

Module 02: Should Women Vote? The Politics of Suffrage

Evidence 5: Almroth E. Wright, *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage*, 1913

A

Questions to Consider

- What is the author's main argument?
- Who is he trying to persuade?
- What additional information might you need to understand the source?

Document

The woman voter would be pernicious to the State not only because she could not back her vote by physical force, but also be reason of her intellectual defects. Woman's mind. . . arrives at conclusions on incomplete evidence; has a very imperfect sense of proportion; accepts the congenial as true, and rejects the uncongenial as false; takes the imaginary which is desired for reality; and treats the undesired reality which is out of sight as nonexistent—building up for itself in this way, when biased by predilections and aversions, a very unreal picture of the external world. . . .In countries such as England where an excess female population [of three million] has made economic difficulties for women, and where the severe sexual restrictions, which here obtain, have bred in her sex-hostility, the suffrage movement has as its avowed ulterior object the abrogation of all distinctions which depend upon sex; and the achievement of the economic independence of women. . . .To secure this economic independence every post, occupation, and Government service is to be thrown open to woman; she is to receive everywhere the same wages as man; male and female are to work side by side; and they are indiscriminately to be put in command the one over the other. . . .Nor does feminist ambition stop short here. It demands that women shall be included in every advisory committee, every governing body, every jury, every judicial bench, every electorate, every cabinet; further, that every masculine foundation, university, school of learning, academy, trade union, professional corporation, and scientific society shall be converted into an epicene institution [including both male and female]—until we shall have everywhere one vast cock-and-hen show. .

. .What we have to ask is whether—even if we leave out of regard the whole system of attractions or, as the case may be, repulsions which comes into operation when the sexes are thrown together—purely intellectual intercourse between man and the typical unselected woman is not barred by the intellectual immoralities and limitations of what appear to be secondary sexual characters of woman. . . .From every point of view, therefore, except that of the exceptional woman who would be able to hold her own against masculine competition—and men always issue informal letters [of admission] to such an exceptional woman—the woman suffrage which leads up to feminism would be a social disaster.

Source:

Almroth E. Wright, *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1913).