Justice: Women and the Vote in the Prairie Provinces* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 24–28.

[24] Carter, *Ours*, 28.

or a Scandinavian language, a ploy to exclude "less advanced" immigrants like Ukrainians and Poles.[25] During the First World War, some suffragists similarly supported the restrictive voting rules in the Wartime Elections Act, legislation introduced by the reigning federal Conservative party as a means to keep themselves, a pro-conscription party, in power. This act *disenfranchised* many immigrant citizens and enfranchised only women with relatives serving in the armed forces. While feminist opinion was divided, some decreed that the vote should only be given to people of "intelligent patriotism," who understood the need to defend the British empire.[26] Even after most women received the federal vote in 1918, calls for literacy tests lingered: the "vote" is not a "right" but "an achievement" with "a price….[namely] the ability to intelligently exercise it," wrote one such suffragist.[27] Worthy voters were women and men with true roots in the community and had the intelligence and independence to make political decisions; unworthy ones were often identified as "herds of aliens," and those defined by their class/poverty, race, ethnicity, and immorality.

Suffragists' support for property qualifications also had unintended consequences. Women made suffrage gains in the nineteenth century at the local level due to their property holding, but married women were later *denied* local voting rights because they were wives of property holders, not property holders themselves—a prohibition that lasted in some cities until the 1940s and 1950s. Since property taxes, and to a lesser extent tenancy or "poll" taxes, were the key means of raising municipal funds, they were still used to define the electorate. It was not just women, of course, but non-property holders in general—the poor and working classes—who lacked the local vote. The arguments used to justify these exclusions were sometimes remarkably similar to nineteenth-century ones about voters requiring an economic and social "stake in the community." These strictures differentially hurt women, who earned less and, if married, were less likely to have property in their name, not the least because married women could not secure their own credit or loans.

[25] Ibid, 62.

[26] "The Franchise – What it means," *Women's Century*, 13 Dec. 1917. This was a notorious gerrymander, redesigning voting rules to keep one party in power: Sangster, *One Hundred*, 194–96.

[27] "Is a Restricted Franchise a Restricted Freedom?" *Woman's Century*, June 1919, 7.

Women's paid, and especially unpaid labour building a family home went unrecognised.

In Vancouver in the 1930s, for instance, women with no property and *all* tenants in lodgings valued at less than $300 could not vote. Thus, married women who did not own the family home and many working-class boarders were rendered voteless, along with all Chinese city dwellers. Former suffragist, trade unionist, and now social democratic city alderman Helena Gutteridge tried to persuade the City Council to rectify these inequities. Gutteridge introduced a motion in 1937 for a universal civic franchise covering everyone with 12 months of residency in the city. Councillors were horrified and uniformly opposed, just as they rejected Gutteridge's efforts to have property requirements removed from eligibility to run for city council. Even the middle-class Local Council of Women objected, claiming that "young people with no property sense would vote for people whose tastes might not be in the best interest of the community."[28]

The exclusion of wives and children of property owners from municipal voting was an issue in other cities, too, though feminist and class-based movements gradually challenged these exclusions. In 1940, the left-wing Winnipeg Youth Council presented a petition of 3,700 names to the City Council, calling for a democratic franchise: surely those citizens marching off to war, they argued, deserved the vote at home. Two years later, new provincial laws democratised local voting.[29] By the late 1940s, many cities had voting provisions for spouses of taxpayers, but some were stubbornly resistant. A brief prepared in 1949 by the Halifax Business and Professional Women's Club (BPWC), representing white-collar and professional women, showed a range of local voting rights across the country; some cities included spouses of eligible taxpayers, though with the proviso that only "ratepayers could vote on money matters." Only a few city charters enfranchised all residents who had been in the city for 12 months—exactly what Gutteridge campaigned for.

[28] City of Vancouver Archives, Matthews Collection, file: Helena Gutteridge. Clippings from Vancouver papers, 14 Sept. 1937. See also Irene Howard, *The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge the Unknown Reformer* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 193.

[29] Aidan Geary, "The right to vote — for some: How Manitobans fought in 1940 to make civic elections 'slightly more democratic'" CBC News: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-voting-petition-election-1942-1.4871157. Accessed June 7, 2024.

The Halifax BPWC declared the "modern trend" was expanded local voting rights, with their own city decidedly behind the times. It lobbied Halifax City Council to change its city charter to allow spouses of taxpayers to vote, sending the Mayor their brief and a letter in 1950, arguing that "husband and wife are partners in their homes" and "both had contributions"[30] to make to the community. Their argument about the shared labour of home building did not sway the Council. Though some elected officials were in favour, others, including the influential City Solicitor, found a multitude of excuses to resist these changes. They claimed women who "co-owned" homes could vote under the existing law and, in any case, brushed off the complaint as an issue only for a "small group."[31] Despite the BPWC's mobilisation of allies, bureaucratic delaying and opposition stymied their efforts. In 1963, "wives" and all other city residents could finally vote.[32]

This campaign also revealed the persisting class biases of women campaigning for suffrage rights. The BPWC played the "British" identity card, reminding civic leaders that they had exhibited "loyalty" in war and peace, and they reassured councillors of their respectable credentials: they were not asking for anything for "women as a class" (i.e., as feminists), but for rights for *all* spouses. Moreover, they did not support universal suffrage for all residents. The principle of only representation *with* taxation thus persisted. One alderman whom the BPWC criticised for opposing their campaign corrected their misconception: he was in favour of *all* spouses of *all* ratepayers voting, whereas their proposal was limited to spouses of property holders, favouring "the more well-to-do."[33] Suffrage for all residents, however, was soundly rejected by the Council as supposedly too "costly and cumbersome."[34]

[30] Ibid.

[31] City of Halifax Archives (CHA), City Council minutes, 31 Jan. 1951.

[32] Nova Scotia Archives (NSA), Halifax Business and Professional Women's Club fonds, MG 20, vol. 711, file 5, Minutes May 1949, Feb. 1949, May 1950, April 1951.

[33] Ibid, Alderman L.A. Kitz, LLB to Grace Wambolt, 25 March 1950.

[34] CHA, Council minutes, 31 Jan. 1951.

"Paupers": Barred from Voting

By the 1920s, voting was increasingly described as a right rather than a privilege, yet it was still a right earned through some measure of economic self-sufficiency.[35] People reliant on state poor relief or public charity were routinely barred from voting at all three levels of government. The exclusion of "paupers" receiving state or charitable aid, like the emphasis on property, had deep roots in British history, politics, and law. Like the US, Canadian colonies drew on long traditions associated with the English Poor Law. The 1834 English Poor Law Amendment Act emphasised the principle of "less eligibility"[36]: the living conditions of those receiving "indoor relief" in the workhouse had to be less attractive than the worst conditions and wages experienced outside the workhouse. Relief had to be a deterrent, economically and ideologically, to prevent "able-bodied" shirkers from using it; it was a form of "work incentive" in the capitalist labour market, forcing workers to accept low wages as the alternative was even worse.[37]

The 1867 British North America Act, which first established a Canadian government, assigned welfare and health to the provinces; in turn, provincial governments enabled local governments and charitable groups to establish institutions for the sick, aged, needy, and destitute, often called Houses of Industry, Houses of Refuge, or Provincial Homes. Some provided indoor relief within institutions; others offered both indoor and outdoor relief. In BC, the aged, infirm, and the poor were cared for in Provincial Homes, while in New Brunswick, Poor Houses were complimented by a "contracting out" system: citizens were paid to take in paupers who worked in their households for free, a practice that lasted until the 1920s. Only New Brunswick had the ignominy of holding pauper "auctions" with the indigent (and their labour) offered to the

[35] Even with an expanded franchise, the numbers who voted remained small: federally, it was 20% of the population in 1917, and still only 41% by 1941. Engerman and Sokoloff, "The Evolution," 910–11.

[36] James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920–70* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 13; Alvin Finkel, *Compassion: A Global History of Social Policy* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019) chap 3.

[37] Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York, 1971); Bryan Palmer, "The *New* New Poor Law: A Chapter in the Current Class War Waged from Above," *Labour/Le Travail* 684 (Fall 2019): 53–105.

highest bidder.[38] Opposition to these auctions emerged as early as the 1880s, but their eventual abolition may have had more to do with officials opting for less expensive ways to care for the destitute.[39]

Paupers were often presumed to be transient, non-residents, "outsiders" who were not contributing, respectable community residents.[40] Pauperism, a category that might include the unemployed, poor, aged, sick, or recent residents of carceral institutions, carried the shame of a person's failure to *be* self-sufficient. Because these people were economically and legally dependent, they had no right to a say in state policy: if you pay no taxes, no representation is merited. Indeed, the poor were not just those lacking independence; they might also be drains on the tax-paying, a claim repeated in the early twentieth century by influential eugenicists who linked the "feeble-minded" (also barred from voting) to pauperism and crime.[41]

Pauper exclusions were a form of "social disciplining,"[42] reminding the poor that they were not deserving, full members of the community. That poverty was a moral failing as much as an economic one was indicated in the legislation to establish Houses of Industry in Ontario; relief was for those "unable to support themselves" but also "lewd, dissolute vagrants," those "loitering in Public Houses," those not doing enough "to procure an honest living."[43] While law and policy later focused more on the "destitute," moral appropriation remained an integral part of welfare provision long into the twentieth century. Political elites also invoked a colonial "frontier" argument that the hard-working could always find work in

[38] Allicor's blog: https://allicor42.typepad.com/blog/2012/06/the-paupers-of-new-brunswick.html, accessed June 7, 2024. See also Jordan Gill, "'Farming out the poor': How auctions sold New Brunswickers into twentieth century," CBC News, January 13, 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/paupers-auctions-roadside-history-1.7081915, accessed June 7, 2024.

[39] Ibid.

[40] In the US, pauper restrictions were instituted alongside nineteenth century anti-tramp laws.

[41] "Feeble-minded" was used to denote mentally challenged and sometimes mentally ill. Both were barred from voting: until 1993, the federal Canada Elections Act excluded from voting "every person who is restrained of his liberty of movement or deprived of the management of his property by reason of mental disease."

[42] Keyssar, *The Right*.

[43] Richard Splane, *Social Welfare in Ontario, 1791–1893* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 71.

a new country; those seeking relief were likely "lazy and thriftless."[44] Pauper voting prohibitions imparted a powerful ideological message, reinforcing the efficacy of "less eligibility," furthering the Protestant work ethic and justifying a capitalist ideology of individual advancement as an attainable, *realisable* possibility for all.

Pauper exclusions were integrated into the federal and provincial voting laws in the later nineteenth century and remained frozen there for decades. Depending on the city or province, people might be barred from voting if they collected state or charitable aid, either weeks, months, or even years before the election in question. Indeed, pauper exclusions became *more explicit* over time; as property and tax-paying requirements that had barred working-class voters were relaxed, paupers were overtly named as ineligible. Economic independence was being redefined, but in ways that still shut out those who lacked "self-ownership": white, male, and especially class privilege simply modernised their forms. In the US, too, the relaxation of property barriers resulted in a tightening of restrictions barring "undesirable" electors, including the poor, immigrants, women, and Blacks.[45]

After 1898, federal voting laws barred those collecting "public charitable support" or receiving care in "municipal poor houses or houses of industry," along with "prisoners" and the "insane." In 1929, those receiving state aid were no longer disqualified.[46] However, provincial exclusions remained much longer, undoubtedly because the delivery of social assistance was provincial and local.[47] Some of the most tenacious disqualification clauses were articulated in the province of Nova Scotia. In 1854, before other provinces named pauper prohibitions, the Nova Scotia Elective Franchise Act innovated by "disabling" "paupers and Indians"

[44] Ibid, 113.

[45] Engerman and Sokoloff, 903.

[46] Canada, RSO, Dominion Elections Act 1920, chap 26, sec 30 (f). Veterans were not subject to the disqualification. The introduction of a limited form of old age pension in 1927 may have spurred the deletion. In parliamentary debates, there was no discussion of this change though discussion might have happened an unrecorded committee meeting: see Canada, Hansard *Debates*, May 29–30, 1929.

[47] For this reason, I am going to concentrate on the laws of three provinces: BC, Ontario, and Nova Scotia.

from voting.[48] Even as the language was modified, the principle persisted. In 1923, a revised elections act clarified the pauper prohibition with a broad definition of the excluded: anyone who received "public, charitable support or care" in any city, town, or municipal "poor house" or received any aid as a "pauper under *any* Nova Scotia law" was disqualified.[49]

The widespread unemployment of the Depression resulted in some questioning of pauper disqualifications in Canada, as it did in the US.[50] In 1931, federal legislation facilitated the transfer of funds to be used by provincial and local governments for "make work" and other relief projects. Nova Scotia agreed to some "protections"[51] for these workers, and in subsequent revisions of provincial voting rules in 1945 and 1954, those who had accepted "unemployment" relief or were in Depression-created "unemployment relief camps" were no longer disqualified from voting. However, those who collected "any public charitable support or care in any city, town or municipal poor house" and "any aid as a pauper under any law of the province" in the two years before an election were *still* disqualified. The "truly" unemployed due to a crisis (largely defined as a male group) were now distinguished from paupers—a distinction which echoed nineteenth-century poor laws. The 1967 Nova Scotia revised election laws finally revealed the end to pauper prohibitions.

The impact of the Depression was also suggested in the timing of BC's abandonment of its pauper restrictions in 1939. First introduced in the 1893 Provincial Home Act, these restrictions forbade any "inmate…in a Provincial Home," which took in the aged, sick, and poor, from voting.[52] This disqualification rule was later transferred to the Provincial Election Act of 1924 and left largely unchanged in a 1936 revision, but it was excised in 1939, just after the Second World War started.

[48] Statutes of Nova Scotia (SNS), 1854, An Act concerning the Elective Franchise, chap. 6. The grouping of Indians and paupers has an overlapping rationale: both were considered reliant on state aid.

[49] SNS, "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Acts in Respect to the Electoral Franchise," chap. 49, 1920; SNS, Electoral Franchise Act, chap. 3, 1923.

[50] Cal Lewis, "The Pauper Vote," *The North American Review*, 246/1 (Autumn 1938): 87–95.

[51] SNS, "An Act to enable advantage to be taken of the Act of the Parliament of Canada" entitled "The Unemployment and Farm Relief Act 1931," 1932, Chap 7.

[52] The first Provincial Home was set up to care for aged, single (and poor) male resource workers with no family. Megan Davies *Into the House of Old: A History of Residential Care in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2004).

The Depression may have resulted in questions about the punitive view of the unemployed and poor, but the xenophobia and ultra-patriotism of wartime prompted the legal clarification of other disqualifications: the 1939 BC election act banned "deserters," "conscientious objectors" (some of whom like Russian immigrant, pacifist Doukhobors were already barred from voting), and those convicted of "treason." Canadians of Asian descent were still disqualified. Newspaper reporting indicated that all political parties agreed on the final version of the new voting act, with no mention of the change to pauper exclusions.[53] Nor is there discussion of these clauses in histories of British Columbia politics, though the social democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)'s opposition to Asian exclusions is noted.[54]

Depression-inspired questioning of the pauper category was a small crack in negative views of the poor. Until the later 1940s, welfare and unemployment policy were still influenced by "less eligibility." During the Depression, those receiving welfare were often reminded by state officials that it was not a right and only for the deserving, who (if they were men) should agree to perform work at any wage in return. Social welfare expert Charlotte Whitton, who extolled the equality of professional women like herself, promoted these ideas in her 1932 report on relief for Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. Whitton's ideal society was centred on the Anglo-Canadian nuclear family, "headed by a self-reliant, enterprising, male breadwinner" who would rely on their own "thrift, inventiveness, and ambition" rather than welfare. She, too, invoked the frontier thesis that Canada was a land of opportunity and should never admit immigrants with a questionable work ethic or morality: these "welfare shirkers" were invariably lower-class and non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.[55] Class, in other words, remained key to some middle-class feminists' understanding of contingent political and social rights.

