

When Jeannette Said “**No**”

Montana women’s response to World War I



Drawing by Mary Theresa Minnaugh

by Mary Murphy

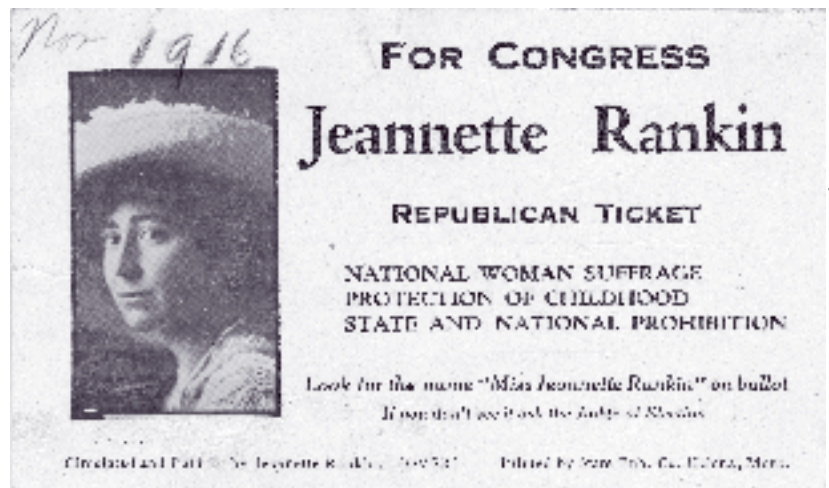
When President Woodrow Wilson called for the United States to enter the First World War against Germany on April 2, 1917, Montana’s representative Jeannette Rankin rose and stated, “I want to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war.” Her position opposing war generated public discussion about the nature of women and men and their political capabilities. It also generated a response from Montana women from across the political spectrum who weighed in on the war and its implications for themselves, their families, their communities, and their nation.

Jeannette Rankin, the thirty-six-year-old woman from Missoula whom Montanans elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1916, was a great campaigner—and she knew clothes.¹ She once delivered a speech for woman suffrage in Lewistown, Montana, attired in a tawny golden velvet suit and a hat trimmed with golden plumes. A reporter commented somewhat vapidly, “[T]hat was an interesting meeting.” An editor replied, “[Y]es, and Jeannette Rankin looked like a young tiger ready to spring.”²

Rankin padded into the jungle of Congress on April 2, 1917. It would be a remarkable day. That morning, national suffrage groups had hosted a breakfast in her honor, and a procession of suffragists accompanied her to the Capitol. At noon, her fellow Montana representative, John M. Evans, escorted her into the House chamber. When her name was reached in the roll call, her male colleagues rose and cheered the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress. That evening, the House and Senate met in special joint session for a grimmer purpose: to hear President Woodrow Wilson call for the United States to enter the First World War against Germany. Wilson had won reelection in 1916 with the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War.” But much had happened in the ensuing months, including Germany’s resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. On that April evening, Wilson asked the country to enter a war not only to defend American lives and property, but also to make the world “safe for democracy.” Over the next year and a half, many Americans would come to see his ringing phrase not as a commitment to a noble human cause, but as an indictment of the hypocrisy of the American state.³

Jeannette Rankin was not a member of Wilson’s Democratic Party. She ran as a Republican on a platform supporting woman suffrage, child welfare, state and national prohibition, labor reforms, and assistance to farmers. Rankin was already a pacifist, but the war was not an issue in her campaign. With Wilson’s stance of keeping the United States out of the conflict, it seemed unnecessary to take a position.⁴

Yet the first vote of a woman in Congress would be for or against war, and it was that link between gender and making war that was foremost in her mind. After days of debate, the House voted on the war resolution on April 6, 1917. Rankin did not respond to the first roll call; on the second, she rose from her seat and stated: “I want to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war.”⁵ Her fellow freshman legislator Fiorello La Guardia later recalled that he was asked if Miss Rankin was crying when she voted. He replied that he



Montana Historical Society Research Center, box 3, MC 286

could not say, for he had not been able to see through the tears in his own eyes.⁶

Rankin’s candidacy, election, and her vote against war sparked a public discussion about the nature of women and men and their political capabilities. Many feminists in the first two decades of the twentieth century argued that women should have the vote and participate in the formal political process because they were morally superior and more peace loving than men. These were arguments based on a politics of difference, a belief that men and women were profoundly dissimilar not merely in the physiological sense, but psychologically, emotionally, and morally—and those differences were all to the good. Scholars have labeled the arguments that women activists used to advocate reform based on this thinking “maternalist politics.”⁷ Feminists and Progressives used these arguments to agitate for a variety of social reforms, particularly those aimed at improving the lives of women and children. As Seth Koven and Sonya Michel summarized, activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries “transformed motherhood from women’s primary *private* responsibility

into *public* policy.”⁸ Jeannette Rankin was an exemplar of maternalist politics. In 1911, when she addressed the Montana state legislature endorsing woman suffrage, she maintained, “It is beautiful and right that a mother should nurse her child through typhoid fever, but it is also beautiful and right that she should have a voice in regulating the milk supply from which typhoid resulted.”⁹ Montana women, who won the right to vote in 1914, agreed.

Suffrage was only one of many causes that drew upon this line of thought. Some, although not all, suffragists argued that women should have the vote specifically because they were not like men—they were less likely to tolerate corruption, power-mongering, and the inequalities of society. These themes echoed in the voices of Montana women who wrote to Rankin and who, for the first time, stood on equal footing with men in debates over the meaning of democracy and the proper role of government. Although no single “woman’s viewpoint” emerged from their correspondence, Montana women from

across the political spectrum weighed in on the war and its implications for themselves, their families, their communities, and their nation. They believed women’s differences should be recognized as a source of strength for the republic.

In the context of war, motherhood and maternal thinking took on complicated meanings.¹⁰ The state considered good mothers those who willingly offered up their sons for service. And the Wilson administration put waging the war first among all causes. World War I posed an ideological and political challenge to feminists who wrestled with their perceived duty to the state and to their own political agenda and tried to determine what would be the most efficacious political path. Those feminists, like Jane Addams, who adhered to the peace movement during the war, exhibited the “maternal thinking” described by philosopher Sara Ruddick: an analysis of war resistance based upon caregiving that sought to protect human beings regardless of their blood relation.¹¹ A rich literature documents the development and practice



“Maternalist politics”—the belief that women would use politics to improve the lives of women, children, and families—was one argument among many made during the campaign for women’s right to vote. Rankin was a suffragist and an exemplar of maternalist politics. When she arrived in Washington in 1917 to take office, she was welcomed by members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, who paraded her through the streets to their headquarters. Above, she holds a bouquet and rides next to fellow suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, the organization’s president and later founder of the League of Women Voters.

In the context of war, motherhood and maternal thinking took on complicated meanings. The state considered good mothers those who willingly offered up their sons for service, aptly illustrated by this cartoon from the *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1917.



of maternal thinking and maternalist politics among the period's activists—women who, for the most part, emerged from the urban middle class and were unusually well educated. But to what extent did less educated, working-class and rural women share beliefs in a woman's culture and maternal thinking? How did they balance their duty to the state, to their beliefs, and to their families? Montanans' responses to Rankin's vote against the war offer a lens to examine this question, a rare opportunity to hear from women who lived on farms, on ranches, and in mining towns and who were not part of any organized feminist or peace movement. Their comments speak to the inextricable twining of class and gender in response to World War I.

