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Period 2

"Compare and contrast the women's suffrage movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the European feminist movement of the 1960's and 1970's." (Question #4, 1996)

The growing emancipation of women has roots in the late eighteenth century Enlightenment and in the French Revolution. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with the 1960s and 1970s, are cornerstones in the women's development in society because of changes these movements brought about. In the later nineteenth century, women (mostly middle class) gained modest rights, such as property rights for married women and more job opportunities. Beginning in the 1880s-1890s and continuing into the twentieth century, these feminist movements' attention turned toward suffrage, or gaining the right to vote. This right was secured after 1918, yet many gains women had won in the workplace were lost because of returning male workers from World War I and shortage of jobs in the Great Depression. These events acted against women and the expansion of their rights. The second wave of feminist thought and action emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This movement focused on opportunities in education, the work force, and sexual freedom. They illustrated their frustration by advocating birth control and abortion in public marches. Women wanted to be liberated from the bonds of motherhood and being a housewife. The population dropped so sharply in the 1960s, that total population in many European countries practically stopped growing. The fact that women's traditional roles as mothers no longer demanded the energies of a lifetime, and new roles for women in the male-dominated world outside the family were opening up too slowly, fueled the resounding fire of feminism and equality that burned within women of that time.

I. Feminist Movements in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries.

A. Background

1. Industrialization and growth of modern cities brought great changes for European women.
 - a. Married women became increasingly separate from their husbands.
 - b. Married women tended to work outside home in poorer families. Middle class women worked in the home.
 - ii. Well-paying jobs were off-limits to women, and a woman's wage was almost always less than a man's, even for the same work.
 - c. Strict division of labor by sex: wife is the mother and homemaker, husband is the wage earner.
 - i. Husbands were unsympathetic or hostile to their wives.

B. Early 19th century movements appear.

1. Middle class women severely suffering from lack of legal rights, discrimination in employment, so they rebelled.
2. Struggle proceeded on two main fronts:
 - a. organized, middle-class feminists campaigned for equality.

- i. Higher education, legal rights, and professional employment
- ii. Organizations scored some victories, such as 1882 law, which gave English married women full property rights.
- b. Socialist women also campaigned.
 - i. These women were inspired by utopian and often Marxian socialism.
 - ii. Argued that the liberation (of working class) women would come only with the liberation of the entire working class through revolution.
 - iii. Won victories and practical improvement.

C. Suffrage movements in early 20th century

1. Suffragettes (Women advocating their right to the vote) in Great Britain.

- a. Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929)
 - i. Led the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.
 - ii. In 1908, the Union had nearly half million women in London that gave their support.
 - iii. Utilized the tactics of the English Liberal Party because of her husband's former participation as cabinet minister and economist of the Liberal Party.
 - iv. By the 1890s, she was the undisputed leader of the women's suffrage movement in England.
- b. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928)
 - i. She and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, founded the Women's Social and Political Union.
 - ii. Led more radical branch of feminism.
 - iii. Group would sometimes turn to violence and vandalism.
 - iv. Successfully gained the Women's vote in 1918 as a main result of major contribution of women to the war.

2. France

- a. Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914)
 - i. Well-to-do woman who did not display ladylike behavior. She did not believe in a moderate kind of feminism either.
 - ii. Beginning in late 1870s, advocated suffrage.
 - iii. She was seen as a radical threat.
 - iv. Argument was women were "ignorant, superstitious, and hyper-religious." If granted the vote, they would restore the monarchy, with Catholicism as its official religion.
 - v. In her defense, Auclert pointed out the word "français" meant French people of both sexes when it came to paying taxes.
 - vi. She pushed feminism in France suffrage for more than forty years.
 - vii. Right to vote achieved after WWII.

3. Germany

- a. German law forbade German women from participating in political activities.

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- a. German law forbade German women from participating in political activities.

- i. Most German women were hesitant to take action because they were not sure of the benefits of having political freedom.
 - b. 1894- BDFK (Union of Women's Organizations) was founded.
 - i. By 1902, the goal of the organization was taking action toward the vote, improving women's social conditions, and expanding education for women.
 - c. The German Social Democratic Party supported women's suffrage; however, they were extremely disliked by the German authorities, and German Roman Catholics. Suffrage, therefore, did not gain much support.
- 4. Suffrage was a necessity for the working woman.
 - a. Suffrage was crucial to meet "the needs of the people...the feeding of children...(the vote is) not a plaything." –Selina Cooper (English).
 - i. Lecturing against "abstract" equality with men. This motivated middle class suffragists.
 - b. Ada Nield Chew (English) started reform activities by pointing out terrible conditions for women in sweatshops.
 - i. Women earned not a "living wage" but a "dying wage." (*The Life and Writings of a Working Woman*)

D. Women and Pacifism

- 1. Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914)
 - a. Sat at the head of the Austrian Peace Society.
 - b. Wrote *Lay Down Your Arms*, which became a European best-seller.
 - c. Brought a respect to pacifism.
 - d. Contributed to the creation of the Nobel Peace Prize because of her relationship with Alfred Nobel.
 - i. Won the prize in 1905.

II. Feminist Movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

A. Marriage and Motherhood

- 1. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, women married late or never married at all. However, if she married she bore several children.
 - a. A third to half of the children would not survive to adulthood.
 - b. Women often died in childbirth.
- 2. With industry growing, more women married and at an early age.
 - a. Industrial development led to higher income and better diet. Therefore, children lived longer and were healthier.
 - b. These trends continued after WWII.
 - c. Baby boom lasted up until the 1960s.
 - i. Mothers felt that two, rather than three children were ideal.

3. 1960s- Rapid Population decline.