[53] "To Consider Act," *The Daily Colonist*, 28 Oct. 1939, 6; "BC Election Law is Changed in Coast and Other Urban Areas," *The Daily Colonist*, 29 Nov. 1939, 3. To be fair, as a minority party, the CCF did not have the votes to change anti-Asian voting rules.

[54] For example, Robert McDonald, *A Long Way to Paradise: A New History of British Columbia Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021); Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

[55] Catherine Ulmer, The Report on Unemployment and Relief in Western Canada, 1932: Charlotte Whitton, R.B. Bennett and the Federal Response to Relief, MA Thesis, U of Victoria, 2009, 55.

Post-World War II Change: The Influence of Welfare State Ideas

A preference for limited state intervention in the family economy and the moral policing of welfare recipients did not disappear after the Second World War; many forms of social assistance were means-tested and self-help was still a mantra offered to those receiving state aid. However, another cadre of social welfare experts had promoted a more rights-based view of social programmes for some time. Their voices became stronger after World War II. The Depression experience and the promises of a war for "democracy" helped to shift social attitudes. Widespread resistance on the part of the poor and working-class to cruel relief policies in the 1930s was important; movements of labour, the left and the dispossessed played a role in making punitive views of the so-called undeserving poor less politically viable. The expanded influence of a social-democratic political party (the CCF) and the rapid growth in the 1940s of industrial unions committed to a welfare state also contributed to more progressive ideas. As European examples in this volume indicate, mass parties with social democratic or socialist leanings played a significant role in questioning welfare-based voting exclusions.[56]

Disqualification of the aged, poor, and indigent became less tenable by the 1950s. In Ontario, pauper disqualification had been added to provincial election law in 1887 and was simply repeated in the 1927, 1937, and 1951 revisions of the act.[57] Ontario lumped the destitute in the same disqualifying clause with "prisoners in institutions undergoing punishment for a criminal offence" and "patients in mental hospitals," but it did not disqualify anyone seeking relief under *any* law, as in Nova Scotia, but rather those resident in state-supported "houses of industry" and "houses of refuge." Shortly before the 1951 election, Harry Walters, a CCF member of the Legislature, discovered that 700 people in a local old age home could not vote. He exposed this injustice, publicising his letter of protest to the Chief Electoral Office in the newspapers.[58]

[56] See also Pilon, *Wrestling*.

[57] Before 1867, the pauper exclusion was not stated. It was in Revised Statutes of Ontario (RSO), Elections Act 1887, chap. 8, Sect. 7; RSO Elections Act 1927, Sec. 16 (2), clause 17; RSO, Elections Act 1937, Chap. 8, clause 17; RSO Elections Act 1951, Chap. 112, clause 17.

[58] "Election Officer Can't Give Vote to 700 Aged," *Globe and Mail*, 19 Oct, 1951, 5.

All political parties agreed that the clause relating to houses of refuge should be removed, though this had to wait until the 1954 revision of the Ontario Election Act. The prevailing social mood was more supportive of an interventionist welfare state: even the ruling Conservative Ontario government committed itself to modernising Houses of Refuge, which a government Inspector declared in 1947 treated aged "inmates" so cruelly and punitively that it reminded him of Dickens' poorhouses.[59] Houses of Refuge included a range of destitute people, but much of the concern about voting exclusion focused on old people, considered the more "honourable" poor. This was especially true of veterans. Newspaper commentary pointed out that some contributed their pension cheques to their upkeep (a sign of economic self-sufficiency) but also concluded it should be no "crime" to be old and poor.[60] Legislators congratulated themselves for removing the clause in 1954, but no one asked how this could persist for so long.[61] A letter to the editor on this issue, however, revealed a related problem. A "roomer" in a boarding house pointed out he was not enumerated and thus was kept off voting lists. Residency requirements kept many poor people who had no permanent residence or moved frequently from voting. Not until 1998 was this rectified with legislation providing for alternative addresses for the homeless.[62]

Challenging "Civic Death": Prisoners and Voting Rights

If asked in the 1980s, many historians would have described the country as one in which "universal suffrage" had triumphed. Yet, the disenfranchisement of those serving in any penal institution belied the word

[59] Norma Rudy, *For Such a Time as This: Earl Ludlow and a History of Homes for the Aged in Ontario 1837–1961* (Toronto: Ontario Association of Homes for the Aged, 1987).

[60] "Prisoners of Poverty," *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 Oct. 1951.

[61] Ontario Legislature, *Hansard*, 5 April, 1954, 1190.

[62] "Name Left Off List," *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 Oct. 1951, 6; The Charter, discussed below, led to revisions in the federal Elections Act, 2000, to rectify the address problem, but voting of the homeless remains difficult. See Ann Kopec, The Forgotten in Democracy: Homelessness and Voting in Toronto, MA Thesis, Guelph, 2017 and on the US: Daniel Weeks, "Why Are the Poor and Minorities Less Likely to Vote? *The Atlantic*, 10 Jan. 2014.

universal. Two forces came together after 1982 to challenge the last voting exclusion: a prisoners' rights movement and the repatriation of the Canadian constitution, including a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which included Sect. 3, the "right to vote." While legal scholars have described the court cases associated with prisoner voting in detail, it is worth pointing, briefly, to the way in which prisoner disenfranchisement recalled arguments grounded in the history of more exclusive, race- and class-based voting.

A prisoners' rights movement inside and outside prisons, emerging in the 1960s, encompassing anti-colonial, anti-racist, and left-wing critiques of the law and incarceration, changed the political conversation about prisoner voting. The concept of "civic death" (introduced under Edward III), which removed *all* prisoners' civil rights during and after prison (even the right to live), was supposedly abolished in 1892, yet prison law reformers pointed out that vestiges of this concept persisted. Their efforts focused on challenging the arbitrary authoritarianism within prisons and on securing more basic rights such as the vote.[63]

Court challenges to prisoner exclusion in the Canada Election Act started in the 1980s, and after numerous cases, the Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that absolute exclusion contravened Sect. 3 and was not justified adequately by the "reasonable limits" on rights allowed in Sect. 1 of the Charter. The federal parliament responded with a revised Election Act, disenfranchising only those in federal prison serving more than two years for "indictable offences." A final Supreme Court case in 2002 heard arguments on the remaining exclusion; in a narrow vote, 5 to 4, it ruled that all prisoners had the right to vote. The majority and minority commentaries reflected different views of criminality, voting rights, and democracy. Both agreed that exclusion contravened Sect. 3 and that the government had to show a valid objective and the "proportionate" benefit of excluding prisoners. Both sides referenced the history of suffrage exclusions, quoted from John Stuart Mill to support their position, and claimed to be on guard for Canadian democracy, offering a pathway to enhance respect for the law and civic responsibility.[64]

[63] John Conroy, *An Introduction to Canadian Prison Law* (Canadian Prison Law Association): https://canadianprisonlaw.ca/Introduction-to-Prison-Law, accessed June 7, 2024.

[64] For the 2002 decision: *Sauvé v Canada* (Chief Electoral Officer), [2002] 3 SCR 519. For just a few (of many) articles discussing it, see Richard Haigh, "Between Here and

Yet their views of the curtailment of voting rights were diametrically different. What is particularly interesting is the discourse of *morality* behind the arguments for exclusion. The government claimed its legislation allowing some exclusions for serious, indictable crimes would "educate" both prisoners and society, reaffirming society's basic moral values. To allow offenders to vote would "demean" democracy and civic responsibility, allowing people to "disrespect" the community with no consequence. The minority Supreme Court opinion agreed, stressing that Election Act exclusions could be motivated by "philosophical and social" goals without clear "scientific proof."[65] Since the criminal code was essentially *about* moral judgements, they contended criminals were rational individuals whose choices had a consequence: temporary isolation from the body politic.

Older ideas of the benefits of incarceration (deterrence, punishment, rehabilitation) were evident in the minority view, even though radical criminologists had long argued that prison had not generally proven itself to be a good form of deterrence or rehabilitation, just plain punishment. Moreover, does the minority opinion not echo earlier suffrage exclusions, which operated as a form of "social disciplining," using the same rhetoric of necessary exclusion from the political community based on an educative function of the vote?

The fact that the case for exclusion was seen as a fundamentally moral issue involving those legitimately "inside" citizenship and those temporarily ostracised was also apparent in the media and public response. While some newspapers, even conservative ones, were quietly respectful of the decision, a right-wing backlash lambasted the majority for *abandoning morality* and the legitimate need to strip citizens of some rights, often sensationalising that the Court was allowing "murderers" to vote.[66]

There is Better Than Anything Over There: The Morass of *Sauvé V. Canada* (Chief Electoral Officer)," *Supreme Court Law Review* 20 (2003); Christopher J. Wydrzynski, "*Sauvé v. Canada*: The Right Thing to do for Wrongdoers?" *Canadian Bar Review*, 83,1 (2004): https://cbr.cba.org/index.php/cbr/article/view/3995; David Brown," Sauve and Prisoners' Voting Rights: The Death of the Good Citizen? *Supreme Court Law Review* 297, 2003, CanIIDocs 469: http://canlii.ca/t/t2nm > .

[65] *Sauvé v. Canada*, 543, 558.

[66] Peter MacKay, "Comment," *The Hill Times*, Issue 664, 25 Nov. 2002; "Prisoners Voting Disgusts Some MPs," *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 2, 2002, A5; "Court Oversteps Limits: Giving Inmates the Right to Vote Debases Democracy," *Calgary Herald*, Nov. 1, 2002, A12.

The majority opinion, a masterful comment on the importance of protecting key democratic rights, accused the minority of offering moral judgements that made "citizen law breakers temporary outcasts" from a system of rights and democracy, pushing them *out of* community membership and preventing, not enhancing their respect for democracy. Written by Chief Justice Beverly McLaughlin, the majority situated their decision within a history of "progressive enfranchisement": "The universal franchise has become…an essential part of democracy. From the notion that only a few meritorious people could vote (expressed in terms like class, property and gender), there gradually evolved the modern precept that all citizens are entitled to vote as members of a self-governing citizenry." "Virtue, mental ability," and "other distinguishing features" should not infringe on these rights unless the government can make a compelling argument, with evidence, to show the proportionate benefit of limiting them. McLaughlin argued that this benefit was not proven; thus, excluding prisoners "runs counter to our constitutional commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every individual."[67] McLaughlin did not even bother to compare Canadian law to international practices (as did the minority), including American laws which disenfranchise present and former convicts, sometimes for life, a practice linked to segregationist, "Jim Crow" laws and the suppression of Black voters.[68]

The controversy about prisoner voting was connected to earlier debates about economic voting exclusion by emphasising morality and one's full integration into, or ostracism from, a "respectable" community. The Supreme Court minority saw some behaviour still requiring the removal of rights; the majority did not. Quoting from Justice Arbour in the 1993 case, the majority stressed no "actual or symbolic" exclusion based on a voter being "decent and responsible" should exist, noting that such restrictions were in the past linked to property ownership and gender. Property qualifications are mentioned by both sides as a form of past discrimination, but the word "class" is used less often. Were property exclusions, however, not also class ones?

The majority decision, however, won narrowly and was contentious; it was adamantly denounced by conservatives who vowed to modify or

[67] *Sauvé v. Canada*, 544, 545.

[68] Whatever the similarities in suffrage histories of the US and Canada, this decision was a decisive shift. See Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen, *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

overturn it (they have not yet). It also revealed the difficulty of addressing more "informal," non-legal voting exclusions. Aboriginal "intervenors" in the case argued any exclusion of prisoners discriminated against Indigenous peoples, who are overrepresented in prisons, a view the minority rejected as these prisoners were supposedly there due to their "actions," not because they were Indigenous. The majority was more sympathetic to the Indigenous argument, which might now be taken even more seriously, given rising rates of Indigenous incarceration.

Concluding Comments

The progress narrative offered by the Supreme Court majority was right in one sense. Suffrage has widened over time. However, understanding the rationales for and longevity of exclusions based on class, gender, and race is not only an important corrective to a self-congratulatory history but it also highlights the resilient power relations, both material and ideological, which characterised a profoundly unequal society.

Property ownership and wealth—the latter measured through leases, taxes, and rent paid—were the most visible means of creating an electorate based on social and economic stability. While these limitations were intensely debated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they did not evaporate after so-called federal "universal" suffrage in 1918. At the local level, they continued to define who could vote until the mid-twentieth century. Perhaps the least debated economic limitations were those imposed on the poor, either through their reliance on public aid or their institutionalisation in state institutions. That these strictures were taken for granted in some provinces until after World War II, suggests how ideologically entrenched punitive "Poor Law" assumptions were in Canadian society—assumptions some argue are being resurrected in neoliberal forms.[69]

Gender, race, and Indigeneity were entangled in complex ways with economic limitations on suffrage, sometimes ideologically reinforcing them but also providing points of contradiction. Barriers to voting based on race and "Indian status" lasted long into the twentieth century, indicating that the dominant ideas of a "good" citizen, and indeed of the nation itself, were shaped by a colonial vision of a white, British, northern

[69] Palmer, "The *New*, New Poor Law.".

European Canada. Gender was contradictory: single women with property might find themselves welcomed into the local electorate in the nineteenth century, but by the mid-twentieth century, married women, as well as the less affluent without property or means, were shut out of local voting. Feminist views on suffrage were also ideologically diverse, even as they shifted over time; some claimed their own equality but denied it to others based on class and race, while women influenced by socialist and radical liberal ideas were more likely, especially after World War I, to embrace a more universal electorate.

While this essay has concentrated on legal barriers and change, it is important to acknowledge there are other stories to be told. Democratic ideas and enlarged voting were not simply offered as gifts from the ruling class; they were also fought for by those shut out of political decisions. Second, legislated exclusions were also the most visible examples of an economic democratic deficit. Other structural and ideological forces erected barriers to voting: systemic discrimination, the ruling power of money in politics, and forms of ideological marginalisation that denigrated the worth of some political voices as opposed to others. Working-class non-participation in elections was also a product of the understandable perception that the system was already stacked against them. Discrimination might emerge with the unanticipated consequences of voting rule changes.[70] Voter participation is currently low, with youth and low-income people more likely to be non-voters. These exclusions are not easily addressed in a legal framework and are still signs that democracy is always an ongoing, unfinished project.

[70] For example, 1990s research showed changes from enumeration of voters to permanent voting lists disadvantaged the poor and youth. Jerome Black, "From Enumeration to the National Register of Electors: an Account and an Evaluation," in *Strengthening Canadian Democracy*, eds Paul Howe, Richard Johnson and André Blais (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy 2005), 161–228.