While the national press devoted an enormous amount of attention to Rankin's action, she had not stood alone. Forty-nine other members of the House and six senators had also voted "no"; yet Rankin's gender catapulted her into a preeminent position among them. By the spring of 1917, virtually every mainstream newspaper in Montana was either owned by or gave editorial support to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM), whose vast copper reserves were a profitable wartime commodity.¹² Yet, initially, Montana's major newspapers were curiously silent concerning Rankin's vote. The *Helena Independent Record*, the *Daily Missoulian*, and the *Billings Gazette* made no editorial comment. The *Great Falls Daily Tribune* merely stated—without mentioning Rankin by name—that representatives who sincerely believed entering the war was wrong had the right to vote against it, but then cautioned that, now that the die was cast, they were obliged to support the majority decision.¹³ The *Bozeman Chronicle*, however, immediately attacked Rankin. An editorial on April 10 condemned Rankin's vote as not reflecting the majority of Montanans' opinion, which was probably

true. However, first and more vehemently, the editor castigated her behavior, accusing her of throwing "a fit of female hysteria"—his exaggerated version of the mistaken news report that had Rankin swooning after she cast her vote.¹⁴ A month after the vote, the *Twin Bridges Independent* printed a poem by Alice D. Van Cleve, a rancher's wife from central Montana, that included the lines:

We tried out the question with you, Jeannette,
Whether women in congress would do,
Jeannette,
But your very first vote,
Has sure got the goat,
Of the nation, your state, and your friends,
Jeannette.
I'm afraid that you've sounded the knell,
Jeannette,
Of a cause that you fought for so well, Jeannette,
A man's job is rough,
For a girl sure enough,
And you've settled the question for fair,
Jeannette.¹⁵

Van Cleve's doggerel expressed the sentiments of those who believed Rankin's vote harmed the cause of woman suffrage. By 1917, only twelve states and territories had granted women full voting rights, although Native American women were excluded from voting

even in those places, since Indians only gained the right to vote with passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924. Some suffragists had urged Rankin to vote “yes” on the declaration of war, fearing that a “no” vote would signal that women were incapable of voting for war and by extension of participating in the rough-and-tumble of formal politics. Carrie Chapman Catt predicted Rankin’s vote would cost the movement a million votes.¹⁶ But gender rarely acts in simple ways in public debates, and the firestorm surrounding Rankin’s vote was no exception. The responses of people on both sides reflected the complex interaction of gender, class, and political ideology.

When people vilified or praised Rankin’s vote, they were tapping into Americans’ conflicted passions about World War I. Europe had been embroiled in war for nearly three years when the U.S. Congress cast its vote. Even though the majority of newspapers favored the Allied point of view, many Americans opposed the United States aligning itself with imperialist monarchies. The fifty-six congressional votes cast against the war represented the deep divides among the American public over the role that the United States should take in the world, the ethnic divisions of a country of immigrants whose sons

might face relatives in the trenches flanking No Man’s Land, and the suspicion that the blood of their children would feed the profits of those manufacturing war matériel.¹⁷

In Wilson’s speech calling for the United States’ entry into the war, he also described how he intended to carry out America’s mission: taxes would be raised, a draft would be instituted, and “disloyalty . . . will be dealt with with a firm hand of repression.”¹⁸ Wilson soon appointed journalist George Creel to head the Committee on Public Information, the country’s first official propaganda agency, which flooded the nation with pro-war publicity. Councils of Defense at the local and state levels assumed extraordinary powers to enforce patriotism. On June 5, 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act, instituting stiff fines and long prison sentences for those who were construed to obstruct the war. Ralph Courtnage, a lawyer from Great Falls who had written to Rankin in April to chastise her for her vote against the war, wrote ten days after passage of the Espionage Act to express his concern over the changes that he saw taking place in America. Describing the ways in which the newspapers called anyone who made the slightest protest against the war a German spy, he continued, “People are asking where liberty is and what liberty stands for. . . . They are wondering if they still have the security of law, the freedom of speech.”¹⁹

In Montana, where more than 50 percent of the population was foreign-born or first-generation American and where intensive labor strife was crippling the production of strategically important copper and timber, the state government even more aggressively pursued coercive patriotism.²⁰ In February 1918, Governor Sam Stewart



The response of people back home to Rankin’s vote fell on both sides of the issue, but some immigrants whose sons might face relatives in the trenches opposed war, and others suspected that the blood of their children would feed the profits of manufacturers of war matériel. The title of this 1918 photograph is “Over the Top” and shows American soldiers answering the bugle call to charge.



Many of those who disagreed with Rankin couched their analysis of her vote in terms of gender and concluded that her womanhood—and apparent inability to vote for war—had made her election a mistake. Above, Company F of the 163rd Montana Infantry Regiment parades in Helena on October 24, 1917.

convened an extraordinary session of the state legislature to pass a gaggle of laws further institutionalizing loyalty and muzzling opposition to the war, including a criminal syndicalism act and a sedition act. The Montana Sedition Law stated that any “person or persons who shall utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, violent, scurrilous, contemptuous, slurring, or abusive language” about the government, the Constitution, the flag, or military uniforms or who made any statements that could be interpreted to interfere with the execution of the war could be punished by fines ranging from \$200 to \$20,000 and prison terms of one to twenty years at hard labor in the state penitentiary. Montana senators Henry L. Myers and Thomas J. Walsh would lead a successful

campaign to convert the Montana Sedition Law into an amendment to the federal Espionage Act in May 1918, broadening the already wide scope for prosecution under the original law.²¹

However, in 1917, in the months before passage of the Sedition Law curbed people’s willingness to speak their minds, many Montanans expressed their disquiet about the war in letters to their congressional representatives. Of Montana’s four members of Congress, only Rankin had voted against joining the war, and only Rankin and Senator Thomas Walsh preserved their correspondence.²² Because of the novelty of Rankin’s candidacy, her grassroots organizing, and the historic nature of her first congressional vote, hundreds of Montanans wrote to “their

Jeannette.” In contrast, few people wrote to Walsh on this issue. Rankin’s correspondence concerning the war includes messages sent before the vote, urging her either to support or defy the war resolution; many written immediately afterwards, praising or vilifying her; and later replies to a “circular” letter—what we would recognize as a form letter—that she sent to her constituents. The extant letters are overwhelmingly from women. Rankin’s female correspondents felt a personal connection with her, a personal investment in her success, and a confidence that she had their interests at heart. As Mary Stranahan, wife of the Hill County attorney, wrote, “[O]ur women of Montana are very much pleased with their woman Congressman. We . . . feel it is good to have a woman who stands for all good things, as you do, to fill the place you are so well filling—and wish you every success, & all happiness in your splendid work for *woman*.”²³ Mary J. Ash from Kinsey confessed that, like many other Montana socialists, she did not vote for Rankin, yet was “glad we women have one of our own sex in Congress.”²⁴ Rankin cultivated that sentiment. She had campaigned for woman suffrage and then for her own candidacy in every county and community in Montana. Many of the women who wrote to her had heard her speak, and many delighted in telling her they had voted for her. Once elected, Rankin worked to maintain that grassroots network.²⁵

On June 6, 1917, just two months after her “no” vote, and one day after the national day of draft registration, Rankin sent out her first circular letter to women voters. She wanted to know “how the women stand.”²⁶ Although the missive was addressed only to Montana women, it drew a wider audience. In their replies, women talked about sharing the letter with other women, their husbands, and church congregations. One woman’s husband had her read it to a crew of Milwaukee Railway well diggers he was supervising.²⁷ The letter began with the salutation

“Dear Friend,” and continued, “I have been deeply concerned about the war, just as you have been, else I should have written to you sooner.” Over three hundred Montanans, all but a handful, women, from all but one county in the state, wrote in reply. They touched on many topics, but as one woman penned, “[T]he war cloud hangs over every thing.”²⁸

Like many other members of Congress who had voted against entering the war, once the majority



In 1918, Montana passed one of the strictest sedition laws in the nation and severely punished those who spoke out against the war, thereafter ending Rankin’s constituents’ opportunity to openly express their opposition. This portrayal of the U.S. sedition-related legislation appeared in the *New York Herald* on May 9, 1918. The culprits are labeled “Traitor,” “Spy,” “IWW,” “German money,” and “Sinn Fein.”

ruled, Rankin did what she considered her patriotic duty: speaking for the Red Cross and the purchase of Liberty Bonds, lobbying for better conditions in army camps, and offering hospitality to Montana soldiers passing through Washington. But she also plugged away at her platform of assistance to women

and children. In an August 1917 essay in the *Ladies Home Journal* titled “What We Women Should Do,” Rankin argued that the war should not abrogate protective labor laws for women or compulsory education for children, that women must be vigilant in the fight against malnutrition and infant mortality.²⁹ In her letter to her constituents, she reiterated, “While we are anxiously doing what we can to help with the war, we must not forget that the homes we are fighting to protect and the children who are to be future citizens, need the attention of every woman.” Rankin assured her constituents that “in spite of the fact that the women all over the country seem to claim me as their special representative, my first service shall always be to you folks out home, and I want you to feel perfectly free to call upon me whenever I can be of the slightest service to you.” She then went on to comment humorously upon the many misstatements made about her in the eastern press, especially the fact that she had red hair (hers was brown) and supposedly had advocated “sending the fathers to war.”³⁰