- a. Women must have 2.1 children on average if total population is to remain constant over a long period of time.
- b. However, the birth rate dropped so sharply in the 1960s that the total population of some countries stopped growing completely.
- c. The population of Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia was still growing rapidly.

4. Changes in the 1960s-1970s.

- a. During this time, motherhood occupied a much smaller portion of a woman's life than at the beginning of the century.
- b. Average life expectancy of a woman jumped from fifty years (1900) to seventy-five years (1970)
- c. Women began bearing children in their late twenties/early thirties instead of their late thirties.
 - i. By the early 1970s, about half of Western women were having their last baby by the age of twenty-seven.
- d. These were significant changes because, throughout history, the male-dominated society insisted on defining women as mothers (married women) and potential mothers (unmarried women).

B. Sexual liberation

1. Early 1960s- a major revolutionary change for women was that the age-old biological link between sex and motherhood was severed.
2. Women chose to gain effective control over pregnancy.
 - a. Oral contraceptives (The birth control pill)
 - b. Intrauterine devices
3. "They no longer relied on undependable males and their undependable methods." -McKay, pp.1053
4. Physiological changes contributed to these new ideas.
 - a. The age at which girls began to menstruate dropped from seventeen years (early 19th century) to thirteen years (1970s)
 - b. At the same time, the age of onset of menopause rose from age thirty six (early 18th century) to fifty (1970s)
 - c. These physiological changes were probably because of better diet and living standards.
5. Modern women decided to separate reproduction from sex.
 - a. This allowed women to pursue sex for its own sake.

C. Feminists that illustrate the beliefs of the time.

1. Simone de Beauvoir (French, 1908-1986)
 - a. Wrote *The Second Sex* which was published in 1949.

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 - a. Wrote *The Second Sex* which was published in 1949.

- i. Discussed women in terms of existential theory, biology, Marxism, Freudianism, and the literary tradition.
- ii. "Marriage still retains, for the most part, this traditional form...The male is called upon for action, his vocation is to produce, fight, create, progress, to transcend himself toward the totality of the universe and the infinity of the future; but traditional marriage does not allow the women to transcend herself with him; it confines her in immanence, shuts her up within the circle of herself." – *The Second Sex*
- iii. "Marriage should be a combining of two whole, independent existences, not a retreat, an annexation, a flight, a remedy...The couple should not be regarded as a unit, a closed cell; rather each individual should be integrated as such in society at large, where each (whether male or female) could flourish without aid..." – *The Second Sex*

D. National Leaders

- 1. Margaret Thatcher (British, b.1925)
 - a. Became the first woman prime minister of Britain in 1979.
 - i. Called "the Iron Lady" for her strong will
 - ii. Committed to ending completely the government's role in industry and to cutting government expenses.
 - iii. She wanted to endorse a public work life for women, but the internal programs cut the public expenditures that allowed for women to support themselves.
 - iv. First British Prime Minister to serve three consecutive terms until Conservatives feared of the revival of the Labor Party and unseated her.
 - b. She was not necessarily a feminist
- 2. Golda Meir (Israel, 1898-1978)
 - a. Israeli premier from 1969-1974
 - b. She was a signer of the proclamation of the independence of the state of Israel in 1948.
 - c. First minister to the USSR in 1948 and 1949
 - d. Named minister of labor and social insurance in 1949

E. New Feminist Organizations

- 1. NOW (National Organization for Women)
 - a. Demanded equality for women in educational programs, as well as faculty appointments in universities.
 - b. Fought to repeal state laws forbidding abortion.
 - i. 1973- The Supreme Court ruled that abortions are legal before the sixth month of pregnancy.
 - c. Strongly opposed the treatment of women as sex objects.
 - d. Co-founded by Betty Friedan who wrote The Feminine Mystique.
- 2. ERA (Equal Rights Amendment)
 - a. A strong goal for most of the women's organizations was a Constitutional amendment to guarantee women equal rights.

- b. By 1978, thirty-five out of the required thirty-eight states had ratified the amendment that had been passed by congress in 1972.
 - i. Those states that did not ratify the amendment based their decision on the many American women that, if it were passed, would be subject to the military draft, or it would end laws protecting women in the work force.

III. Compare and Contrast

A. Compare

1. A common goal between the feminist movements, in their respective time periods, was to eliminate gender bias in the male dominated society.
2. During the 19th and 20th centuries and the 1960s and 1970s, women used public marches and strikes to voice their opinions.

B. Contrast

1. After the feminist movements of the late 19th/early 20th centuries, women had more support and it was easier to ideas spread.
2. 1960s moved for equality in jobs, pay, and education and sexual liberation. They already had the vote.
 - a. With the right to vote, women had the right to speak out on issues concerning their countries.
3. The late 19th/early 20th centuries did not focus on sexual liberation because it was not proper to discuss. The 1960's and 1970's feminist movements strongly emphasized this.
4. Feminist movements were more common in U.S, Britain, France, and Scandinavian countries. More conservative countries, such as Western Germany and Italy, had fewer.

The feminist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries laid the foundation for more radical movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Women in the later twentieth century had secured the right to vote, and now could more easily voice their opinions. However, the problems and obstacles women had to face did not drastically change from one time period to another. The feminists, in their respective times, faced gender bias in society, politics, the work force, and even at home. Looking toward the 1990s and the present, it is evident that society has come far, yet still has far to go. Women of today still face inequality in wage, even for the same work. Certain jobs that require more physical strength are often thought as "man's work." At school, girls can face prejudice from their teachers. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the 1960s and 1970s have proven that women will not remain silent in a male-dominated society, and may impact future feminists movements that at almost certain to come.

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