CHAPTER 10

The Poor and Deservingness for Political and Social Citizenship: "Universal suffrage" in Finland Since 1906

Minna Harjula

Introduction

The implementation of universal suffrage in Finland was early, sudden, and radical compared to many countries where voting rights were gradually extended. Men and women were granted the right to vote in national elections in 1906. The previous corporate representational system, which consisted of nobility, clergy, burghers, and freeholding peasants, was accessible to less than 10% of the population at the turn of the century.

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_10

This system was replaced by a unicameral parliament and "one vote for all."[1]

The sudden change in voting rights occurred through a revolutionary strike movement that spread within the Russian Empire in 1905. This movement combined nationalist, political, and social agendas in Finland. Finland, with a population of three million, was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire from 1809 (and would remain so until 1917). Prior to 1809, it had been under Swedish rule. Despite the Russian Emperor accepting laws, Finland functioned as a "semi-state" with its own legislation, currency, fundamental institutions, and civil society, where political organisation and voluntary associations had been increasing.[2]

Most Finnish citizens got the right to vote and stand for parliament in 1906, but this newfound universal suffrage was not fully inclusive. Approximately 10–15% of individuals over the voting age of twenty-four were not allowed to vote.[3] Nine criteria limited suffrage in national elections. Most of these criteria were consistently followed when universal suffrage was eventually introduced in local elections after Finland gained independence in 1917 (Table 10.1). The delayed process of democratising the oligarchical income-based local government played a significant role in eroding social trust, ultimately leading to the civil war in 1918.[4] Table 10.1 shows how the exclusion criteria in national and local elections were mostly abandoned by the 1970s.

[1] Pirkko Koskinen, "Äänioikeuden lainsäädäntöhistoriaa," in *Yksi kamari – kaksi sukupuolta. Suomen eduskunnan ensimmäiset naiset*, eds. Pirjo Markkola and Alexandra Ramsay (Helsinki: Eduskunnan kirjasto, 1997), 26–41; Irma Sulkunen, "Suffrage, Nation and Political Mobilisation: The Finnish Case in an International Context," in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, eds. Pirjo Markkola, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Irma Sulkunen (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 83–105.

[2] Pertti Haapala, "The Expected and Non-Expected Roots of Chaos: Preconditions of the Finnish Civil War," in *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy*, eds. Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–35; Sulkunen, "Suffrage, nation," 84–7, 93–7; Risto Alapuro, "The Construction of the Voter in Finland, c. 1860–1907," *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History* 10 (2006): 41–54; Juhani Mylly, *Edustuksellisen kansanvallan läpimurto*. Suomen eduskunta 100 vuotta. (Helsinki: Edita, 2006).

[3] Lauri Tarasti, *Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö* (Vantaa: Kunnallispaino, 1987), 57.

[4] Haapala, "Expected and Non-expected," 21–50; Pertti Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995); Alapuro,"Construction of the Voter," 48–9.

Table 10.1 Suffrage requirements and grounds for disenfranchisement in Finland after the introduction of "universal suffrage" in national elections (1906) and local elections (1917)

Basic requirements	*National elections*		*Local elections*	
Citizenship	1906–		1917–1976*	
Residency in Finland	1906–1972			
Residency in municipality			1917–	
Minimum age	1906:	24	1917:	20
	1944:	21	1919:	24
	1969:	20	1919:	21
	1972:	18	1968:	20
			1972:	18

Grounds for disenfranchisement	*National elections*	*Local elections*
Unpaid taxes or municipal payments	1906–1928	1919–1948
Bankruptcy	1906–1928	-
Regular poor relief	1906–1944	1919–1948
Permanent military service	1906–1944	-
Loss of civic confidence due to crime	1906–1969	1917–1969
Vagrancy (3 years after workhouse)	1906–1972	1919
Being under guardianship	1906–1972	1917–1972
Not registered in the population register	1906–1972	1917–1990
Convicted of election crime	1906–1995	1917–1976

*Exceptions for citizens from Nordic countries (1976–) extended to citizens from other countries in the 1990s

Sources: Tarasti, *Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö*, 49–56; Tarasti and Taponen, *Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö,* 51–58; Soikkanen, *Kunnallinen itsehallinto*, 483–496; AsK 1919/105, Maalaiskuntain kunnallislaki § 9, Kaupunkien kunnallislaki § 10

This chapter will first analyse Finnish voting restrictions as a whole and delineate how exclusion criteria were connected to the economic ideals of a citizen. Then, I will focus on the criterion of poor relief, which targeted the poorest individuals. I will explore the principle, practice, and experience of disenfranchisement among poor relief recipients.

Voting rights restrictions based on "pauperism" were common in the Nordic countries and many others. The timelines for lifting these restrictions varied significantly: Norway (1919), Iceland (1934), Finland

(1944/1948), Sweden (1944), and Denmark (1961).[5] The chronology of voting legislation alone hides the complexity of the national development of universal suffrage. This chapter states that even though the criterion of poor relief was abandoned in Finland in the 1940s, all poor relief recipients were still not allowed to vote. The connection between poverty-based social benefits and the right to vote was entirely abolished only in 1970.

Understanding how voting restrictions shaped the relationship between the individual and society requires contextualisation beyond just looking at voting legislation. In line with T.H. Marshall's idea of interdependence between civil, political, and social citizenship, I propose that changes to voting rights were closely linked to reconfigurations in civil and social aspects of citizenship. Ruth Lister's conceptualisation of the informal dimension of citizenship as belonging and participation expands my analysis to cover the social meaning of voting restrictions. Lister highlights how tensions between inclusivity and exclusivity lead to varying hierarchical levels of citizenship. Ensin Isin's focus on citizenship as acts and practice allows for analysing everyday local processes where voting rights and restrictions were negotiated. The concept of "lived citizenship," with its emphasis on experience, combines the formulations of citizenship as status, belonging, and everyday practice.[6]

Since research material storing expressions of how voter exclusion was lived and experienced is fragmented, my focus in this chapter will be to discuss the sociocultural context that sets the limits and frameworks for lived citizenship.[7] The analysis is based on parliamentary records, governmental committee memoranda, and newspapers and journals by and for

[5] See Larsen's, Kristjánsdóttir's, Rasmussen's and Cottrell-Sundevall's chapters in this volume.

[6] T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950); Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Ruth Lister et al., *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe: New Challenges for Citizenship Research in a Cross-National Context* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007); Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen, *Acts of Citizenship* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2008); Kirsi Pauliina Kallio, Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood, and Jouni Häkli, "Lived Citizenship: Conceptualising an Emerging Field," *Citizenship Studies* 24, no. 6 (2020): 713–29.

[7] Heikki Kokko and Minna Harjula, "Social History of Experiences: A Theoretical-Methodological Approach," in *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State*," eds. Pertti Haapala, Minna Harjula, and Heikki Kokko (Cham: Palgrave, 2023), 17–40.

public administration officials and lawyers.[8] By applying deservingness—a concept developed within welfare studies[9]—as an analytic lens, I will show how the strict reciprocity, which defined a vote as a reward for fulfilled responsibilities, was replaced by the idea of equality-based individual rights. Using a conceptualisation from the history of experiences, these competing views can be seen as two societal "layers of experience." These two layers carried divergent interpretations of the individual-society relationship and resulted in complex and changing lived citizenship of the poor.[10] The analysis of the long-term exclusion of paupers from voting in Finland will nuance the prevalent historical interpretation of the Finnish welfare state's development.[11]

Nine Voting Restrictions and More: Defining Deservingness for Political Rights

The right to vote and stand as a candidate for parliament was granted to "every Finnish citizen, both man and woman, who has turned twenty-four before the election year" in 1906. According to historian Irma Sulkunen, the early inclusion of women reflected the view of men and

[8] The chapter builds on and develops further my earlier research. More detailed information about the primary sources can be found in: Minna Harjula, "Kelvoton valtiokansalaiseksi? Yleisen äänioikeuden rajoitukset ja äänioikeusanomukset Suomessa 1906–1917," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 104, no. 4 (2006): 368–81; Minna Harjula, Excluded from Universal Suffrage: Finland after 1906," in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reform*, eds. Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 106–19; Minna Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton, kansalainen? Köyhäinapu yleisen äänioikeuden esteenä Suomessa," *Janus* 18, no. 1 (2010): 4–19. Newspapers and journals until 1944, see "Digital Collections National Library of Finland," accessed June 16, 2022, https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/etusivu?set_language=en.

[9] See Tijs Laenen, Federica Rossetti and Wim van Oorschot, "Why Deservingness Theory Needs Qualitative Research: Comparing Focus Group Discussions on Social Welfare in Three Welfare Regimes," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 60, no. 3 (2019): 190–216; Carlo Michael Knotz et al., "A Recast Framework for Welfare Deservingness Perceptions," *Social Indicators Research* (2022). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02774-9.

[10] Kokko and Harjula, "Social history of experiences".

[11] Finland in comparison, see Pauli Kettunen, "The Nordic welfare state in Finland," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26, no. 3 (2001): 225–47.

women as a working team in the agrarian economy, where social movements aiming for nation-state building via temperance and self-education were not divided by gender. Thus, the development of Finnish democracy differed from older, more "advanced" Western nation-states.[12]

Setting Finnish citizenship and voting age as requirements for voting had two major implications. Firstly, a high age limit of twenty-four was utilised to exclude young voters, particularly women deemed more susceptible to political unrest. This restriction also had a clear class dimension, excluding half of the working-class from suffrage. Secondly, Finnish citizenship was contingent upon adherence to the Christian faith. The small ethnic minorities of Jews and Tatars could only obtain citizenship and voting rights from 1918 and 1919 onwards. On the other hand, the Sami people, as an indigenous group, were recognised as citizens and possessed the right to vote.[13]

The main principle of universal suffrage came with special reasons for excluding individuals.[14] As a political right, voting was seen differently from civil rights: instead of individual private benefit, voting involved the nation's public interest. According to legal authorities in Finland, some individuals were "worthless" or "incapable" of voting. Legal experts argued that the universal aspect of suffrage was not jeopardised even if some citizens were excluded for special reasons, as long as whole groups of people were not excluded because of their class, wealth, or education.[15]

Significantly, many exclusion criteria for voting rights were inherited from the previous oligarchical representational system. When the Finnish parliament, operating under the Russian Empire, began regular sessions

[12] AsK (Finlands Legislation Collection), VPJ (Parliament Act) 1906/26 § 5; Sulkunen, "Suffrage, Nation," 88–103; Irma Sulkunen, "Suffrage, gender and citizenship in Finland: A comparative perspective," *Nord Europa Forum* no. 1 (2007), 27–44.

[13] Harjula, "Excluded from," 107, 110; Tuttu Tarkiainen, "Eduskunnan valitseminen 1907–1963," in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia IX* (Helsinki: Eduskunnan historiakomitea, 1971), 20–8; Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, 143. Minna Harjula, Johanna Annola and Laura Ekholm, Etniset ja sosiaaliset vähemmistöt Suomessa. In *Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan historia 1400–2000 II*, eds. Pirjo Markkola et al. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2021), 294–9.

[14] Ask VPJ 1906/26 § 5.

[15] Arvid Neovius, *Lyhyt yleiskatsaus valtiolliseen vaalioikeuteen eri maissa* (Helsinki: Frenckell, 1906), 3; Rafael Erich, Yleisen äänioikeuden rajoituksista. *Lakimies* 6 no. 3 (1908): 111–37; Y. W. Puhakka, "Äänioikeus," in *Valtiotieteiden käsikirja IV* (Helsinki: Tietosanakirja-osakeyhtiö, 1924), 703.

in 1863, it followed the old legislation and traditions from the Swedish regime. Despite Sweden's transition to a bicameral system in 1866, the reformed Parliament Act in Finland (1869) still maintained the four-estate structure. This act identified guardianship, bankruptcy, lack of registration in the population register for taxpayers, loss of civic confidence, and election crimes as grounds for voting restrictions. These ideas of wealth, taxpaying ability, and blameless life as criteria for political citizenship left an imprint in the new legislation of 1906.[16] These ideas can be seen as a "layer of experience" which—as widely circulated and legitimated everyday experiential knowledge—was institutionalised as the structures of society and still had a presence within the new reform.[17] The earlier model managed fears among the ruling elite due to the sudden increase in voters from 125,000 to over 1 million.[18]

Three of the nine voting restrictions—poor relief, vagrancy, and permanent military service—were new and specially designed for universal suffrage reform in 1906. People who did not have a socially acceptable lifestyle were categorised as vagrants and faced a loss of voting rights for 3 years following their workhouse sentence. Exclusion based on military service only impacted Finnish officers serving in the Russian army, as Finland did not have its own national army or compulsory military service in the early twentieth century. This differed from Sweden, where men who had not served in the military were barred from voting in 1909. In the context of growing nationalism in Finland, the intention was to separate the military from politics. Additionally, the disciplined nature of the military was believed to hinder independent political thinking.[19]

Voters had to earn their right to vote by fulfilling several conditions linked to their economic and moral agency. In welfare studies, the concept of deservingness has been used to conceptualise the criteria

[16] AsK 1869/11 § 14; Koskinen, "Äänioikeuden lainsäädäntöhistoriaa," 27–9, 37; O. Seitkari, "Edustuslaitoksen uudistus 1906," in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia V*, Helsinki: Eduskunnan historiakomitea, 1958) 83–4; Mylly, "Edustuksellisen kansanvallan," 11, 32–46, 149–51.

[17] Kokko and Harjula, "Social history of experiences".

[18] Koskinen, "Äänioikeuden läpimurto," 29, 37.

[19] Harjula, "Excluded from," 109; Tarkiainen, "Eduskunnan valitseminen," 28–30; Mylly, "Edustuksellisen kansanvallan," 151, 205–206. See Cottrell-Sundevall's chapter in this volume.

defining access to and acceptability of social rights.[20] Similarly, deservingness for political rights was defined by voting restrictions. Based on arguments surrounding voting restrictions in 1906, I have categorised failed deservingness into two spheres—economic and criminal—and into two aspects—lacking independence and contribution—in Fig. 10.1.

Most exclusion criteria for voting were primarily based on economic qualifications. In addition to landowners being subject to a tax requirement, every Finn between the ages of 16 and 63 was obligated to pay a small personal tax called "henkiraha" during the early twentieth century. Failure to pay this tax for two consecutive years resulted in losing voting rights. Bankruptcy was seen as an indication of ineffective economic management, while regularly relying on poor relief indicated a lack of self-sufficiency. Furthermore, citizens who owned property could be placed under guardianship by court order if they were deemed incapable of handling their finances due to old age, mental illness, or alcoholism.[21]

The dotted lines on the left in Fig. 10.1 indicate that crime-based criteria often had a link to a person's socio-economic agency. Election crime mainly consisted of selling or buying votes. The loss of "civic confidence" that resulted from serious crime restricted political and civil

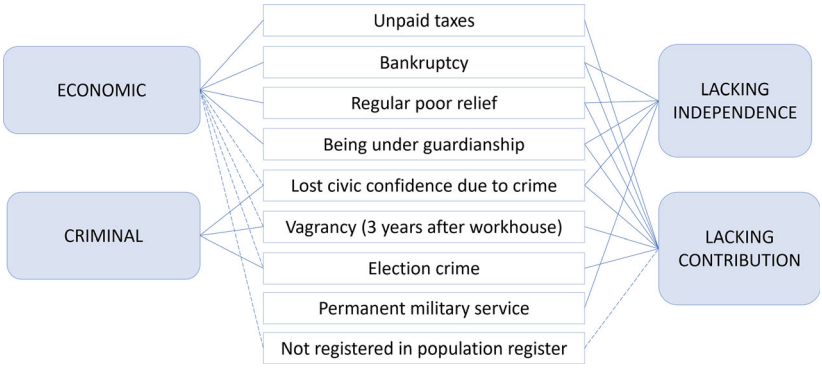

Fig. 10.1 Aspects of failed deservingness in voting legislation in Finland, 1906. *Source:* AsK VPJ 1906/26 § 5

[20] Laenen, Rossetti and van Oorschot, "Why deservingness theory"; Knotz et al., "Recast framework".