Voters were clearly not as cynical as we may be today.³¹ They took Rankin’s letter personally, and they replied with thoughtful comments about the issues on their minds as well as reassurances that they did not pay the least attention to the eastern press and, in fact, quite liked redheads. Mrs. J. H. McKeeman of Clyde Park wrote, “Red hair is all o.k. My Hubby has red hair (hes all right) he first finds out what is right. Then he sticks by it. You cannot change him when he is once convinced he is right. You do the same Miss Rankin and you will win the world. Red hair is all right.” Mrs. Lucy Sherlock, who identified herself as “a homesteader at 54,” wrote from Drummond, “I read all about the ‘red hair’ and also made full allowance for ‘newspaper notoriety’ as to ‘sending the fathers to war’ my own experience is, that is the best & only place for a great many of them.” Mrs. J. H. Conrad from Dawson County proclaimed, “I don’t care whether your hair is red, sky blue, pink, or nile green, I have faith to believe the good gray matter under it will make good.” After expressing



MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, 944.482

Once the decision had been made to enter the war, Rankin did what she considered her patriotic duty, speaking for the Red Cross, selling Liberty Bonds, lobbying for better conditions in army camps, and offering hospitality to Montana soldiers passing through Washington. A war poster is prominently displayed in her Washington office (above).



These “Boosters for the Liberty Loan” are promoting the purchase of war bonds. The image appears on a postcard postmarked in Glendive on May 31, 1918.

MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, Pac 2013-50. 2091

her opinion on the war, and on continuing inequality between men and women, Irene Lingren, wife of a farm laborer in Hall, signed off because she had to go fry chicken for supper—a supper she wished Rankin “could eat . . . with us.”³²

Before and after her vote, some correspondents wrote to Rankin expressing a faith in the simple power of her gender or referencing an essential nature of womanhood when they comforted her for the public criticism she endured. Seeking to influence her vote or responding to the aftermath, they contended that as a woman, she had no choice but to vote the way she did. On the eve of the House vote, Minerva Manning, who ran a hotel in Great Falls with her husband, urged Rankin to stand against the war “with all

the strength of womanhood.” Eva Jane Bailey, whose husband was a locomotive engineer in Havre, told her that Montanans did “not want or expect you to act like a Congressman. We want a Congresswoman who will clothe the services rendered with the undefiledness of

“Women all over the country seem to claim me as their special representative,” Rankin said, “[but] my first service shall always be to you folks out home.” Mrs. Emma Kessler Sweet sent Rankin this photograph of a sign encouraging enlistment in September 1917 to protest army recruitment procedures. It reads “ENLIST NOW 5th & 2nd Regiments of the National Guard[,] DON'T BE A SLACKER Mariposa Hotel, 204 University Ave [Palo Alto, California].”



Emma Kessler Sweet, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, Pac



In their letters to Rankin, most writers articulated complicated feelings about the war. They worried about the men going to war and about being able to plant and harvest without their labor. These boys pictured with their sister and the family garden crop of 1914 would soon be old enough to wear uniforms and fight in Europe. They are Ralph, Marvin, and Myrtle Deem; the Deems homesteaded southeast of Big Sandy (opposite, circa 1915). MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, PAc 2009-49.25



pure womanhood and solve her problems with a wisdom that comes from intuition, which is a prerogative of our sex.” More than one woman testified that “[I]f we had a lady President we would not be in that world struggle.” Maud Wills wrote from Ravalli County to say, “[W]e women out here do not blame you for not voting for war—what woman could?”³³ All these comments, and many more, revealed that Montana women from all walks of life shared a belief that there was something one could identify as a woman’s nature and that it comprised elements of intuition, moral purity, and, if not pacifism per se, then an inclination to peaceful conflict resolution.

Other women who wrote presented a complementary gender analysis, one that demonstrated a similarly essential idea of male character. Lillian C. Steere, married to a teacher in Kalispell, supported the war but was thankful that Rankin had voted against it, not because it demonstrated womanly instincts, but because it illustrated independent thinking. She hoped Rankin’s act would help to revise the “masculine mind and its stupid reflection in the feminine sex.” A few pointed out the gendered irony of the criticism aimed at her. “Are not our men folk inconsistent,” exclaimed Edith Ayers from

Ismay, “they fear lest women in politics should act like men—and now that we have a woman in Congr. they demand that she act like a man!” Birdie Runnalls, who farmed with her husband in Winnett, instructed her not to pay attention to criticism and offered for solace her observation that “even Jesus was crucified at the hands of man. I don’t ever remember of reading of a woman that had anything to do with it.”³⁴ To these writers, it was not only clear that men and women were fundamentally different, but that difference should be celebrated. For them, Rankin’s election brought a new and welcome, uniquely female perspective to national politics.

Only a few of the responses to the circular letter stated unequivocal support for the war. Most writers articulated much more complicated feelings. Mrs. Sylvia McClintick from Big Sandy, for example, wrote that having followed the events in Europe for the last few years, she did not see how the United States could have kept out of the war for much longer. Like several older women who wrote to Rankin, McClintick was familiar with war because her father had fought in the Civil War. She compared the American soldiers in World War I, like her son who had enlisted in the Marines to fight “for humanity,” to the Union soldiers



"Since we have put our hands to the plow," wrote Mrs. Anna F. Holt of Ekalaka, "there must be no shirking of duty or responsibility." The crowd above turned out in Ekalaka to see off soldiers bound for France on October 3, 1917.

of her fathers' generation. Other women who had known war reacted differently. Mrs. Minnie Hallenbeck's son had lied about his age and enlisted, at age seventeen, in the Spanish-American War; he survived, but his health was ruined: he had "never been well since." As a child, Hallenbeck had seen soldiers come home from the Civil War. She confessed to Rankin, "I always wanted to die before seeing another war." Mrs. Louise Coluson of Dillon "kn[e]w what war means—as I passed through the dark days of 1860 to 1865. Yet that seems not so dreadful as this whole world turmoil." Ultimately, the majority of her correspondents shared Rankin's trajectory of thought and action. As Mrs. Anna F. Holt from Ekalaka summed up, "I was against this war, every sane responsible mother of sons must be, but since we have put our hands to the plow there must be no shirking of duty or responsibility."³⁵

Despite the fact that Rankin was single and did not have children, her constituents believed that as a woman she possessed a universal sense of motherhood that would shape decision-making. For example, Mrs. Rosa Ryan wrote from Grass Range, referring to Rankin's statement that she wished to stand by her country but could not vote for war: "I think you said what every mother would have said had she the chance

to do so." But mothers, too, had complicated feelings. A few stated that they were "glad to make a sacrifice" of their son to the war. Others prayed that their sons who registered for the draft would not be called, but if they were—as soldiers' mothers—they would "do all I can to help." A few, whose sons had already enlisted, simply prayed "for this cruel war to end."³⁶

Still others deeply resented the war and especially the draft, which they feared would turn their sons into "cannon fodder." Women wrote with specific concerns about their own sons and sons-in-law, but most extended their worries beyond their immediate families, to all sons. They attached their motherly concerns to a fear of spreading militarism. Citing the draft and the pressure to buy war bonds, Edna Wood in Superior feared the "perminant establishment of militarism in the United States," which she saw threatening "home and children not only my own but all. This is the reason I am watching so carefully the laws that are being passed controlling conditions in our country."³⁷

Far from seeing Rankin's vote against war as evidence of weakness, many equated a stand for pacifism with courage, and they offered a hypothesis that a lack of courage had led to past wars. Speaking of European mothers whose children had already suffered