[21] Harjula, "Excluded from," 108–109.

rights after the person was released from prison. This criterion was widely implemented after the civil war in 1918 when over 60 000 low-income working-class men were imprisoned due to being part of rebellions who lost the war. People sentenced to workhouses as vagrants were often women in prostitution or from the Roma minority, whose lifestyle differed from the societal ideal. Additionally, Roma and other individuals without permanent residence faced the highest risk of missing registration in the local population register, a requirement for voting rights. Thus, even requiring registration was linked to a person's socio-economic contribution.[22]

In addition to the nine officially recognised exclusion criteria, two restrictions were considered self-evident and thus not explicitly enshrined in legislation but rather implemented in practice. Firstly, it was commonly accepted that individuals with mental illnesses, whether under guardianship or not, lacked the legal capacity to vote. Secondly, Finnish legislation did not explicitly state that prisoners were excluded from voting. It was understood as a self-evident restriction since prisoners did not have practical means to exercise their voting rights while incarcerated.[23] Both groups were perceived as incapable of developing independent political opinions and as economic and moral burdens to society.

Figure 10.1 shows how lacking independence and contribution were deeply intertwined aspects of failed deservingness for political citizenship. In examining social citizenship, the concept of reciprocity refers to how an individual has contributed to society in the past or is expected to contribute in the future, such as through tax payments and employment. It is considered a crucial factor in determining deservingness judgements for social benefits. Similarly, in studies on suffrage, Jonas Hultin Rosenberg and Fia Sundevall have emphasised the importance of economic

[22] Harjula, "Excluded from," 109–110; Tiina Kinnunen, "A Danger to the State and Society: Effects of the Civil War on Red Women's Civil Rights in Finland in 1918," in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reform*, eds. Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi and Pirjo Markkola (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 177–92; Marjatta Rahikainen, "Miten kansakunta pidetään puhtaana: rotuhygienia ja äänioikeuden epääminen" In *Kansakunnat murroksessa: Globalisoitumisen ja äärioikeistolaistumisen haasteet*, ed. Anne Ahonen (Tampere: Rauhan- ja konfliktintutkimuskeskus, 1995), 31; Harjula, Annola and Ekholm, "Etniset ja sosiaaliset vähemmistöt," 306–12.

[23] KM (Committee Report) 1906:12, Eduskunnanuudistamiskomitealta, 71.

contributivism based on reciprocity.[24] Besides the capacity to act independently (both economically and morally), the ideal voter would also be a useful member of the nation-state.

The Poor and Voting: Two Opposite Views of Citizenship in the Early Twentieth Century

Disenfranchisement on the grounds of receiving poor relief was one of the most controversial voting restrictions and revealed the complex relationship between social and political citizenship. Unlike modern social benefits, poor relief was not a social right enriching the status of a citizen in the early twentieth century. Quite the contrary, poor relief was essentially a loan, although the legal obligation to pay it back was not always realised in practice. Each applicant's deservingness and required level of assistance was assessed on a case-by-case basis. Aid recipients had their civil rights restricted, as they were placed under the local poor relief board's authority.[25]

While an international comparison of voting systems in 1906 revealed that the exclusion of poor relief recipients from suffrage was common in many countries,[26] their exclusion from universal suffrage was not unanimously accepted in Finland. Two opposing views emerged, reflecting divergent perspectives on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

The exclusion of poor relief recipients reflected the view that "paupers" were immoral and incapable citizens whose lack of independence and contribution to society rendered them incapable of making voting decisions. The starting point of the Poor Relief Act 1879 was that "every man or woman who is capable of working shall be obliged to support

[24] Laenen, Rossetti, and van Oorschot, "Why deservingness theory"; Knotz et al., "Recast framework"; Jonas Hultin Rosenberg and Fia Sundevall, "Contributivist Views on Democratic Inclusion: On Economic Contribution as a Condition for the Right to Vote," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy 2022*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2022.2104552.

[25] Mirja Satka, *Making Social Citizenship: Conceptual Practices from the Finnish Poor Law to Professional Social Work*. (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 1995), 22–6; Minna Harjula, *Hoitoonpääsyn hierarkiat: Terveyskansalaisuus ja terveyspalvelut Suomessa 1900-luvulla* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2015), 221–9; Kaarlo Tuori and Toomas Kotkas, *Sosiaalioikeus* (Helsinki: Talentum Pro, 2016), 92–100.

[26] Neovius, *Lyhyt katsaus*, 13.

him/herself and his/her under-aged children."[27] As poor relief recipients were under the guardianship of the local poor relief board, they were equated with people who were similarly disenfranchised because of court-ordered guardianship. Legal guardianship and poor relief can be seen as two parallel systems: legal guardianship concerned those who had property, while local poor relief was targeted at those without financial means. The Poor Relief Act (1879–1921) pointed out that the practice was a special kind of guardianship: the target group for poor relief was "under-aged, mentally weak, crippled, chronically ill, old and infirm *who lacked a guardian*."[28] Rafael Erich, a professor in constitutional law, wrote in 1908 that the exclusion of "paupers" and those under legal guardianship resulted from their special legal status and their lacking civic prowess and a sense of civic responsibility. He argued that the need for poor relief was often caused by the person's own negligence and moral inferiority.[29]

Eugenics and the fear of degeneration, prevalent in Western countries during this time, also influenced Finland's voting rights discourse. As historian Marjatta Rahikainen has stated, voting restrictions were a symbolic cleansing of the nation.[30] Eugenics defined biological and moral conditions for citizenship and considered the poor—among many other groups—a threat to the nation. High-ranking officials in charge of poor relief in Finland attributed the rising costs of poor relief to degeneration. During the civil war, in 1918, the rebellious "Reds" were labelled degenerate individuals, and prominent eugenics advocates proposed replacing universal suffrage with voting rights based on biological capabilities.[31] These discussions emphasised reciprocity as the key to deservingness and strongly supported restricting political citizenship for the impoverished.

An opposing argument was spearheaded by the Social Democratic Party, whose potential voters came from the low-income rural and urban working-class. The exclusion of people receiving poor relief was viewed as

[27] AsK 1879/10 § 1. Translation by Satka, *Making*, 20.

[28] AsK 1879/10 § 2, § 31; KM 1906:12, 125–6; Sini Korpela, *Holhouksesta edunvalvontaan. Helsingin kaupungin holhouslautakunta 1866–1999* (Helsinki: Helsingin kaupunginmuseo, 1999) 50–52, 63; Tarkiainen,"Eduskunnan valitseminen," 42–43.

[29] Erich,"Yleisen äänioikeuden," 132.

[30] Rahikainen,"Miten kansakunta," 25.

[31] Markku Mattila, "Rotuhygienia ja kansalaisuus," in *Kansalaisuus ja kansanterveys*, eds. Ilpo Helén and Mikko Jauho (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2003), 110–116; Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 10.

inhumane and unjust, a disgrace to society,[32] and was criticised for having a "clear class-based character, as in practice it will target the working-class, sick, and elderly people only."[33] The peasant-dominated party, "Old Finns," emphasised that many respectable citizens required poor relief due to the absence of old age pensions and national health insurance in Finland.[34] Due to the lack of social security, critics deemed the exclusion of elderly poor relief recipients as a humiliating and embittering deprivation of citizenship, threatening their belonging to the nation and society:

> It is unnatural, even partly criminal, to stigmatise these decent citizens in the evening of their lives so that they are deprived of everything that makes them a citizen. Such conduct punishes people because of their poverty, and poverty is still not a crime.[35]
>
> When the workers have worked hard for society in their prime, lost their health and ability to work in drudgery, and have been forced to receive help from society, there is no moral right to push them outside society.[36]

Even for the bourgeois political parties, excluding poor relief recipients posed a problem. It was considered practically impossible to differentiate between those whose poverty was self-inflicted and those who were not at fault.[37]

A new interpretation of poverty redefined it as a social risk, necessitating societal protection. Advocates for inclusive voting argued that lack of wealth did not equate to incompetence, as even the poorest made valuable contributions to their community. Poor relief was seen as a pension-like right for low-wage workers unable to save for old age.[38]

[32] For example: Tekla T., "Turun naisten yleinen äänioikeuskokous," *Palvelijatarlehti,* May 1, 1906, 139–40; "Äänioikeusrajoituksen merkitys," 1906. *Savon Työmies,* December 11, 1906, 2.

[33] VP (Parliamentary Records) 1919, Liitteet I, Perustuslakivaliokunta I,3, Edusk. esit. N:o 6, 37.

[34] KM 1906:12, 69; Seitkari, "Edustuslaitoksen uudistus," 84; Tarkiainen, "Eduskunnan valitseminen," 38–41.

[35] VP 1905–06, Asiakirjat II, Per.lakivaliok. miet. no 1, vastalause I, 5–6.

[36] VP 1925, Pöytäkirjat I, 45.

[37] "Kunnallis-olojemme uudistus," *Wiipuri*, March 25, 1908, 1.

[38] VP 1921, Pöytäkirjat III, 3023; VP 1925, Pöytäkirjat I, 434–458; Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 11.

This view emphasised that poor relief recipients were honourable and competent citizens who deserved the trust and respect of society.[39]

As the local government—municipality—was responsible for organising poor relief, the question was whether poor residents were only a burden to the municipality or if they could have a say in organising the local practice of giving poor relief.[40] Between 1917 and 1919, the introduction of universal suffrage in local elections led to three different versions of voting restrictions due to the changing political landscape. The initial municipal election law, drafted mainly by the Social Democratic Party in 1917, granted the local vote to all recipients of poor relief. However, this broad interpretation of local universal suffrage was short-lived, with only guardianship, election crime, and lost civic confidence serving as restrictions. In 1919, after the civil war, a stringent interpretation emerged that excluded paupers and those with limited means who did not have local tax obligations. Five months later, a new compromise aligned local exclusion criteria with national criteria, preventing poor relief recipients and tax defaulters from voting. These rapid changes highlight the contentious nature of voting rights in a politically divided country.

The Unclear Terminology of Poor Relief and the Practice of Exclusion Until the 1940s

In the legislation of 1906, individuals who received regular or ongoing poor relief were excluded from participating in national elections. However, those who received occasional or temporary relief were not subject to this exclusion.[41] In contrast to Sweden, where all poor relief recipients who had not repaid the loan-like financial aid were disenfranchised until 1921, Finnish legislation was less severe. However, since official terminology and poor relief policies at the local level were only gradually taking shape, the implementation of voting restrictions was

[39] "Kunnalliskodin hoidokkien kunnian puolesta," *Huoltaja* 13, no. 7 (1925): 70.

[40] On municipal government: Hannu Soikkanen, *Kunnallinen itsehallinto kansanvallan perusta: Maalaiskuntien itsehallinnon historia* (Helsinki: Maalaiskuntien liitto, 1966), 483–492; Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, 32–36.

[41] AsK VPJ 1906/26 § 5.

open to many interpretations. Similar problems were faced in Sweden when it applied the same kind of restriction policy as Finland in 1921.[42]

The ambiguity surrounding the distinction between occasional or temporary and regular poor relief created uncertainty in determining the boundaries of suffrage exclusions. According to G.A. Helsingius, a prominent figure in social administration, receiving poor relief was considered regular if the aid was provided repeatedly and lasted for more than a year, while relief received for shorter periods and on an irregular basis was deemed temporary. However, the lack of clear definitions led to the imprecise local implementation of voter exclusion. Oral history accounts and parliamentary records indicate that even temporary poor relief could lead to losing voting rights.[43]

Defining and proving aid recipients within a family presented another challenge. According to the legislation, only individuals who received personal poor relief were ineligible to vote. However, cases were reported where poor relief given to children or spouses had affected the voting right of the husbands. As local officials typically maintained records under the father's name, it is likely that men, being the heads of households, could be disenfranchised due to aid given to other family members. Nevertheless, Finnish voting legislation generally considered spouses as independent individuals. In contrast, Norway followed a household principle: both adults would lose their voting rights due to poor relief.[44]

As statutes (Fig. 10.2) in local elections were slightly different compared to national elections in the late 1910s, implementation of voter exclusion remained unclear. Despite harmonised terminology in local and national elections during the 1920s, new concepts still left room for varied interpretations of regulations. First, the concept of full poor relief remained ambiguous. Second, the concept of *vuosihoidokki*—roughly translated to "annual ward/inmate"– could be referring either to aid that lasted longer than 1 year or to the type of aid. In the

[42] Fia Sundevall, "Pengar och medborgarrätt: Om rösträttens ekonomiska diskvalikationsgrunder," *Arbetarhistoria* 44, no. 2–3 (2019): 43–4.

[43] Gust. Ad. Helsingius, *Köyhäinhoidon käsikirja* (Porvoo: Holger Schildt, 1917), 57–58; Elli Tavastähti, *Köyhäinhoidon käsikirja* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1926), 200–1; Jukka Eenilä, ed., *Ruotiukkoja ja huutolaisia*: *Muistikuvia entisajan sosiaalihuollosta* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1971) 132; VP 1919, Liitteet I, Per.lakivaliokunta I,3, Edusk. esit. N:o 6, 37.

[44] Rahikainen, "Miten kansakunta," 26–27*;* Harjula,"Köyhä, kelvoton," 8–9; Larsen's chapter in this volume.

latter meaning, it could refer either to an out-of-home placement in an institution or include a placement in a family.[45]

In practice, the voting right of a poor relief recipient was defined individually in each election. The right to vote was based on the electoral register, which the local electoral committee compiled using population registers and information from local officials. People who found their name missing from the electoral register could apply for the right to vote two weeks before the election. Although newspapers and political parties actively spread information, people were not always aware of the need to check the electoral registers. This meant that many people only found out about their exclusion on election day. Additionally, as approximately 30% of the population aged fifteen and above lacked the ability to write in 1920, it hindered their ability and confidence to challenge the electoral board.[46] According to a newspaper from the east of Finland, 20%

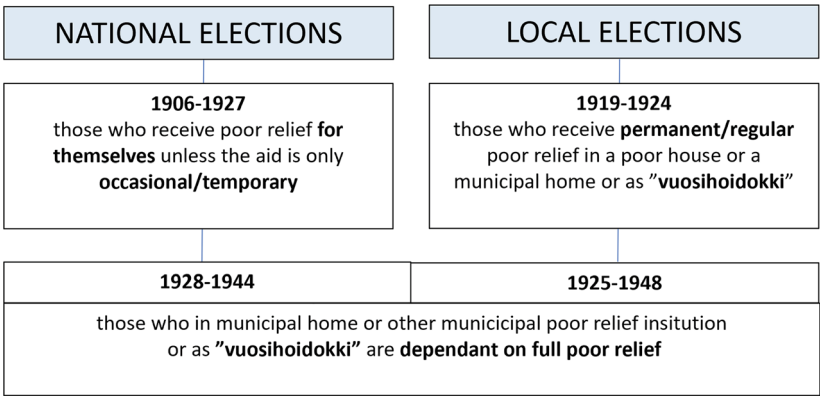

Fig. 10.2 Different regulations for exclusion of poor relief recipients in Finnish national and local elections (1906–1948)
Sources: AsK VPJ 1906/26 § 5; AsK VPJ 1928/7 § 6; AsK 1919/105 Maalaiskuntain kunnallislaki § 9, Kaupunkien kunnallislaki § 10; AsK 1925/71 § 9; AsK 1925/72 § 10

[45] Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 9–10.