Grass Range, Montana, circa 1910–1920



Superior, Montana, circa 1910–1918

war, Julia Adams, an ocean and a continent away in Deer Lodge, wrote, “I know a mother feels each stab of the bayonet piercing her son or daughter—feels the course of each bullet as it ploughs its way through their bodies.” Because leaders had not been courageous enough to resist war, she feared American mothers would soon be sharing the grief of their European counterparts “because we have not been, and our parents and their parents before them were not brave enough to face the jeers, the ridicule of the multitudes [for opposing war], this may soon come to us mothers

of the United States also.” Mrs. J. Krischlamer wrote that she had talked with many mothers in Havre about the war, none of whom approved of it. She feared that her two children would end up in the trenches, for, as she mused, “It is easy to plunge the country in war but not so easy to get out of it.”³⁸

As we might expect, women also analyzed the war from a domestic perspective and worried about the home management problems that it would cause. Rankin’s greatest electoral clout had come from the rural counties, and many of her supporters

Women analyzed the war from a domestic perspective and expressed concern over the home management problems that would arise. The call for food conservation angered some families who had been scrimping for years.

there replied to her inquiry with descriptions of conditions on the farms, their concern that the draft would leave them with no one to get in the crops, and their anger at government calls for food conservation, which they saw as an insult to families who had been scrimping for years.³⁹ Echoing a widespread national argument, many women wrote to say that they would not support food conservation until prohibition had been put into effect, since, as one farm wife put it, “[a]s long as the breweries are allowed to buy up the grain and use it for poison, what little we save won’t amount to much.” This argument, too, turned on gender. Another farm wife, Margaret Lytle, wrote from Pattonhill, “I read a peice the other day where the Presodent wanted all women to save every scrap of food, that is all wright, but just look what the men waste in drink, chewing and smoking and gambling. If the men would save[,] their wives and children might have a few scraps to eat.”⁴⁰

For farm families, the increase in demand for crops and high prices for wheat hardly offset the threat of losing husbands and sons to conscription. Women worried not only about the safety of their men, but also about the lack of manpower for harvest. The contradiction in pushing farmers to increase acreage and then drafting them before they could work the harvest drove some women to question the government’s reasoning. Leotha Scott in Chester pointed out what seemed to many a ridiculous federal policy: “The government has been sending out urging all farmers to put in all the crops they possibly could[,] to plant all waste land, which they did as far as was possible. Now just before time to harvest this crop the

government is coming and taking over half of these poor homesteaders and is going to . . . leave their crops to rot in the ground.”⁴¹

Mothers and wives of struggling farmers conflated their concerns for their male kin with opposition to the draft and questions about whom the war would benefit. Mrs. F. C. Jenkins, a Heron resident, noted, “I have 3 sons and 2 sons in law. They are all farmers just striving to make a liveing, all have famalies. Do you think it just to take them away by force to protect some rich mans property.”⁴²

In fact, it is impossible to divorce a gender analysis from the class analysis Montana women presented. Mrs. Jenkins was only one of dozens who saw the war in class terms and who had grave doubts about the legitimacy of the argument that its purpose was to make the world safe for democracy. Women questioned who would pay the price of war, both in financial and physical terms; how the government would protect civil liberties; and whether the Allies were themselves democratic or committed to instituting



Montana State Fair News, 1 (June 1918), 1

democracy. It raised the hackles of Eva Little in Plains to read in the newspaper advice from an English lord on what Americans should eat and how they should economize. Then she continued, “How can we call our allies democratic when they have kings, queens, lords, dukes, ect.? Have we not also got to be careful or we will have a greater autocracy in this country. . . . [A]re we not giving our President more power than even [the Kaiser] has?” Carolina Lochen, a farmer’s wife in Raymond, also questioned the wisdom of an alliance with England: “Is she not, in fact, the enemy of any country which rises to prosperity and, thereby, threatens to be Englands rival?”⁴³

Rankin’s correspondents also shared with her a concern for the state of democracy at home. They feared that wartime infringements on civil liberties would damage American democracy, and they asked her to work toward preserving freedom of expression. A sixty-six-year-old woman apologized for the mistakes in her letter, confessing that she “never had much advantage for education in my time,” but she wondered, “[D]o we dare express our centiment[;] can we hardly call this a free country.” Another woman

and her husband asked Rankin to do all she could to fight censorship and to ensure public access to information. They feared people “who want to suppress ‘freedom of speech’ and are afraid of the public getting to know too much.” And a rancher from eastern Montana declared that those who would fight woman suffrage, “burn a nigger,” or oppose child labor laws were the ones who currently had access to “the pulpit and the press.”⁴⁴ Although many described their scant education, Rankin’s correspondents demonstrated not only a deeply felt commitment to grassroots democracy, but also a broad-ranging familiarity with political, social, and economic issues of the times.

These letters clearly reveal that many Montanans saw World War I as a war fought for domestic special interests and the expansion of imperialist empires, in particular for the interests of Wall Street and Big Business. Contrary to Wilson’s grand vision, they believed the war was harmful to democracy. Anticipating a sympathetic ear in Rankin, women, such as Lillie Emry, were forthright in their proclamations. Emry had just spent seven weeks traveling by wagon from Nebraska to the homestead town of Olive in southeast

Coulter Studio, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, Pac 2013-50. 1761



These Lewistown women posed with the Stars and Stripes and banners that say “FERGUS HOTEL WSS \$1671.38” and “Food Will Win The War.” Presumably, they are celebrating their sale of \$1,671.38 in War Savings Stamps issued by the U.S. Treasury to support participation in the war.



Mrs. Edd Neyer wrote from Bynum (above, 1914), “We are poor people dear Miss Rankin didnt have the chance to secure an education but we understand enough to know that this is a money war.”

Montana. She reported that her family had met few “comon people” on their journey who thought there was a just cause for war. She bluntly expressed herself, averring, “[W]hen it comes to fighting and dying for Big Business there is nothing to make one patriotic.” Wives of ranchers, farmers, and miners wrote to say they did not care to sacrifice their husbands and sons “for a war of the capitalists making.” Many of Rankin’s constituents identified themselves as “common people,” “poor people,” “working-class people,” whose interests stood in opposition to the rich, especially to capitalists, and specifically to munitions makers, ship owners, and other industrialists whom they saw making enormous profits from the war. They were confident that although they might not be well educated, they knew the lay of the land. Mrs. Edd Neyer wrote from Bynum, “We are poor people dear Miss Rankin didnt have the chance to secure an ediuaction but we understand enought to know that this is a money war.” From Malta, Linna Mangis made the observation that “from the way things are looking now it seems as if it is just a war for the rich men to get richer.” She was only one of many who suggested that if the nation conscripted the men of poor families, the least they could do was conscript the money of the rich.⁴⁵

The contest between the interests of the working class and capitalists took center stage in Butte during the summer of 1917. In what remains the worst hard-rock mining disaster in U.S. history, 168 men lost their lives in the fire that broke out in the Speculator Mine on June 8.⁴⁶ The tragedy triggered a bitter strike. To many beyond Butte, the conflict loomed larger than

one of bad relations between the Anaconda Company and its workers. Mrs. Marianne Geary of Deer Lodge foresaw a “baptism of blood that must come upon our thrice unhappy country, the mine accidents, the fearful loss of life and property and what conscription will bring in its train.”⁴⁷

The men and women of Butte who wrote to Jeanette Rankin manifested an intense awareness of class divisions and a desperate wish to have the world outside of Butte realize their plight. People testified to Anaconda’s influence over the state government, business, and the press and to its use of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as a scapegoat for all the city’s labor troubles—thus turning miners’ real grievances into the wild ravings of unpatriotic radicals. To the laboring men and women of Butte, the Company was the foe of democracy, not the Wobblies or striking miners. And Butte, not France, was the immediate battleground in the struggle for democracy. Miner’s wife Catherine J. Penney noted that a captive press meant that “thinking men and women feel their intelligence is being insulted; free press and free speech exist but in name. . . . [A]ny one who dares to voice his sentiments, can and will be punished through the ‘Black List.’” Penney concluded, “We want at home the real democracy that our sons are fighting for in France.” Working people in Butte appealed to Rankin because, as one said, “Miss Rankin has no copper wires to her.”⁴⁸