[46] Harjula, "Excluded from," 111, 113; "Aluetoimikunnille," *Kansan Lehti.* May 5, 1908, 2; "Onko nimenne vaaliluettelossa," *Aamulehti, May* 13, 1908, 2; STV (*Statistical Yearbook of Finland*) 1932, 46–7.

of eligible voters in a remote rural voting district were excluded from the first national election due to unpaid taxes or poor relief. However, no applications for voting rights were submitted due to a lack of skills.[47]

In the application process to get their missing name on the electoral register, the burden of proof was on the applicant. As a result, the local electoral committees and poor relief boards could exercise political power in compiling the electoral registers. For example, the Social Democratic newspaper in the industrial city of Tampere criticised these local committees, accusing them of being "weapons of bourgeois parties" and intentionally working to suppress the number of leftist voters.[48] Such an accusation highlights the powerful political role of the electoral committees.

In the 1908 national elections, there were 1317 suffrage applications across all exclusion categories. Compared to 1.27 million eligible voters and 817,000 votes given in the election, the number of applications was small. However, the fact that these applications were submitted highlights the importance of suffrage to these individuals. The highest application activity was observed in the metropolitan area of Helsinki and the Häme region surrounding the industrial city of Tampere. Across the country, 27% of suffrage applicants were granted the right to vote. A case study from Häme revealed that one-fifth of all applications were rejected due to procedural errors such as missing signatures and late submissions. This indicates the difficulties faced by ordinary people in asserting their rights. In Häme, 12 poor relief recipients navigated the application process, with only two being granted the right to vote, while the remaining ten applicants could not demonstrate that the local electoral committee had no grounds for their exclusion.[49]

Due to the lack of statistics, the total number of suffrage exclusions based on poor relief can only be estimated. Regular poor relief was given to approximately 30,000 persons above voting age in 1907 and 55,000 persons in 1937.[50] Since even people with temporary poor relief could sometimes be stripped of their right to vote, these figures show that

[47] "Äänioikeusrajoituksen merkitys," *Savon Työmies,* December 11, 1906, 2.

[48] "Varovaisuus tarpeen," *Kansan Lehti*, June 26, 1908, 1–2; "Vaalilain puutteita," *Kansan Lehti*, June 27, 1908: 1.

[49] Harjula, "Excluded from," 112–5.

[50] SVT (Official Statistics of Finland) XXI A 15 Köyhäinhoitotilasto 1907; SVT (*Official Statistics of Finland)* XXI A 1 Huoltotilasto 1937.

exclusion was not a marginal feature, as stated by the advocates of voting restrictions.[51]

According to poor relief statistics, most impoverished people needed aid for old age or health-related reasons until the 1970s.[52] In their extensive database analysis from the national election in 1911, Elina Einiö, Hanna Wass, and Miia Heinonen have indicated that women—and especially older women—faced the loss of voting rights more often than men due to poor relief. Female widows and single mothers had to turn to poor relief due to the lack of national social insurance.[53] Furthermore, individuals with disabilities faced a heightened risk of disenfranchisement. Compared to the overall population living on poor relief, which accounted for approximately 4–5% in the 1930s, the proportion of disabled individuals who were entirely dependent on poor relief was significantly higher. It ranged from 20% among those classified as blind and physically disabled to 30–50% among those with learning disabilities and mental illness.[54]

In his analysis of the construction of the Finnish voter, sociologist Risto Alapuro discusses how the dignity and importance of the act of voting were demonstrated by dressing up in one's best clothes. The voting act and the ballot's secrecy represented a voter's independence. Voters had high expectations for societal reforms, which gave special significance to their vote in the early twentieth century.[55] In this context, the exclusion from national political citizenship added an extra dimension of shame to those who were already ashamed to be receiving poor relief. Local exclusion from voting also intensified the experience of being a worthless outsider (Fig. 10.3).

[51] KM 1906:12, 68; Erich, "Yleisen äänioikeuden,"131.

[52] Harjula, "Hoitoonpääsyn hierarkiat," 64.

[53] Elina Einiö, Hanna Wass, and Miia Heinonen, "Political Exclusions Attributable to Poor Relief in Early Twentieth-Century Finland," *Population* 73, no. 1 (2018): 137–153.

[54] Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 10.

[55] Alapuro, "Construction of the Voter," 55–61.

Fig. 10.3 The polling station for parliamentary elections at an elementary school in a small rural election district in Finland, 1916.
Photo: J.A. Aho, Finnish Heritage Agency

The Right to Vote Is Allowed by Electoral Legislation but Denied by the Poor Law in the 1940s

During the social context of World War II, a gradual shift towards expanded voting rights occurred. The increased need for social assistance during the war led to a reinterpretation of deservingness criteria for political and social rights. As a result, the exclusion based on poor relief was eliminated in national (1944) and local (1948) elections. Simultaneously, military personnel gained the right to vote, and the voting age was lowered from 24 to 21 in national elections, aligning with the practice already established in local elections since 1919.[56]

[56] AsK VPJ 1944/839 § 6; AsK 1948/642 § 15.

The removal of poor relief as an exclusion criterion from electoral legislation was a significant change. It was seen by left-wing members of parliament as a recognition that individuals who could not support themselves were now considered equal to all other members of society.[57] However, it was only a practical solution that simply harmonised and simplified legislation concerning poor relief and voting, not a sign of the breakthrough of welfare ideology. The parliament accepted the removal of poor relief as an exclusion category without opposition as it was "at least in practice, without great significance." There was still a way of preventing a group of paupers from voting. According to the Poor Relief Act (1922–1956), people who were taken under the "full care" of the municipality for the rest of their lives remained under the guardianship of the local poor relief board. Therefore, the criterion of guardianship could be used to prevent political citizenship of the poor (see Fig. 10.4).[58]

The enduring voting restriction in Finland reflects the gradual and slow expansion of social rights compared to other Nordic countries. In the early stages of social benefits, there were significant institutional and ideological connections to the existing system of poor relief. For example, the Maternity benefit (1938) for women with limited means explicitly excluded women whose child was born while they were placed in "permanent, i.e., continuous full care of poor relief," or in a workhouse or prison. This exclusion suggests that those classified as permanent poor relief recipients were seen as a distinct and marginalised group whose motherhood was not deemed deserving of "a special gift from the state," as the benefit was called. Similarly, the benefit for large families (1943) was granted only to families deemed to "raise mentally and physically healthy members of society." While the benefit was aimed at rescuing such families from the stigmatisation of poor relief, the families whose physical or mental health did not meet these demands were not seen as worthy of the new benefit. The ongoing exclusion of poor relief recipients echoed the reciprocal idea that individuals had to prove their deservingness to

[57] VP 1946, liitteet VII:15, Toiv.al.no 61. Pirkko-Liisa Rauhala, *Miten sosiaalipalvelut ovat tulleet osaksi suomalaista sosiaaliturvaa* (Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto, 1996), 98–9; Anneli Anttonen and Jorma Sipilä, *Suomalaista sosiaalipolitiikkaa* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2000), 64.

[58] VP 1944, Pöytäkirjat I, 780, 800; Ask 1922/145 § 59.

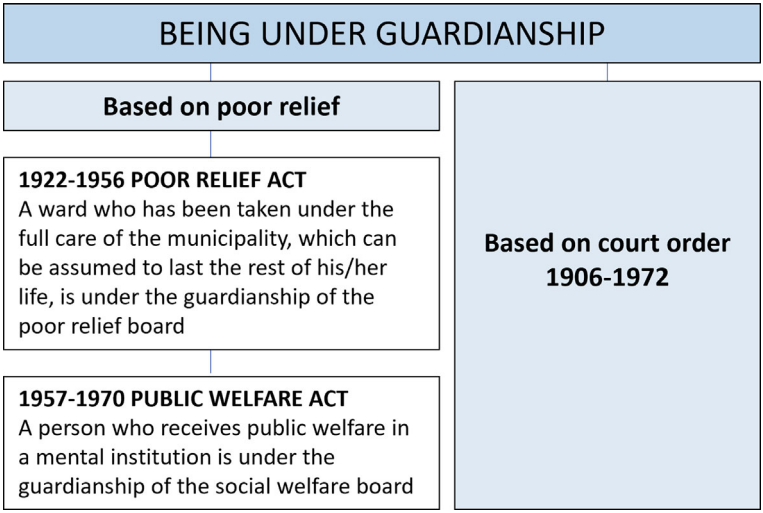

Fig. 10.4 The criterion of guardianship as voter exclusion in Finland, 1906–1972
Sources: Ask 1922/145 § 59; AsK 1956/116 § 52; AsK 1970/275; AsK VPJ 26/1906 § 6; AsK VPJ 1972/357 § 6

receive state support and obtain national and municipal political rights. This created hierarchical social and political citizenship.[59]

The Development of More Inclusive Voting Practices as Part of Building the Welfare State

The introduction of universal social benefits, such as cash child benefits for all children (1948) and national pension (1956), sparked controversy regarding excluding poor relief recipients from voting. Universalism started challenging the strict prerequisite of reciprocity for welfare deservingness by creating a more abstract relationship between citizen and

[59] Minna Harjula, "Encountering Benefits for Families: Layers of Lived Social Citizenship in Finland in the 1930–40s," in *Lived institutions as history of experience, eds.* Johanna Annola, Hanna Lindberg and Pirjo Markkola (Cham: Palgrave, forthcoming).

state.[60] Thus, universalism in social security was linked to a parallel reformulation of political citizenship.

The disenfranchisement of poor relief recipients due to guardianship posed significant concerns for poor relief institutions during the late 1940s and 1950s. Municipal homes, formerly known as poor houses, operated as parallel establishments to hospitals; however, their primary emphasis centred on providing maintenance and basic care rather than curative treatment. Municipal homes usually encompassed a general department, an infirmary for those who were ill, and a department for those who were categorised as mentally ill, all primarily accommodating elderly individuals and individuals with mental illnesses and disabilities.[61] By law, municipal homes were aimed at caring for paupers, but in practice, even self-funding residents were accepted. Usually, only those who had property were put under the guardianship of the poor relief board, which would authorise the board to take care of their finances. The absurd result was that an inmate with no financial means could have the right to vote while his or her roommate with some property could be excluded.[62] The practical question of guardianship escalated in 1956, when all those older than sixty-five or incapable of work were granted the national pension.[63]

Reforming the Poor Relief Act was a practical solution. According to the new Public Welfare Act (1957), municipal homes were legally allowed to accept self-funding residents. Municipal homes changed from institutions for the poor to elder care facilities, regardless of the person's wealth. The distinction between poor relief recipients and self-funding residents became less clear within municipal homes as the public welfare, referred to as maintenance assistance or "huoltoapu" in Finnish, was no longer characterised as a loan. No charges were imposed on the recipient or their relatives in cases where the need for relief stemmed from a chronic illness or similar circumstances.

Additionally, only residents in mental hospitals or mental departments within municipal homes were placed under the guardianship of the local board, while all other individuals receiving public welfare retained their

[60] Harjula, "Encountering Benefits".

[61] Harjula, "Hoitoonpääsyn hierarkiat," 105–7, 167–76, 211–12.

[62] Harjula, "Hoitoonpääsyn hierarkiat," 227–9; Harjula,"Köyhä, kelvoton," 12.

[63] Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 12.

right to vote.[64] According to the law drafting committee for the Public Welfare Act, putting welfare recipients under guardianship was "inapplicable from a modern standpoint." As a part of a major reform of poor relief, the change of guardianship was accepted without any discussion in the Finnish parliament.[65]

The political participation of many institutionalised people was still limited because voting was only possible at polling stations on a specific election day. It was estimated that 25,000 hospitalised patients had no access to polling stations in the 1950s. Voting in hospitals and the infirmaries of municipal homes became possible in 1955, but voters needed a document from the municipality where they were registered as residents. However, three-quarters of municipal home residents still had no voting access. The general departments in municipal homes were accepted as polling stations in local elections in 1964 and in national elections in 1969. In 1969, the introduction of voting in advance at post offices and institutions improved accessibility to the voting process.[66]

In the late 1960s, individuals hospitalised in mental institutions and departments for the mentally ill in municipal homes were the last social welfare recipients who could not vote. This was because they were still categorised under the local board's guardianship. Even wealthy patients were registered as public welfare recipients since all hospital stays were charged, and mental institutions required financial obligations from the social welfare board, formerly known as the poor relief board, regardless of the patient's ability to afford the fees. Hospitals were obligated to inform electoral boards about patients diagnosed with mental illness or learning disability and not prognosed to recover. In some cases, even patients with mild neurological symptoms could lose their right to vote when admitted to a mental hospital for medical examination.[67]

[64] AsK 1956/116 § 22, § 30, § 52.

[65] KM 1953:1 mon, Köyhäinhoitolain uudistamiskomitean mietintö n:o 1, 6–7; Harjula," Köyhä, kelvoton," 12.

[66] Tarkiainen, "Eduskunnan valitseminen," 44–5, 104, 150, 154–5; Jalo, Margit, "Kunnalliskotiemme hoidokkiaines tilaston valossa," Huoltaja 44, no. 22 (1956): 683; Tarasti,"Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö," 64–7.

[67] Harjula, "Köyhä, kelvoton," 13–4; Romppanen, Pekka, "Sosiaalihuolto, terveydenhoito, sairausvakuutus," *Huoltaja* 56, no. 22 (1968): 741; Miettinen, Esko, "Kentän ääni," *Huoltaja* 52 no. 21 (1964): 677–8.

Discussion on the voting rights of institutionalised patients with mental illness started as part of a wider debate on the civil and social rights of persons in institutions in the late 1960s. Based on the United Nation's Declaration from 1948, lack of suffrage was considered a violation of human rights:

> When a mental patient without means is put under the guardianship of social welfare, his/her name will be removed from the electoral registers. This is one example of a lack of human rights, preventing the person from participating in society and societal decision-making.[68]

The new emphasis on human rights resulted in a rapid extension of the political citizenship of people with mental illness in the early 1970s. Firstly, starting in 1970, people who received public welfare because of mental illness were no longer ordered under the guardianship of the local board. The policy was deemed inappropriate and against widely accepted principles of social policy at the time.[69] Secondly, the criteria of guardianship and vagrancy were entirely removed from electoral legislation in 1972. At the same time, institutions for the mentally ill and alcoholics, prisons, and workhouses were accepted as polling stations, but the acceptance of institutions for people with learning disabilities as polling stations took place only in the 1980s.[70] As a new, gradually legitimised layer of experience, the individual-society relationship that abandoned the prerequisite of reciprocity became institutionalised in voting legislation.