On August 7, six days after IWW organizer Frank Little was kidnapped from his Butte boarding-house, tied to the bumper of an automobile, dragged through the city streets, beaten, and hanged from a

Milwaukee Railway trestle, Rankin spoke before the U.S. House of Representatives. She had intended to discuss woman suffrage, but events in Butte forced her to address the situation there. First, she recounted her unsuccessful efforts to get any department of the federal government to launch an investigation into the city's labor situation. Then she dropped her own bombshell. She called for the nationalization of metal mines.⁴⁹

Response to her speech was swift. Cornelius Kelley, Anaconda's vice president, labeled it "an unwarranted attack" and closed the Company door on Rankin's efforts to mediate the strike. Attorney G. Edward Snell of Billings assured her that she could "expect nothing from the best element of people in this State." But from around Montana, working people sent expressions of gratitude and support. "Permit me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your address." "What splendid courage was yours to stand before a body of so-called 'superior' men and speak the truth." "You have undoubtedly brought down upon yourself the wrath of the Company men, big and little. . . . That one who is so easy a target for those powerful interests should have the courage to attack them, has put more heart into the rest of us. . . . [F]rom now on we will find it easier to resist the tyranny of a corporation which had all but silenced criticism and fair discussion." Louise Bunnett from Lewistown reached far back in history for her analysis. She wrote, "We admire your courage in bucking up against the Amalgamated [ACM] and your sympathy with and understanding of those workers whose ignorance may at times lead them into acts of rashness[,] but whose grievances are as real and imperative of adjustment as those of those sturdy Englishmen in the past who used I.W.W. methods to persuade King John that it was best for his general condition of health to sign the Magna Carta."⁵⁰

Cornelius Kelley and John D. Ryan, leaders of the Anaconda Company, and their wives became the symbols of upper-class privilege that frustrated and angered Butte's working class. Music teacher Grace Rabbitt Kloeckner, chronicling Company control of the press, city government, and a private armed guard, pleaded, "[I]n the name of justice what chance has an ordinary workingman?" She documented the widening divide between wages and the price of staples and testified to her growing sense of despair and

anger at her inability to give her children the living to which they had a right: "I was raised as well as Con Kelly's wife . . . as well as John D. Ryan's. I have as big ambition for my children as they have for theirs." Yet under the present conditions, realizing those ambitions was impossible, and Kloeckner laid part of the blame at the feet of the government. "The wages we receive is none of the government's concern, yet that same government must provide punishment for law breaking, when their absolute lack of concern regarding the welfare of their people is what makes law breakers." She concluded with the cry, "Let some of the government officials come here and try living on the wages we receive. . . . Fight for democracy! What a huge joke."⁵¹

It is unlikely that when Jeannette Rankin sent out her rather bland circular letter, she anticipated such an outpouring of concern, anger, and bitterness. But for Montana women, what an opportunity! Here was Rankin—a feminist and a pacifist in the U.S. Congress—soliciting the opinions of her constituents, the first women in the country to have a female representative in the national legislature. She asked them to "find a moment to write to me," and they did, exposing a taproot of conviction and belief about the nature of gender, democratic practice, class divisions, and the meanings of citizenship. It was an unprecedented moment in American women's history.⁵²



MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, Pac 81-64.6

Einar Johnson's letter from Butte was accompanied by this photograph taken on July 4, 1916, of a Butte residence flying an American flag and a Peace flag.

Does it make a difference to have women in positions of power? Jessie Nakken hoped it would. Among all the letters that Montanans wrote to Jeannette Rankin in 1917, Mrs. Nakken's is the most poignant and painful. Abused by her husband, Herman, Jessie grabbed at the chance to tell her story to her newly elected female representative. It is almost impossible to believe that any woman in 1917 would have written such a letter to a male politician. Indeed, it was a remarkable act of courage for Jessie to write this letter at all. There was no law against domestic abuse—the term itself did not even exist. And Jessie's letter reveals her fear that if she tried to get any kind of formal relief from a system in which judges, lawyers, and jurors were men, her husband would prevail and she might lose her son.

Jessie's letter exhibits what we now recognize as classic patterns of domestic violence. Herman subjected her not only to physical, sexual, and verbal

abuse, but also took away her small store of money and ensured she had no way to make an income; he turned a pleasant face to the community, while isolating her and denigrating her to their neighbors.

Jeannette Rankin had worked as a social worker. Undoubtedly, she had met other abused wives. Rankin's first instinct was to suggest ways that Jessie might gain some economic independence, a key to escaping an abusive relationship. Rankin's support of suffrage, better wages for women, and better health care for women and children all aimed to give women more control over their lives. Although her suggestions might appear feeble to us at this point in time, in reality there was no system in place to help victims of domestic violence.

There is no evidence that Jessie ever wrote again to Jeannette Rankin, but we do know that the Nakkens divorced in the early 1920s, and Jessie moved back to Indiana to live with her sister, and, we can only hope, find a little peace.



Flaxville, Mont.
July 9, 1917

Dear Friend:

I received your letter glad to here of you for I was wishing to know where to write to you and impose up on you with a number of questions. Yes the war is quite bad but I have got so much to think of to home I do not get much of a chance to get excited about the war as I should.

I was 26 years when I was married and my husband 25 being 7 month younger then I he had been married before when 19 years old in Iowa lived with his wife 5 month, and left her I beleave in Marshalltown Iowa. He apeared to me such a kind hearted man and pleasant, so he won me in that way, not telling me about bing a grass widower till three weeks before we were married then told me she his first wife was a bad woman I hated such woman and he knew it so I had that much more simpaty for him. He told me he did not drink or chew, which he did boath. But that is not our main trouble he is rough with me.

First night of our married life told me he picked up my hand bag (which was white kid with a small

pocket book in side) and opende it and took out my money and said is that all put money in his pocket and threw my hand bag and empty pocket book in one corner of room and said you wont kneed that any more a maried woman has no busness with a pocket book. I said not a word but cryed to know he was rough natured but he did not sware at me till five month after we were married. I told him I beleaved I was in family way. Oh how he cursed at me and said he supposed I would be sickly and he would have to spend on me he called me an old bitch hore and every thing told me my people were poor and I just married him for his money and he did not have any money when we were married with the exceptions of his wages where he was working which he had not spent all he borrowed of his father and of the Dr. we rented of in N.D.

I was a girl that never keped rough company. I did not sware, dance, play cards, but I was not a Christian but resped my parents. I was raised in Ind. my brother and I went to N. Dak to work. No man has ever touched me only my husband. And he knew all I knew of married life was what he told me so he used me rough first six years of our married life I had to let him—14 to 20 times a weak I could not stand it I got poor waighing around 100 lbs wher my weight was 137 lbs to 140 lbs before married

when I would feel worst he would be rougher and
 couss me he was boss and I wasent a woman If I
 had a man like other men I would have to let him
 6 or 7 times a night. We will be married 10 years
 this Nov 11, 1917. our boy is 8 years old lat Jan 13,
 1916, is living our little girl died she would of been
 6 next April died at 7 month of age. I have had
 no moss carriges, but I had operations 3 years ago
 feamale troubl and I was not alowed to take care of
 myselfe as I should and I am in worse condition then
 before. I am skipping a lot, as I see it is to much. My
 glasse kneed changing I have been chewing with
 out teath for severl years and I kneed care in other
 ways and he puts me off from fall to fall. and he
 spends money the yeare round for beer and a lot.
 But all ways tell me I can do without that I do not
 live like a woman and I cannot get a dam sent. He
 likes [licks] me whenever he takes a notion he will
 hurt me or I will do to hard work and do not feel
 so good then he sais that God is poniching me for
 my orneryness he cals me a sun of a bitch. Hoar.
 Hussy. God dam heffer. a thousand other things we
 lived two years in N. Dak on farm I did his chores
 and mine to took care of garden now for allmos 8
 years we are on a claim 320 ackers and good crops.
 We have the horses in good condition, 8 hed, 1 cow,
 4 pigs, a few chickens I am not alowed any chicken
 feed or I would sell and care for my self he cuses
 if I even get postage stamps accuses me of giving
 things away, always when I had nothing to give I
 left him once because he got to licking me every
 day or so and so rough. he is a large man and can
 hit hard 220 lbs. he promised to be good to me
 and for the sake of the child I came back well he
 was better on licking but treated me just as mean as
 he knew how now last winter he comenced to lick
 me again and every time he comes in the house he
 comences call me names I do not answer him for it
 makes him worse he acts like he is loosing his mind
 when we are alone if anyone comes in or he is any
 wher he is as pleasant as can be.

as far as I know he has the neighbors to go to for
 simpy as severl of them slamb me for being lazy,
 and so on. but what do you think if I go to Plentywood
 to get a devorse he will buy them off. and these
 botchlors of his neighbors will tell anything he pays
 them to and may[be] I would loose my boy.

and Oh tell me something to do. If you think I could
 keep my boy and get enough money to suport
 myself and boy would be alowed to take to another

cort or would it be necessary. he wants the boy and
 so do I. he is a Han and dutch and he does not
 see the kneed of edication as I do so I have some
 troubl in getting him in school. he quit school when
 in third grad and my father was a school teacher so
 he throwes up edication to me like it was a disgrase
 Oh I want to see him threw school so bad. I am
 going to sell soap and face cream for a little money
 and if things were quite here I could crochet, but
 so much cursing but I am proud to say that I have
 taught the boy to respect God, and he does not
 sware or use bad words at all that is my ambition
 to raise him right and please help me. my mother is
 dead, my brother is living in Elkhart, Ind. I beleave
 I could make a piecible living raising chickens and
 crocheting and tatting if I would not get anything

Please do not address your answer to me but to my
 brother, our claims join

Mrs. Jessie Nakken
 Flaxville
 RR No. 1, Mont.
 my husband is Herman Nakken

• • •

Rankin's reply:

July 24, 1917

Dear Mrs. Nakken:

I have read your long letter and wish you to know
 that I sympathise deeply with you in your troubles
 and hope that it will be possible for me to be of
 assistance to you.

Were you thinking of filing on a homestead for
 yourself or of taking part of your husband's farm: If
 you had a part of the homestead that you and your
 husband are now living on could you make a living
 raising chickens. I shall appreciate it greatly if you
 will write to me about this and will tell me just what
 you want to do.

With best wishes to you and trusting that a proper
 adjustment can be made, I am

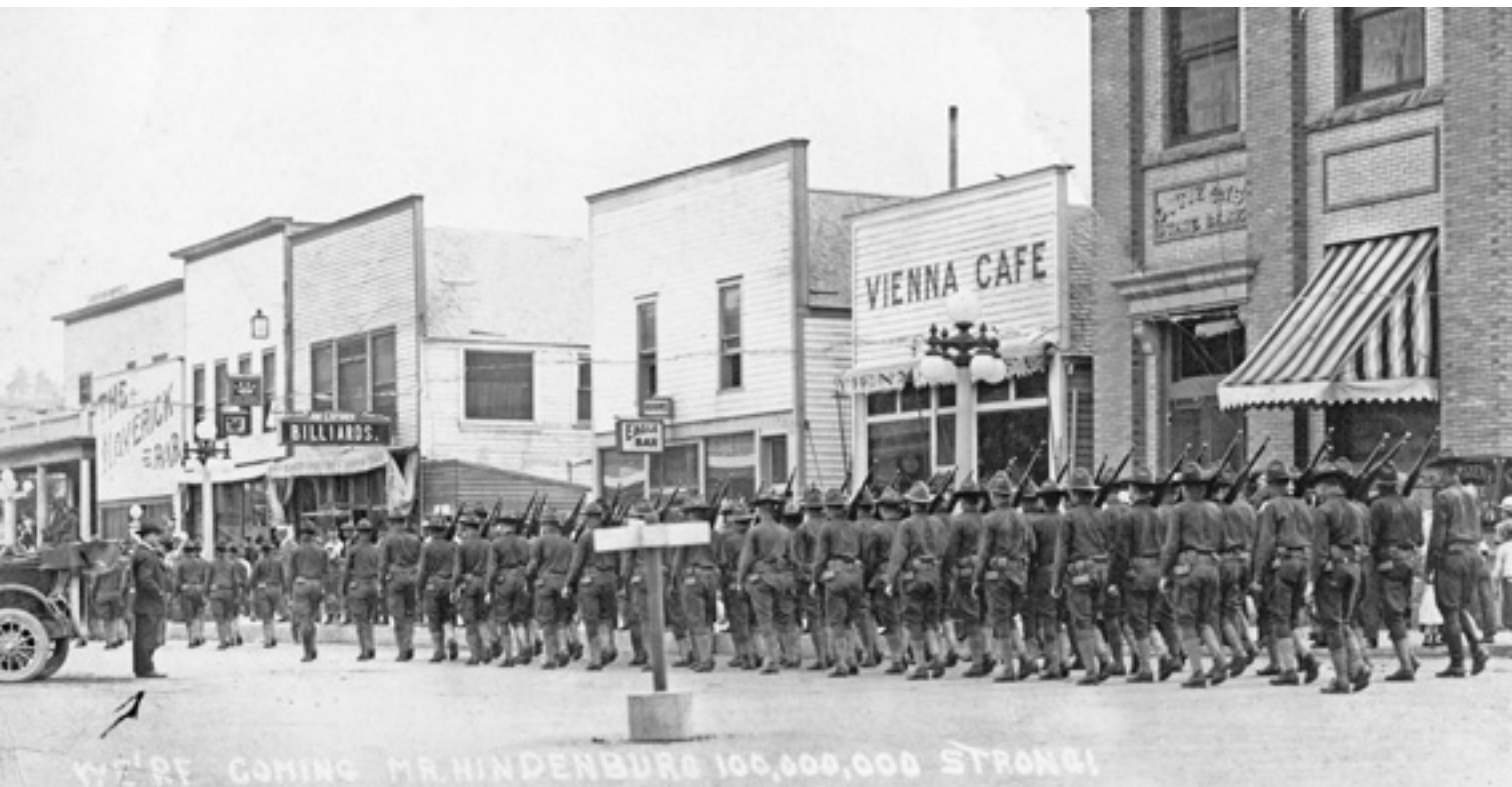
Faithfully,
 Jeannette Rankin

Do these letters tell us anything about a women's culture, about women as innately peace-loving, as sharing maternal thinking? Certainly they are not any kind of scientific sample, but they channel several hundred voices not often represented in the press of the day. This sample of Rankin's constituents enunciated a grassroots analysis of militarism and democracy that combined gender and class in a way enviable to theorists today. These writers spoke from their own experience, and their experience was of a country divided by class and marked by gender. In homely metaphors, women explained how the issues of the war years—prohibition, food conservation, the draft—affected them differently from men. Yet they also asserted a class consciousness that encompassed the experiences of both genders and set working women and men in opposition to capitalists. Their letters illuminate the complex matrix of conflict and cooperation, of family and class loyalties that shaped their lives. They illustrate that, indeed, many homesteading women, wives of laborers, miners, and ranchers, did believe in a women's culture and were thrilled to think that Jeannette Rankin could embody it within the halls of Congress. Yet their analysis of war ultimately plaits gender with class. Working people—

women and men—would pay the price of a war that would benefit the rich—rich women and men.

Perhaps what these letters best elucidate is that rank-and-file writers, often poorly educated, living in some of the tiniest, most remote communities in the United States—a few of whom were members of the Socialist Party and perhaps the Nonpartisan League, but most not—had a complex, critical analysis of the war and a deeply ingrained commitment to democracy. They did not trust what they read in the newspapers and magazines of the day.⁵³ They were not afraid to challenge politicians, but they took voting seriously. In 1916, the year that Rankin was elected, Montana's presidential vote was twice that of 1912.⁵⁴ That year marked the first presidential election in which Montana women could vote, and Rankin's candidacy added extra impetus for many women to exercise their new right. Edith Mutchler was eight months pregnant when she “rode 14 mi on a cold windy day” to cast her ballot for Rankin and pronounced that she “would gladly do it again.”⁵⁵ But voting was only one of their concerns. Montana women came of political age during World War I, a period that one scholar has called “the birthplace of the American surveillance state and the nadir, to date, of American civil

MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, PAc 2013-50.1845



In 1918, T. G. Pappas, Roundup, Montana, received this “We’re coming Mr. Hindenburg” postcard.