The connection between social security and voting rights was abolished simultaneously as access to health care and social benefits became an essential element of modern social citizenship in a welfare state. National pension (1956) and national health insurance for citizens aged 16 to 65

[68] Taipale, Ilkka, "Miten suhtaudut," *Mielenterveys* 8, no. 1–2 (1968): 35–6.

[69] AsK 1970/275; VP 1969, Asiakirjat III.1. Hall. es. 251, 1–4; Tarasti, Aarne, "Huoltoapu- ja irtolaislain eräiden perussäännösten muuttaminen," *Lakimies* 68, no. 2 (1970): 136.

[70] Tarasti, *Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö*, 54–5, 67, 443; Tarasti and Taponen, *Suomen vaalilainsäädäntö*, 397–9; KM 1986:13. Vammaisten ja laitoksessa olevien äänestysmahdollisuuksien parantamista selvittäneen toimikunnan mietintö, 6–9, 25–6.

(1963) made basic minimum income a universal social right for all citizens.[71] However, the lasting impact of past voting restrictions tied to social security remained significant: still in the early 1970s, the elderly were hesitant to relocate to homes for the elderly due to the fear of losing their voting rights.[72]

Conclusion

Despite introducing universal suffrage in Finland in 1906, certain voting restrictions were imposed to determine individuals' deservingness for political rights. These restrictions emphasised economic and moral independence and reciprocal contributions to society as prerequisites for being considered an ideal citizen. Poor relief recipients were among the groups that did not benefit from the promise of universal suffrage in national elections in 1906 and local elections in 1919. Consequently, two opposing perspectives on citizenship emerged, causing divisions among political parties and public discourse. The everyday experience of paupers was greatly influenced by whether the receipt of poor relief was viewed as a personal failure, rendering them incapable and unworthy of political citizenship, or as a social risk unrelated to their qualifications for voting. As societal "layers of experience," these conflicting views shaped evolving voting practices.

In everyday life, voting restrictions created a hierarchical form of citizenship that involved a mix of inclusion and exclusion. The political rights of poor relief recipients were determined based on various factors, including the duration (whether aid was provided regularly and permanently or temporarily), the nature of care (whether it was provided in residential care or not), and the cause of the aid (whether it was due to mental illness or other reasons). The loss of voting rights was a humiliating experience of exclusion that intensified the stigma associated with receiving poor relief, even in the context of new welfare legislation. The combination of electoral legislation, social welfare legislation, and civil legislation pertaining to guardianship intertwined civil, social, and political rights. Due to the ambiguous terminology used in poor relief and the

[71] Harjula, "Hoitoonpääsyn hierarkiat," 227–309.

[72] Kattelus, Hilma. Vanhusten mielenterveysongelmat kunnallis- ja vanhainkodeissa. *Mielenterveys* 11, no. 6 (1971): 25.

existence of different regulations across administrative areas, the loss of voting rights could come as a surprise to citizens. The divergent regulations governing local and national political rights further complicated the lived citizenship, creating differing notions of belonging at the local and national levels.

Despite the criticism spearheaded by the Social Democrats and despite the subsequent electoral legislation reform in the 1940s, voting restrictions tied to the guardianship of recipients persisted until 1970. The expansion of suffrage was closely connected to re-evaluating the requirements for citizenship. Rather than adhering to a strict notion of reciprocal deservingness, where an individual's rights were contingent upon meeting economic and moral obligations, a new layer of experience emphasising equality in civil, political, and social rights emerged, gained legitimacy, and was institutionalised by the 1970s.

CHAPTER 11

Universal Suffrage, Inequalities, Welfare, and the 'Gendered Voter' in India: 1917 to the Present

Anupama Roy

Universal franchise as a component of political rights is integral to citizenship's promise of a fuller measure of equality.[1] For T. H. Marshall, *universal* franchise was different from other elements of citizenship, such as civil and social rights, due to its potential to change the foundations of inequality on which modern democracies were "fashioned by the upper classes."[2] The "right to participate in the exercise of political power" was, therefore, construed as inherently dangerous and handed down "cautiously," denying political personhood and self-determination to large sections of people.[3] Political power presented a danger to capitalism since it introduced the principle of collective bargaining, which

[1] T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

[2] Marshall, *Citizenship*, 41.

[3] Marshall, *Citizenship*, 42.

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4_11

sought to strengthen civil rights not as individual entitlements but as social progress through struggles which would not cease at minimum wages and social security. The relationship between civil, political, and social rights has, however, proved tenuous as proletarianisation has not, especially in the neo-liberal contexts, strengthened the bargaining powers of the working class. The potential of universal suffrage to attenuate the inequalities of social class has shown two tendencies—of *reinforcement*, where the 'excluded' have ushered in a different politics through the power of irruption in the electoral domain, and of *enervation*—where the power to change has been enfeebled by turning the working class into 'beneficiaries' of poverty alleviation programmes binding them in a relationship of indebtedness to the state.

The history of the struggle for universal suffrage in India can be traced to the second decade of the twentieth century, in the conflict between the colonised who claimed the rights to equality and self-determination, and the colonial policy of cautious enhancement of political rights as evidence of 'improvement' of the colonised under colonial rule. Following its post-First World War policy, the British government promised the gradual development of self-governing institutions for the progressive realisation of responsible government in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1919) extended the franchise to the colonised piecemeal, hitherto restricted to men who owned property and paid taxes. After independence in August 1947, the adoption of universal franchise by the Constituent Assembly of India (Constituent Assembly) in November 1949 established political equality in a single moment of rupture by enfranchising all Indians above the age of twenty-one. The preparation of an electoral roll based on universal adult franchise to elect a Parliament in independent India differed from any other enumeration exercise since its objective was to unfetter popular sovereignty. Yet, inserting voters in the electoral roll as individuals was challenging in a context where 'access' and 'intelligibility' generally, and 'custom' in the case of women, the poor, and the lower castes specifically, presented bureaucratic and political challenges. The persistence of deference in a caste-based hierarchical society bound the vote to traditional systems of authority. Since the late 1980s, with popular mobilisations and institutionalisation of participatory democracy at the grass-root level leading to the rise of the "plebians,"[4] the *voter* finally

[4] Christophe Jaffrelot and Sanjay Kumar, *Rise of the Plebians? The Changing Face of the Indian Legislative Assemblies* (Delhi: Routledge, 2009).

emerged as a significant political category. In this chapter, I will examine 'the vote' as a gendered category to see how suffrage is imbricated in the logic of democratic citizenship and is simultaneously entangled in social power and state ruling practices. The prefix 'gendered' is deployed to scrutinise the social and economic forces that structure the meanings attached to 'the vote' and the multiple axes of caste, class, race, and sex, which inform the relationships of power framing the right to vote.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each anchored in a specific dimension of the contestations over universal suffrage. The first section explores how colonial rule made suffrage dependent on the racial/civilisational imperatives of the British Empire. Masculinity as the defining principle of imperial relationship was affirmed in the colonial state's exercise of paternal/political/proprietary authority over the colonised/women/working class. The second section is anchored in the conduct of elections and its relationship with democracy immediately after independence from colonial rule in August 1947. It locates universal suffrage in the context of the 'transformative' associated with national sovereignty, constitutional democracy, and republican citizenship. The last section identifies the processes through which the gendering of the vote occurred in independent India through political churnings and the irruption of hitherto excluded groups into the electoral domain. It also explores the processes of disenfranchisement generated in the disputes over legal citizenship and through state policies that make the voter a *labharthi* (beneficiary), trapping the 'collective' political power of suffrage in a web of state charity.

The Gender of 'the Vote'

Figure 11.1 is a photograph of Indian women participating in 'the pageant of empire,' a procession organised by the suffrage societies in Britain on June 17, 1911, to commemorate the Coronation of George V, bringing together "militant and constitutionalist [suffragettes] in one grand, consciousness-raising display."[5] The release of the British film

[5] Aina Khan, "How Indian women contributed to the suffrage movement: Historian Sumita Mukherjee on the Contribution of South Asian Women to British Women's Suffrage Battle 100 years ago." *Al Jazeera*, February 6, 2018. Accessed 4 February 2022. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/6/how-indian-women-contributed-to-the-suffrage-movement.

Suffragette (2015) triggered debates on race, class, and gender in the suffrage movement in Britain. The photograph of Indian suffragettes in the coronation pageant was reproduced in an article on the contribution of Indian women in the struggle for suffrage in Britain to discuss the intersection of race and class in the British suffrage movement under conditions of imperialism. The image, it was argued, represented "aristocratic Indian women" who lived in Britain—whose lives were "far removed" from the life of the central character in the film—the East End laundry worker, Maud.[6] The presence of colonised upper-class women in a space inhabited by 'White women' represented the complex entanglement of class, race, and gender that the struggle for the vote had assumed in early twentieth-century India and Britain.

Fig. 11.1 Indian suffragettes in the Women's Coronation Procession, London, on June 17, 1911
[Courtesy: Museum of London]

[6] Khan, "How Indian Women".

The debate on the franchise for women and the working class in Britain saw the vote being defined increasingly in national imperialist, class, and gender terms. Britain's women and the working class were infantilised by invoking the 'domesticated' colonised subject; both, like the 'natives,' were considered incompetent in possessing or enforcing their will, requiring firm and unsentimental control.[7] This was deemed necessary for preserving the political authority of the ruling class—White, propertied, and male, premised on political Manhood—the idea of masculinity embodied in economic standing and courage essential for the defence of the Empire, which required virile men and submissive fertile women.[8] Suffrage in the colony, seen from the logic of the Empire, could not be based on the notion that all subjects of the King were equal. The presence of a "common king" did not imply that there *must* exist "common and equal citizenship" and that "*all* differences and distinctions" were wrong in principle. On the contrary, as General Smuts, who served as Prime Minister of South Africa (1919–24, 1939–48) argued, there existed "*every imaginable difference*." Common kingship was "the binding link" but not "a source" from which citizens drew their rights.[9]

The anti-colonial national liberation movement in India asserted that it was impossible to achieve political, economic, and social equality, as well as equality before the law, under conditions of colonial rule. Public declaration of a constitutional future was made by the Indian National Congress (INC) in Bombay in May 1927, pledging to frame a *swaraj* (self-rule) constitution with a Declaration of Rights.[10] In the Madras Session of the INC in May 1928, a resolution was passed affirming a Constitution with a charter of rights. A draft Constitution framed by the Nehru Committee in 1928 declared its objective to secure to all Indians the fundamental rights denied them under colonial rule. It articulated the principle of universal adult franchise while delineating the election modality to the proposed Parliament's House of Representatives (Lok

[7] Catherine Hall, White, *Male and Middle Class: Explorations of Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Routledge, 1992), 285

[8] James Fitzjames Stephen, law member in the Governor General's Council in India (1869–1872) cited in Clark, "Gender, Class," 285.

[9] Smuts cited in Srinivas Shastri, *The Indian Citizen: His Rights and Duties* (Bombay: Hind Kitab Limited, 1948), 50.

[10] Shiva B. Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents*, Vol. 1 & 5 (Delhi: Law and Justice Publishing Company, 2022), 55.

Sabha). In the Karachi Resolution of 1931, which followed the civil disobedience call by Gandhi, the INC announced its commitment to *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence). In addition to civil liberties and social and economic rights that citizens would possess in independent India, the Resolution proposed the enfranchisement of all Indians above the age of twenty-one.[11] The Karachi Resolution and the Nehru Report are signposts in India's journey towards constitutional democracy, manifesting a harmonious achievement of equality in the political domain, reflected later in the Constitution of India (1950), which installed republican citizenship. The consensus over universal suffrage, also seen in other nationalist movements,[12] occluded fundamental contestations that existed around voting rights, which included complex ideological formulations and critical social tensions of gender, class, and community in colonial conditions.

The right to vote in colonial India was braided with the question of the status of Indians in the British Empire. The ideology of *difference*—racial, civilisational, and gender—enabled the spatial and temporal distancing of the colonised and the *deferral* of their fundamental rights. While a small section of Indian men could vote based on a property qualification, Indian women had no voting rights. Since suffrage was associated with political Manhood, enfranchising propertied men created a gender hierarchy among men. The struggle for suffrage in the colony was against the *double erasure* brought by colonial rule—through patrimony, i.e., male power perpetuated through lineage and property, aligned with White patrimonial rule, which asserted itself through masculinist iteration of claims to property over feminised colonial land.[13]

Masculinisation of citizenship was evident in the debates on franchise reforms in Britain through its association with owning property, marrying, heading a household, and defending the Empire with

[11] Granville Austin, *The Indian constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

[12] See the discussion in Birgitta Bader-Zaar's chapter in this volume on the Habsburg Austrian context.

[13] Catherine Nash, "Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland," *Feminist Review* 44, no.1 (1993): 39–57.

violence.[14] Restricting voting rights in India to property-owning men, however, was not simply an extension of this principle to the colony. Within the framework of their 'rule,' the British sought to "recognise and legitimise" a class of men as "natural leaders and representatives of Indian society," who, like the aristocracy in England, "embodied particularistic ideas of legitimate status and authority."[15] The restriction of the franchise to this class strengthened the "structure of alliance" to confront the rising challenge from the INC.[16] The fault lines along class subsequently intersected with another set of divisions inserted by the education/literacy criterion when the demand for voting rights for women became persuasive. As the following discussion will show, these intersecting fault lines revealed the tensions between 'modern' and 'traditional' opinions arrayed along differences within and between religious communities.

In August 1917, Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu declared the British government's intention to gradually develop self-governing institutions in India with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government. The franchise question was addressed by the Southborough Committee, which received several petitions from women's organisations but concluded that women's suffrage was incongruous with the 'conservative' feelings that prevailed in India.[17] Montagu was concerned about the dangers of provoking 'religious feelings' on the issue. He subsequently toured different parts of India with Governor General Chelmsford to familiarise himself with *Indian* opinion. A women's delegation consisting of members of several organisations active in advocating social reforms requested a meeting with Montagu to submit a memorandum only to be told that the committee would receive deputations with political subjects only. Margaret Cousins, an Irish feminist active

[14] Anna, Clark, "Gender, Class and the Nation: Franchise Reform in England, 1832–1928," in *Re-reading the Constitution*, ed. James Vernon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 230–31.

[15] David Gilmartin, "Election Law and the "People" in Colonial and Postcolonial India," in *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*, eds. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Mujumdar, and Andrew Sartori (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62.

[16] Gilmartin, "Election Law.".