Rankin's vote against the war and her support for striking workers sabotaged her chances for reelection. But for a brief time her stylish, female figure, walking the halls of Congress, opened a floodgate to women's thinking and held out a glimmering promise that women's politics could effect change. She is pictured at right, circa 1917.

liberties.”⁵⁶ Montana women proved themselves well aware of those developments. They were absorbed not only with how the war might change their immediate lives, but also with the moral and political life of the country. And in their correspondence with Rankin, many Montana women proved they were not naïve about politics, war, democracy, or the nature of individuals' relationships to the state. A few days after the declaration of war, Butte resident Muriel Zimmerman testified that she could “not see how the interests of the American people can be best served by an orgy of bloodshed and murder.” She believed that “for the progress of mankind new standards of ethics must be adopted by nations and individuals.”⁵⁷

Zimmerman must surely have been disheartened in the following months as the state prosecuted over 130 Montana men and women for sedition; school authorities burned German language books; the Council of Defense forbade Lutheran, Mennonite, and Hutterite ministers to conduct services in German; mobs nearly lynched men who refused to name IWW members and forced others to kneel and kiss the flag; and neighbors turned into spies to report such disloyal activities as not purchasing Liberty Bonds or using too much sugar.⁵⁸

Montana would claim to be the state that sent a higher proportion of its population to war than any other and that had a record proportion of casualties.⁵⁹ Yet Montana shared with the deep South and some other western states one of the highest rates of draftee desertions.⁶⁰ The Treasure State had the honor of sending the first woman to Congress and, with its institution of the Sedition Law, the dubious distinction of passing perhaps the most restrictive civil liberties law in American history. These actions propelled Montana politics to the national stage.

Rankin's vote against the war and, even more, her support for striking workers sabotaged her chances for reelection. But for a brief time her stylish, female figure, walking the halls of the U.S. Capitol, opened



MHS Photograph Archives, Helena, PAc 90-23

a floodgate to women's thinking and held out a glimmering promise that women's politics could effect change. Perhaps Susie Yundel from Butte best expressed the sentiments of the majority of women who confided in Jeannette Rankin: “The trouble with the world at this age [is] they value property and money more than life when life ought to come first. I am glad you was elected in Montana. . . . Protect humanity.”⁶¹

Mary Murphy is a Distinguished Professor at Montana State University–Bozeman, where she teaches in the Department of History and Philosophy. She is the author of *Mining Cultures: Men, Women and Leisure in Butte, 1914–41* and *Hope in Hard Times: New Deal Photographs of Montana*. Special thanks to Dale Martin, Anastatia Sims, and Natalie Scheidler for their thorough and helpful reading of this essay.

Notes

Abbreviations used in the notes include Collection (Coll.); Jeannette Rankin (JR); Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena (MHS); *Montana The Magazine of Western History* (Montana); Box 329, sub-series B, series VI, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa, Iowa City (Redpath Coll.) Unless otherwise noted, all newspapers were published in Montana.

When Jeannette Said “No”

1. James J. Lopach and Jean A. Luckowski, *Jeannette Rankin: A Political Woman* (Boulder, CO, 2005) discusses Rankin’s campaigning in depth.

2. Belle Fligelman Winestone, interview by Helen Bonner, July 14, 1980, transcript, p. 3, Oral History 104-4 and 104-5, K. Ross Toole Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, University of Montana, Missoula. Winestone, a suffragist and journalist, accompanied Rankin to Washington as a member of her staff. Her memory shifts as to which predatory cat the Lewistown editor compared Rankin. In her essay “Mother Was Shocked,” *Montana* 24 (Summer 1974): 70–79, Winestone recalls the editor referring to Ms. Rankin as a panther.

3. On Wilson’s evolving position and his speeches leading up to the declaration of war, see Robert W. Tucker, “A Benediction on the Past: Woodrow Wilson’s War Address,” *World Policy Journal* 17 (Summer 2000): 77–93. The exact phrasing in his speech was, “The world must be made safe for democracy.” Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 41, Jan. 24–Apr. 6, 1917 (Princeton, NJ, 1983), 525.

4. On Rankin’s pacifism and the war as a campaign issue, see Norma Smith, *Jeannette Rankin, America’s Conscience* (Helena, MT, 2002), 101–102; and Joan Hoff Wilson, “Peace is a Woman’s Job”: Jeannette Rankin and American Foreign Policy: The Origins of Her Pacifism,” *Montana* 30 (Winter 1980): 28–41.

5. Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*, 112.

6. Fiorello H. La Guardia, *The Making of an Insurgent: An Autobiography, 1882–1919* (Philadelphia, 1948), 141.

7. These arguments are reviewed in Linda Gordon, “The Peaceful Sex? On Feminism and the Peace Movement,” *NWSA Journal* 2 (Autumn 1990): 624–34; Ruth Roach Pierson, ““Did Your Mother Wear Army Boots?” Feminist Theory and Women’s Relation to War, Peace and Revolution,” in *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical*

Perspectives, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden, and Shirley Ardener (Madison, WI, 1988), 205–28; Joyce Berkman, “Feminism, War, and Peace Politics: The Case of World War I,” in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Savage, MD, 1990), 141–60; Lynn M. Weiner et al., “International Trends: Maternalism as a Paradigm,” *Journal of Women’s History* 5 (Fall 1993): 95–131; and Felicia A. Kornbluh, “The New Literature on Gender and the Welfare State: The U.S. Case,” *Feminist Studies* 22 (Spring 1996): 171–98.

8. “Introduction: ‘Mother Worlds,’” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York, 1993), 2.

9. Rankin’s speech is quoted in John C. Board, “The Lady from Montana,” *Montana* 17 (July 1967): 6.

10. On images of motherhood during World War I, see Susan Zeiger, “She Didn’t Raise Her Boy to be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War,” *Feminist Studies* 22 (Spring 1996): 7–39.

11. Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York, 1989); Sara Ruddick, “Notes Toward a Feminist Peace Politics,” in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 109–27; Alison Bailey, “Mothering, Diversity, and Peace: Comments on Sara Ruddick’s Feminist Maternal Peace Politics,” in *Bringing Peace Home: Feminism, Violence, and Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady (Bloomington, IN, 1996), 88–105.

12. Dennis L. Swibold, *Copper Chorus: Mining, Politics, and the Montana Press, 1889–1959* (Helena, MT, 2006), 158.

13. “Criticism of the Pacifists,” *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, Apr. 11, 1917.

14. “The Lady from Montana,” *Bozeman Chronicle*, Apr. 10, 1917.

15. Van Cleve’s poem concludes the editorial “On Miss Rankin,” *Twin Bridges Independent*, May 4, 1917.

16. Rankin’s vote on war was a divisive one for the national suffrage movement. Leaders of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, who had pledged support to Wilson, urged Rankin to vote for the war; Alice Paul of the National Woman’s Party lobbied her to vote against it. Lopach and Luckowski, *Jeannette Rankin*, 148–49; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*, 108–13.

17. See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York, 1980) for an overview of tensions in American society at the beginning of the war.

18. Ibid., 14. Also see Harry N. Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties, 1917–1921* (Ithaca, NY, 1960).

19. Ralph E. Courtneage to Jeannette Rankin (hereafter JR), Great Falls, Apr. 12, 1917, and June 15, 1917, fldr 4, box 10, Jeannette Rankin Papers, 1916–1919, MC 147, MHS. Courtneage enlisted in the army in 1918. Unless otherwise noted, all the correspondence cited is in MC 147 and all the places referenced in the letters are in Montana. I have not changed spelling in any of the quotations from letters to Rankin and have added punctuation only if necessary to clarify meaning.

20. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Atlas of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1914), plate 147.