[17] Indian Constitutional Reforms, Reports of the Franchise Committee and the Committee on Division of Functions, 1918–1919, 3.

in the suffrage movement in India, was part of the women's delegation. In her book, published in 1941, Cousins refers to the irony of the birth of the demand for voting rights for women in the condition set down by Montagu—in the "couple of extra sentences about political rights or rather opportunities," she added in the draft of the memorandum.[18] A delegation of fourteen women subsequently met Montagu and Chelmsford in December 1917 with the memorandum demanding political rights.[19] The delegation assured Montagu that the INC would unanimously support women's enfranchisement. Montagu's diary notes reveal that he found the deputation "interesting." He noted the presence of "one very nice-looking woman from Bombay, Dr. Joshi," alongside Sarojini Naidu,[20] "the poetess, a very attractive and clever woman, but [he believed] a revolutionary at heart" and Mrs. Cousins, "a well-known suffragette from Bombay" and "one of Mrs. Besant's crowd"[21] as delegation members.[22] To mobilise support for suffrage, the women's organisations framed their demands to convince the *male* nationalist *and* conservative opinion that women's enfranchisement was consonant with the struggle for national liberation and the preservation of tradition. Addressing a special session of the INC in Bombay in August 1918, Sarojini Naidu exhorted the five thousand delegates that enfranchising women was rational, scientific, and politically sound, compatible with tradition, and consistent with human rights.[23] A resolution supporting women's suffrage was approved by 75 per cent of the delegates.[24]

When it laid down the qualifications for franchise, the Southborough Committee excluded all persons below 21 years of age, foreigners,

[18] Margaret Cousins, *Indian Womanhood Today* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1941), 33.

[19] Gail Pearson, "Reserved Seats: Women and the Vote in Bombay," *The Indian Economc and Social History Review* 20, no.1 (1983): 49–50.

[20] Sarojni Naidu was a poet and political activist, a member of the INC and its first woman President in 1925.

[21] Founder of the Home Rule Movement in India, Annie Besant was a British Socialist, and advocate of Indian and Irish self-rule.

[22] Frank Moraes, "In Political Life," in *Women in India*, ed. Tara Ali Baig (Delhi: Manager Publication, 1958), 91.

[23] Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, South Asian Paperback edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 94.

[24] *Report of the Special Session of the Indian National Congress*, Bombay, August 19–31 and September 1, 1918, 109–10.

and persons of "unsound mind." Among those excluded *en masse* were women. Southborough felt it premature to enfranchise women when "so large a proportion of male electors require(d) *education* in the use of *responsible* vote." While all voters were male, only those men who satisfied the specified property criterion and provided proof of paying land revenue, rent or local rates in rural areas, municipal rates in urban areas, and income tax could vote.[25] With the recommendation by a British Parliamentary Committee in 1919 that women's franchise was a matter for the Indians to decide, women's franchise was *domesticated*.[26] During the next ten years, nine provinces that had elected legislatures extended franchise to women on the criteria of age and property.[27]

A Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms (1934) estimated that after the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919), the provincial electorate comprised only three per cent of the population. The complex franchise question was subsequently addressed to the Indian Franchise Committee headed by the Marquess of Lothian, which toured India in 1932 to propose the next Government of India Act. The committee recognised the inevitability of increasing franchise in general and specifically of women to prevent the "drastic" steps the government might be compelled to take in the future to rectify the discrepancy between the number of women and men voters. The committee added 'wifehood' and 'education' criteria to the existing age and property qualifications to enfranchise wives of propertied men above the age of 25, widows of over 25 years of age if their husbands were enfranchised, and women university graduates over 21 years of age.[28] With this addition, an estimated 14.3% of women and about 33.5% of the adult population in Bombay province would be enfranchised.[29] The provincial governments

[25] *Indian Constitutional Reforms*, 3. [Emphasis added].

[26] Barbara Southard, *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics in Bengal* (Delhi: Manohar, 1995), 71–72.

[27] In the 1923 elections only 18.3 per cent of those women eligible to vote in Bombay did so. In the 1926 elections the proportion of female voters to the adult female population of the province was only 0.8 per cent and only 20.1 per cent of those eligible actually voted. Report Showing the Result of Elections in India 1923 cmd., 2514, p.8; Report Showing the Results of Elections in India 1925 and 1926, cmd., 2923 cited in Pearson, "Reserved Seats," 51.

[28] *Report of the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference*, Vol–VI, no. 6 franchise, Government of India, *1931*, 80–81.

[29] Pearson, "Reserved Seats", 6.

were wary that increasing the number of voters, especially women voters, would be challenging to implement and adopted different modalities for increasing the number of voters. Some provinces gave the vote to wives, others to literate women, and still others to the wives of military officers. The Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms envisaged administrative difficulties with the sudden expansion of franchise caused by large-scale illiteracy and non-availability of returning officers.

While the Resolution for women's franchise was passed in Madras and Bombay Legislative Assemblies in 1921, the conservative opinion represented by the 'gentlemen of the aristocracy' in the Bengal Legislative Assembly cautioned against enfranchising women, arguing that 'reforms' would benefit only the *bazaar* (public) women who were likely "to possess the necessary qualifications by payment of rates and taxes."[30] The Hindu and Muslim conservative opinions shared the sentiment that the vote would be an affront to the "respectable" women. The Resolution for women's franchise was defeated in the Bengal Legislative Council—a defeat which was described as an effect of male fears that exaggerated facts into fiction:

> They exaggerated the fact that about one woman to every eight men might (not must) vote in three years into the fiction that every woman would compulsorily keep voting all the time and meals would not be cooked. They inflated the fact that purdah polling stations would be provided into which women might enter as unseen as into a lady's carriage, into the terror that 'sexes would mix promiscuously.'[31]

The Government of India Act 1935 did not accept universal franchise. Still, it increased the percentage of the enfranchised from three to 14 per cent of the total population by extending franchise to literate and married women 21 years of age and above, who also had the same property and taxation qualifications as men. The 1935 Act enfranchised 6 million women and 29 million men, i.e., one woman to every five men.[32] Enhancing franchise based on property, education, and wifehood

[30] Kumar Shib Shekhareshwar Ray speaking in the *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol.IV, September 1, 1921, 324–325.

[31] Muthulakshmi Reddy. *Margaret Cousins and Her Work in India* (Madras: WIA, 1956), v–vi.

[32] Shyam Kumari Nehru ed. *Our Cause* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1937), 372.

criteria augmented the political power of the propertied classes, further disadvantaging the poor. The enfranchisement of wives of propertied men strengthened conservative positions that opposed social reforms. Women demanding suffrage in India were critical of the wifehood and property criteria that did not treat them as individuals.[33] The debates in the Bengal Legislative Council demonstrated the need to present themselves as a "vitally integral part of the body politic"[34] without being perceived as disruptive 'manly' and 'street' women who would unsettle the social order. Women activists resolved the dilemma by presenting their public-political roles as commensurate with their roles within the home. The claim to political rights was invested with a moral responsibility surrounded by respectability, which drew from the social sphere. This 'feminine' domain was distinct from the private space of the home and the public domain, usually identified with masculine activities and attributes. Such a delineation distinguished the 'political' women from the *bazaar* (market) women who were public without being respectable, inserting a class distinction among women, to present a case for those women who were appropriate candidates for enfranchisement. While appealing for suffrage to the colonial administrator, women activists pointed out that their demands were not against 'their' men, insisting that their struggle for the franchise was a 'universal' demand and not a feminist one. The appeal to Indian men to upport women's franchise was a 'moral' appeal.

A Constitutional Right: Making Suffrage Universal

With independence in August 1947, suffrage was no longer a struggle to claim eligibility in the form of 'exceptions' to the norm of restricted franchise. Suffrage was a *constitutional* right—a universal right subject to 'disqualifications' prescribed in the Constitution and by Parliament in the Representation of the People Act 1950. The desire for universal suffrage as an expression of popular sovereignty was recognised as the prevailing public opinion by the Cabinet Mission in 1946 which proposed the modalities for framing the Constitution of independent India. However,

[33] *Annual Report of the All-India Women's Conference*, 8th Session, 1933–34 (AIWC, Calcutta, 1934), 252.

[34] Annual Report, AIWC, 252.

the 'public opinion' that the Constituent Assembly should be elected directly by the people of India based on universal adult franchise was discarded because of the delay the process would cause.[35]

Within the Constituent Assembly, a prior consensus existed on universal suffrage, drawing from the anti-colonial movement. Some dissonant notes persisted, however, to argue for restricted franchise. Resonating perspectives on democracy that advocate 'narrow suffrage' to preserve the principle of 'elite rule,' opposition to universal franchise was made on the ground that without an enlightened electorate, parliamentary democracy would be impossible.[36] However, the President of the Constituent Assembly ruled that the Assembly had already accepted universal adult franchise as a *principle* of parliamentary democracy.[37] A Parliament embodying popular sovereignty was considered necessary to make a rupture from the colonial past. The debates in the Constituent Assembly from December 1946, when the Objectives Resolution was adopted, to November 1949, when the Constitution was adopted, reflected apprehensions about the fragility of democracy in a context where it lacked entrenchment. Yet, the parliamentary system had wide acceptance since it allowed "daily control" over the executive, offered the possibility of effective opposition to the government, and afforded democratic representation buttressed by universal adult franchise. Belief in the principles of parliamentary democracy and the "nearly universal" support for adult suffrage to be exercised through direct elections was done "with abundant faith in the common man and belief in the ultimate success of democratic rule."[38] The Constitution also envisaged India as a social democracy. Part IV of the Constitution consists of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which lay down social and economic justice norms and the goal of substantive welfare, which were to guide social policy. The directive principles were considered imperative in a society where deep-seated inequalities would make political equality insufficient for establishing a durable democracy.

There was no substantial discussion within the Constituent Assembly on electoral design. While proportional representation was considered

[35] Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution*, Vol. 5, 470.

[36] B. Prasad, CAD, 16 June 1949.

[37] R. Prasad, CAD, Ibid.

[38] Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar cited in Austin, *The Indian Constitution*, 46.

appropriate for effective representation of minority communities and for containing the 'tyranny of the majority,' it was discarded for being too complex. The Constituent Assembly favoured the First Past the Post System (FPTP)—familiar, simple, and conducive to providing a cohesive and stable government. The Constituent Assembly did not consider democracy as a problem of design and believed in the efficacy of parliamentary government to ensure representation through deliberation and accountability, even in a majoritarian system. The Advisory Committee on Minorities and Fundamental Rights, a committee of the Constituent Assembly responsible for framing fundamental rights, recommended setting up an Election Commission of India (ECI) as an autonomous constitutional body to conduct elections to different representative bodies. The committee was concerned about preserving the right to vote and the secrecy of the vote, which made its appropriate location not in the section on fundamental rights but in a separate chapter on 'Elections.'[39] The Constituent Assembly deemed this was not a "lighthearted" decision but a "proper" placement to determine the 'eligibility' of electors.[40]

The location of franchise provisions in a chapter on Elections in the Constitution of India is significant since it implies that franchise is not one of the 'fundamental' rights inscribed separately. While electoral laws enacted by Parliament regulate the conditions in which citizens can vote, the right to vote is not a statutory 'privilege' that can be withdrawn at will. However, its 'entrenchment' as a constitutional right depends on the effective discharge by the ECI of its responsibility of conducting elections. With its placement in the constitutional architecture in the chapter on Elections, suffrage is woven into the *administrative* responsibility of the ECI to prepare electoral rolls (Article 324) based on the 'eligibility' of 'electors' as prescribed in the Constitution (Article 326). While providing adult suffrage, Article 326 gives effect to the constitutional principle of equality of the citizen-voter. No person can be excluded from the electoral roll on grounds "only of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them." Yet, the Article also prepares the foundation for statutory abridgement of this right by giving the legislature the power to prescribe

[39] Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution*, Vol. 2, 295–96.

[40] T.T. Krishnamachari, Constituent Assembly Debates, 14 October 1949 (Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2003).

'disqualifications' on the grounds of not being "ordinarily resident" in the territorial constituency, "unsoundness of mind," "crime or corrupt or illegal practice."

The Constituent Assembly had considered it necessary to install institutional machinery for conducting elections to ensure that a parliamentary democracy based on adult franchise worked with adequate safeguards. Preparing the electoral roll based on universal franchise for the first time in an independent India was a challenge and a responsibility for the ECI. Preparation began before November 1949 when citizenship provisions and universal franchise came into force. The electoral roll was based on the *draft* constitution and derived legitimacy from it. The Joint Secretary of the Constituent Assembly Secretariat sent instructions for the urgent preparation of the draft electoral roll based on universal adult franchise in March 1948, setting in motion a governmental activity of identification and enumeration of the voting population. This exercise was, however, distinct since its objective was not the enhancement of the governmental power of the state but the affirmation of popular sovereignty and the transition to a democratic republic. The process of inserting 'the people' into the state's administrative structures through the implementation of universal franchise elicited "a sense of Indianness and commitment to democratic nationhood." It made the electoral roll part of the "popular narrative."[41]

The Constituent Assembly had envisaged the ECI as a body that would play an active role in ensuring fairness in the electoral process. The ECI's task of "superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls" (Article 324, Constitution of India) has evolved into an obligation to encourage, as the ECI's website states, the "*actual* exercise of franchise by eligible citizens." In 1973, the Supreme Court of India declared a 'republican and democratic form of government' a "basic feature" of the Constitution, which Parliament could not alter through a constitutional amendment.[42] In 1975, in a case involving electoral malpractice, the Supreme Court laid down that 'free and fair' elections

[41] Ornit Shani, *How India Became Democratic: Citizenship and Making of the Universal Franchise* (Gurgaon: Penguin/Viking, 2018).2.

[42] Judgement in **Kesavananda Bharati v. Union of India delivered on April 24, 1973,** retrieved August 2, 2023, https://main.sci.gov.in/jonew/judis/29981.pdf.

constitute an inviolable 'basic feature' of the Constitution of India.[43] Successive Supreme Court judgements have construed the ECI's powers in conducting elections as "plenary in nature."[44]

The 'Universe' of Suffrage

The adoption of "universal adult franchise," as the first Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) asserted, was a "massive act of faith"—implicit in a newly independent country's attempt to move straight into universal adult franchise instead of incremental enhancement, which had hitherto been the practice in most countries. This faith "launched a great and fateful experiment unique in the world in its stupendousness and complexities." This 'experiment' was conducted under the scrutiny of those convinced it was likely to fail and those who hoped to adopt the legal and administrative structures of Indian elections under similar 'illiteracy' and 'ignorance' conditions in their own countries.[45] The *universalisation* of suffrage has been a process of incremental gains and substantial challenges. Discussing the feasibility of universal suffrage, the Constituent Assembly had considered the kinds of problems that would emerge out of the magnitude of the task involved: the *numbers* would exceed "all reasonable bounds" involving "too stupendous an administrative task"; the "illiteracy" of the voters was likely to render the election "a farce" unless a system could be devised in which even an 'illiterate' voter could cast his vote 'intelligently,' and in secret.[46]

Significantly, the diversity of the country and the need to give representation to disadvantaged social groups such as the Scheduled Castes—the official nomenclature for lower caste groups who also constitute a disproportionately large percentage of the poor, was made effective through the

[43] Judgement in **Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narayan delivered on November 7, 1975, retrieved August 2, 2023,** https://main.sci.gov.in/judgment/judis/21398.pdf.

[44] See for example, *Union of India v Association for Democratic Reforms* (2002). http://adrindia.org/sites/default/files/Supreme_Court's_judgement_2nd_May_2002.pdf; **Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and Another v. Union of India and Another (2003).** http://www.right2info.org/resources/publications/case-pdfs/india_union-for-civil-liberties-pucl-and-another-v.-union-of-india-and-another

[45] Sukumar Sen, *Report on the First General Elections in India 1951–52,* (Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1955), 11.

[46] Sen, Report, 10.

identification of constituencies as single, dual, and multi-member. While persons belonging to a Scheduled Caste contested from seats designated as double member/joint constituencies, a practice abandoned in 1961 in favour of single member—general and reserved—constituencies, voters were inscribed in election law as unmarked individuals. The electoral roll was to initially include details of an elector's name, address, religion, caste, name of a parent, and, in the case of married women, the name of her husband. In 1949, the Diwakar Committee, set up by the Constituent Assembly, recommended that information about religion or caste not be in public documents. Anti-discrimination was the basis of registration in the electoral roll, premised on the idea that the voter was an individual unfettered by constitutive belonging and "sedimented social identities."[47] The individual/citizen became the conduit through which the 'nation' could "ratify its own purposefulness" in delivering "the promise of freedom" and fostering "national unity."[48] Unlike the fear of the teeming multitude in other parts of the world, 'the vote' and 'the terms of franchise' became "crucial grounds for authorising a new kind of power and unity," manifesting the collective ability and political will of the Indians to constitute themselves into a state that could claim to be authorised by 'We the People.'[49]

The insertion of the "uncoerced" voter as a "free individual" in electoral law was a statement of the legal status of the voter, "not as the bearer of a particularistic culture, but as a universal vessel of free will and legal rights."[50] Elections in India are, however, embedded in sentiments "grounded in the particularities of culture," manifesting *tension* between the voter's embodiment of universalist claims of a democratic electoral process and exhortations that besiege him/her with calls to particularistic identities.[51] The apprehension that the large number of 'ignorant' and 'illiterate' voters susceptible to the "sound and din" of the election campaign may not be able to make the right choice was a concern,

[47] Uday Mehta, Uday. "Indian Constitutionalism," in *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*, eds. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochana Majumdar, and Andrew Sartori, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

[48] Mehta, "Indian Constitutionalism," 21.

[49] Mehta, "Indian Constitutionalism," 56.

[50] Gilmartin, "Election Law," 73.

[51] Gilmartin, "Election Law," 56.

even for Jawaharlal Nehru in the years immediately after independence. Penderel Moon, a British official of the Indian Civil Service, who stayed on in India and supervised the inaugural election in the state of Manipur, wrote: "A future and more enlightened age will view with astonishment the absurd farce of recording the votes of millions of illiterate people."[52] These suspicions were dispelled when elections were over: "My respect for the so-called illiterate voter," remarked Nehru, "has gone up. Whatever doubts I might have had about adult suffrage in India have been removed completely."[53]

Between 1951/52 and 2019, seventeen general elections to elect the Indian Parliament were held. The size of the electorate has increased manifold from a little over 173 million in 1951/52 to around 912 million in 2019. The voter turnout has increased from 61.2% to 67.4%, with the turnout of women voters rising from 35.6% in 1951/52 to 67.2% in 2019, overtaking the male voter turnout, which stood at 67.0% in 2019.[54] The steady decrease in the gender gap and, subsequently, in women turning out to vote in consequential numbers is partly because of the Election Commission's efforts to improve the 'roll gender ratio' by enrolling women, the 'electoral population ratio' by ensuring that the names of those eligible to vote were on the electoral roll, and the 'EPIC ratio' by ascertaining that all those whose names were on the electoral roll were also in possession of the Electoral Photo Identification Cards (EPIC). Between 1999 and 2019, men and women were added to the electoral roll at the same pace. However, the number of women voters grew between 1989 and 2019 by over 75 per cent, compared to a 50 per cent increase in male voters, making the increase in voter turnout in India largely "a female story."[55]

Universal suffrage is shaped by the social location of individuals and the historical disadvantages suffered by groups. Historically, the voter was burdened by the 'deference legitimation' claimed by a caste-based status society and the gender norms that sustained social relations. With

[52] Ramachanchra Guha, "Democracy's Biggest Gamble: India's First Free Elections in 1952," *World Policy Journal* 19, no. 1 (2002): 101.

[53] Guha,"Democracies Biggest Gamble," 101–02.

[54] Ujjwal Kumar Singh and Anupama Roy, *Election Commission of India: Institutionalising Democratic Uncertainties* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), 261.

[55] Rukmini S., Whole Numbers and Half Truths: What Data Can and Cannot Tell us about India (Chennai: Contexts, 2012), 59–60.

the institutionalisation of decentralised participatory democracy at the local level in the *panchayat* institutions[56] and the pluralisation of the political field into a competitive multi-party system, with regional parties emerging as strong contenders for power at the state and central levels, the 'voter' became a more expansive category. The rural voter, hitherto tied to the caste hierarchy through a relationship of 'deference,' and the urban poor whose 'transactions' with political parties were confined to 'political society,' became consequential.

The 'participatory upsurge' witnessed among the hitherto excluded groups,[57] indicating the dynamism which the electoral process witnessed in the period,[58] and the rise of the 'plebians'[59] changed the social profiles of the voters and elected representatives in the state assemblies and the Lok Sabha. As conceptualised by T. H. Marshall, political rights came to be wielded by groups excluded from political power through mobilisation around disadvantaged caste identities, which also comprised a disproportionately large proportion of the poor and, although numerically dominant, did not wield adequate economic and political power.

However, access to the vote for the poor in the rural areas and the cities has continued to be challenging for numerous reasons. For example, the requirement of proof of 'residence' documents and possession of election photo identity cards (EPICs) has presented conditions for disenfranchisement. Initiatives by the ECI to 'purify' the electoral roll to prevent impersonation and fraudulent voting have led to charges of exclusion of the poor from the voter list. In 1993, for example, the then Chief Election Commissioner decided that all voters should possess the EPIC and could vote without one only if they presented alternative documents specified by the ECI. A survey conducted after the 2004 parliamentary election showed that only 71 per cent of the voters possessed an EPIC,

[56] The panchayati raj institutions were provided in the Directive Principles of State Policy as units of self-government at the local level. They came into effect in the early 1990s through constitutional amendments which established elected panchayats in the villages and municipalities is the cities. Reservation to women and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were provided in these elected bodies.

[57] Yogendra Yadav, "Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections 1993–1995," in *State and Politics in India* ed. Partha Chatterjee (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[58] Yogendra Yadav, "Electoral Politics in the Time of Change: India's Third Electoral System, 1989–99," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no 34–35, August (1999): 2393–9.

[59] Jaffrelot and Kumar, *Rise of the Plebians?*

and the possession of EPIC was uneven across states and social groups. In 2005, the ECI removed the names of two million 'fake' and 'non-existent' voters from the state of Bihar's electoral roll, which opened it up to the charge of being biased against the 'weaker sections' (the poor, lower, and backward castes) and Muslims.[60]

The purification of the electoral roll has also occurred within the 'national security' framework. The suspicion that large numbers of 'illegal migrants' from neighbouring countries, especially Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh, have made their way into the electoral roll resulted in some cases in the excision of the poor from the voter list. The ECI has empowered the electoral registration officers (EROs) to 'identify' and 'delete' the names of foreigners from the electoral roll. In the early 1990s, the police issued notices to thousands of persons living in slum clusters in Mumbai (then Bombay) and Delhi 'suspected' of being foreigners. The burden of proving citizenship lay with those whose names were deleted. The largely poor and illiterate residents whose names figured in the electoral roll of the polling station were directed to appear before the electoral authorities with documentary proof of their citizenship. Those served notices were not just poor; they were also Muslims, in most cases, who saw the ERO's initiative as an attempt to disenfranchise them because of their religion. The residents approached the state high courts, which upheld the deletions. Later, they appealed to the Supreme Court and argued that they had migrated to the city for livelihood. Even though they did not have citizenship documents, they possessed ration cards (documents issued by the government to poor families which are eligible for purchasing subsidised food grains from the public distribution system), past electoral rolls with their names, school records, etc., to prove that they were residents of the locality. The Supreme Court held that the ERO's notices were "sweeping" in nature, "covering the entire populace of the area" without any inquiry as to an individual's citizenship, and were unjustified. The court found it especially disturbing that those served notices were "by and large uneducated and belonged to the working class" and that the EROs abdicated their function to the police without applying their minds to individual cases.[61]

[60] Interview of Shivanand Tiwari, spokesperson, RJD in 'Biased EC Officials Will Try to Defeat us. But We Believe in People's Court,' *The Indian Express*, 9 October 2005.

[61] *Lal Babu Hussein & Others* v. *Electoral Registration Officer*, 1995 AIR 1189, 1995 SCC(3).

Residence within a territorial constituency is necessary for inclusion on the electoral roll. For the rural poor, locked into migration cycles from the village to the cities in search of livelihood, having a fixed address may not be a reality. The breakdown of rural economies, primarily since the 1990s, has also meant some periods in the migration cycle when people are most likely to be away from their villages. The months of April–May, when the general Lok Sabha election takes place, coincide with the peak period of absences from villages. The split between the life of electoral democracy and the livelihood cycles of migrants has produced 'missing voters' in elections.[62] While the government has been considering extending proxy voting rights to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who are Indian citizens living abroad, and more recently via remote voting by the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) to "respect and recognise the achievements of the NRIs," similar provisions are not under consideration for the migrant poor. While the ETPBS can be seen as enfranchisement of a class of persons who are Indian citizens living in countries where they do not have political rights because of their non-citizen/alien status, it also creates a hierarchy among voters—the NRIs who can negotiate their terms of belonging and present themselves to the state as worthy candidates for political rights, and the 'footloose' internal migrants who constitute the most significant numbers of missing voters and have little bargaining powers.

In January 2022, the Indian Parliament passed the Electoral Laws Amendment Act (ELA) to amend the Representation of the People Act 1950 and 1951. Almost seven decades after independence, the Bill replaced 'wife' with 'person' in the eligibility clause of 'ordinary residence' for registration as 'voters' to make the provision gender-neutral. In addition, the ELA sets out to 'purge' and 'authenticate' the electoral roll. Towards this end, the ELA has authorised linking electoral data with the existing biometric identification system—Aadhaar. The Aadhaar is a twelve-digit unique identity number that citizens and residents can obtain based on their demographic and biometric data. Collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority under the Government of India, the Aadhaar is necessary for a whole range of 'benefits' that the government disburses to the people—in the form of welfare

[62] Shreya Ghosh and Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, "Postal Ballot Voting Rights: The Only Way Migrant Workers Can Make Their Presence Felt," The Wire, 21 May, 2020. https://thewire.in/rights/postal-ballot-votes-migrant-workers.

for the poor or pension for those retiring from government service. The Aadhaar has, however, become a ubiquitous identity document for most Indians, and the UIDAI controls what is the most extensive biometric ID system and data repository in the world. Despite the Supreme Court's judgement directing the Parliament to put in place a robust data protection regime and restrict the use of Aadhar to authenticate the identity of welfare beneficiaries, Aadhaar has become 'ubiquitous' as an 'identity card.' Without an effective legal regime for data protection, the 'security' of the Aadhaar data and citizen's 'privacy' have remained a concern.

Linking the electoral roll with Aadhaar raises the additional normative problem of conflicting logic that undergirds the two 'identification regimes.' The electronic voter ID card is for citizens since only citizens can vote. The Aadhar is not proof of citizenship but of residence, fortified by biometric information, to confirm the identification of those entitled to the state's welfare schemes. Linking the electoral roll with Aadhaar has generated animated debates about personal data privacy and its impact on electoral integrity. The bleeding of the Aadhar identification system into the universal enfranchisement system embodied in the voter ID card has two serious ramifications for constitutional democracy: it undermines the ECI's constitutional mandate of regulating the 'superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls.' It changes the idea of 'the vote' in a democracy from a *right* driven by the people's sovereign power to bring about regime change into a 'subsidy,' 'benefit,' and 'service' delivered to a 'targeted' population under Aadhaar. The transformation of franchise into a service provided by the state is a far cry from the objective of universal franchise in a parliamentary democracy, ensuring accountability and 'democratic disposition' in the government and citizens.

The ECI has a positive and affirmative power to render franchise universal so that no one eligible to vote is excluded from the electoral roll. The ERA tends to constrain franchise by making it dependent on another document, raising the risk of bringing the vote within the purview of political surveillance through Aadhaar. The *voter* has been converted from an agent of regime change to a category dependent and bound by gratitude to the political party in the government through doles. The *labharathy* (beneficiary) voter, recipient of various schemes by the government targeting the rural and urban poor, became an influential force in the 2022 state assembly election in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India, skewing the outcome in favour of the 'ruling' party. This

brings us back to Marshall and the idea of welfare as a social right rather than charity. Charity is merely an attempt to "abate" the "nuisance of destitution in the lowest ranks of society." Social and economic rights as a component of citizenship must modify the whole "pattern of social inequality," which Marshall believed had the power to reconstitute the relationship between social class and political power.[63]

Conclusion

Debates over universal suffrage have taken several turns in the life of Indian democracy. In the years leading up to independence, suffrage was associated with republican citizenship and constitutional democracy, demonstrating an emphatic rupture from colonial rule. In the following years, the universalisation of suffrage was a bureaucratic and political challenge, which required the electoral domain to be 'inclusive' and electoral competition 'free and fair.' These requirements were linked to procedural and substantive questions of democracy—not confined to 'election time'—and encompassing the deliberative content of democracy. Yet, electoral competition has come to have ramifications on substantive democracy and the meaning of the 'vote' itself. The continuous increase in 'costs' of elections, primarily the expenditure on election campaigns, has increased the influence of "money and muscle" in the composition and functioning of political power.[64] The 2014 general election, for example, was the most expensive in India, behind only the US presidential campaign in which, according to the US presidential commission, a billion dollars were spent.[65] Under these conditions, suffrage becomes part of the 'rent-seeking' activities of political parties and the endorsement of policies and leaders primarily concerned with consolidating and sustaining regime power (Table 11.1).

[63] Marshall, *Citizenship*, 35.

[64] Milan Vaishnav, *When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics* (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)*.

[65] 'Election Watch: Indian General Election 2014, Available at http://www.scoop.it/t/Indian-general-election-2014.

Table 11.1 Suffrage Reforms in India, 1917–1949

Year	*Developments*
1917–1919	The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1919) initiated the process of extending franchise to the colonised piecemeal, hitherto restricted to men who owned property and paid taxes
August 1918	A resolution supporting women's suffrage was approved by 75 per cent of the delegates assembled for the Indian National Congress convention
1921	Resolution for enfranchising women on the same footing as men passed in Madras and Bombay Legislative Assemblies
1927	Public declaration of a constitutional future made by the Indian National Congress (INC) in Bombay
1928	The Nehru Committee prepares a draft constitution declaring its objectives to secure fundamental rights for all Indians
1931	Karachi Resolution of the INC announces its commitment to independence; Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic and Social Change proposes the enfranchisement of all Indians above the age of twenty-one
1932	Indian Franchise Committee tours India to make proposals for the next Government of India Act, recognises the inevitability of increasing franchise for men and women, and adds 'wifehood' and 'education' criteria to the existing age and property qualifications to enhance women's franchise
December 1946	The Constituent Assembly of India, consisting of indirectly elected Indian members, begins its deliberations to frame the Constitution of India
August 15, 1947	India becomes independent
November 26, 1949	The Constitution of India adopted, Universal adult franchise comes into force, subject to 'disqualifications' prescribed in the Constitution and by Parliament in the Representation of the People Act 1950

This table was created by the author and is based on the discussions in the chapter

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F. Cottrell-Sundevall and R. Kristjánsdóttir (eds.), *Suffrage, Capital, and Welfare*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69864-4

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