21. Criminal syndicalism was defined as “the doctrine which advocates crime, violence, force, arson, destruction of property, sabotage, or . . . any such acts, as a means of accomplishing or effecting industrial or political ends, or as a means of effecting industrial or political revolution.” For all the laws passed during the special session, see *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana Passed by the Extraordinary Session of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly* (Helena, MT, 1918). On the issue of repression of civil liberties during World War I and the ensuing Red Scare, see Clemens P. Work, *Darkest before Dawn: Sedition and Free Speech in the American West* (Albuquerque, NM, 2005); Arnon Gutfield, *Montana’s Agony: Years of War and Hysteria, 1917–1921* (Gainesville, FL, 1979); Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest, 1917–1940* (New York, 1983); William Preston Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903–1933* (Cambridge, MA, 1963); and Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York, 2008).

22. Thomas J. Walsh’s Papers are in the Library of Congress. See J. Leonard Bates, *Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana* (Urbana, IL, 1999) on Walsh’s position on the war. Rankin’s papers are in several collections: in the Montana Historical Society, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, the University of Georgia Library, and

Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Only MHS has significant material from the World War I period.

23. Mary V. P. Stranahan, Havre, to JR, July 30, 1917, fldr 1, box 7.

24. Mrs. Mary J. Ash, Kinsey, to JR, June 18, 1917, fldr 2, box 2.

25. Belle Fligelman Winestine, Rankin's administrative assistant, recollected that they had begun using direct mail in Rankin's campaign for representative. They obtained the voter registration lists from each county and mailed handwritten penny postcards to all women who were registered, urging them to vote for Rankin. From an interview with Winestine in Thomas N. Bethell, Deborah E. Tuck, and Michael S. Clark, ed., *The Native Home of Hope: People and the Northern Rockies* (Salt Lake City, UT, 1986), 24.

26. The circular letter and replies are in the Rankin Papers. The circular letter is in fldr 3, box 2. Rankin wrote to a fellow suffragist, Cornelia Swinerton, in May 1917 that "all of this intense war feeling has grown since I left Montana and it has been very hard to be sure how the women stand. . . . I am getting out a letter . . . to all the woman voters." Lopach and Luckowski, *Jeannette Rankin*, 55–56. It is difficult to know how to assess the representativeness of the letters in this collection. They are evidently a small sample of the mail she received. Belle Fligelman Winestine, whose main job was to answer Rankin's mail, recalled that during her first term she received "a couple of sacks" every morning from all over the world. A contemporary article, in *The Literary Digest* 55 (Aug. 11, 1917): 43, stated that Rankin received approximately three hundred letters a day. That volume is not represented in any of the Rankin collections.

27. Ethel Carver to JR, Plevna, July 8, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Dr. Maria C. Crafft, Anaconda, to JR, June 22, 1917, *ibid.*

28. Mary O. Learn, Lewistown, to JR, June 22, 1917, fldr 5, box 2.

29. Jeannette Rankin, "What We Women Should Do," *Ladies' Home Journal*, Aug. 1917, 17.

30. On October 13, 1916, the *New York Times* ran a story, "The House Beautiful," a facetious piece about Rankin's nomina-

tion and the aesthetic contribution she would make to the House of Representatives, reporting that Rankin "is said to be 'tall, with a wealth of red hair.'" The reference to "sending fathers to war" may have been in response to a comment she had made years earlier in Butte during the suffrage campaign: "If they are going to have war, they ought to take the old men and leave the young to propagate the race." Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*, 101. Also, in May 1917, when she voted for a conscription bill that exempted nineteen- and twenty-year-olds, a Washington newspaper reported that Rankin wanted to withhold young unmarried men from the army so that "the mothers of the next few years will not have to pick their mates from the old men, the feeble and the worst of the race." Lopach and Luckowski, *Jeannette Rankin*, 150.

31. On reading political constituents' letters, see Jacquelyn Hall et al., *Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987); Alice Kessler-Harris, "Gender Ideology in Historical Reconstruction: A Case Study from the 1930s," *Gender and History* 1 (Spring 1989): 31–49; Margaret Hobbs, "Rethinking Antifeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice Kessler-Harris," *Gender & History* 5 (Spring 1993): 4–15; and Leila A. Sussmann, *Dear FDR: A Study of Political Letter-Writing* (Totowa, NJ, 1963).

32. Mrs. J. H. McKeeman, Clyde Park, to JR, June 18, 1917, fldr 6, box 2; Lucy Sherlock, Drummond, to JR, July 25, 1917, *ibid.*; Mrs. J. H. Conrad, Edwards, to JR, n.d., fldr 2, box 2; Irene Lingren, Hall, to JR, Aug. 16, 1917, fldr 5, box 2.

33. Minerva Manning, Great Falls, to JR, Mar. 31, 1917, fldr 5, box 10; Eva Jane Bailey, Havre, to JR, June 20, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Maud J. Wills, Woodside, to JR, Aug. 15, 1917, fldr 13, box 6.

34. Lillian C. Steere, Kalispell, to JR, May 15, 1917, fldr 6, box 10; Mrs. C. C. Ayers, Ismay, to JR, June 5, 1917, fldr 11, box 2; Birdie Runnalls, Winnett, to JR, Aug. 24, 1917, fldr 1, box 7.

35. Sylvia McClintick, Big Sandy, to JR, June 18, 1917, fldr 6, box 2; Minnie Wiegert Hallenbeck, Freewater, to JR, June 28, 1917, fldr 4, box 2; Louise Coluson,

Dillon, to JR, n.d., fldr 2, box 2; Anna F. Holt, Ekalaka, to JR, June 25, 1917, fldr 3, box 2.

36. Rosa Rosa Ryan, Grass Range, to JR, July 5, 1917, fldr 7, box 2; Mrs. M. K. Burke, Butte, to JR, June 12, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Ida M. Crowley, Lewistown, to JR, June 26, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Nettie Haupt, Wibaux, to JR, July 14, 1917, fldr 3, box 2.

37. Edna Wood, Superior, to JR, June 15, 1917, fldr 7, box 2.

38. Julia Adams, Deer Lodge, to JR, Apr. 6, 1917, fldr 5, box 10; Mrs. J. Krischlamer, Havre, to JR, July 11, 1917, fldr 5, box 2.

39. Ellis Waldron and Paul B. Wilson, *Atlas of Montana Elections, 1889–1976* (Missoula, MT, 1978), 63.

40. Birdie Runnalls, Winnett, to JR, Aug. 24, 1917, fldr 1, box 7; Margaret Lytle, Pattonhill, to JR, July 24, 1917, fldr 5, box 2.

41. Leotha Scott, Chester, to JR, July 23, 1917, fldr 7, box 2.

42. Mrs. F. C. Jenkins, Heron, to JR, June 12, 1917, fldr 4, box 2.

43. Eva C. Little, Plains, to JR, June 26, 1917, fldr 5, box 2; and Carolina Lochen, Raymond, to JR, June 24, 1917, fldr 5, box 2. The twining of gender and class and their relationship to memories and experiences of World War I is discussed in Angela Woollacott, "Sisters and Brothers in Arms: Family, Class, and Gendering in World War I Britain," in Cooke and Woollacott, *Gendering War Talk*, 128–47.

44. Mrs. J. Corad, Whitefish, to JR, June 18, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Ethel Carver to JR, Plevna, July 8, 1917, fldr 2, box 2; Jack Shaughnessy, Circle, to JR, May 10, 1917, fldr 6, box 10.

45. Lillie Emry, Olive, to JR, June 13, 1917, fldr 3, box 2; Mrs. T. B. Greene, White Pine, to JR, June 1917, fldr 3, box 2; Katharine McBride, Kalispell, to JR, June 23, 1917, fldr 6, box 2; Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Laidlaw, Ethan A. Laidlaw, B. E. Laidlaw, Butte, to JR, Mar. 10, 1917, fldr 9, box 3; Mrs. Edd Neyer, Bynum, to JR, Aug. 1, 1917, fldr 6, box 2; and Mrs. John N. Mangis, Malta, to JR, June 27, 1917, fldr 6, box 2.

46. Michael Punke, *Fire and Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster of 1917* (New York, 2006). The fire broke out in the Granite Mountain shaft and spread

Panoramic photo of the Sixty-fifth Congress. Jeannette Rankin sits in the front row near the center, wearing a hat.



to its sister shaft, the Speculator, both owned by the North Butte Mining Company. In Butte, the disaster has always been referred to as the Speculator fire.

47. Marianne Geary, Deer Lodge, to JR, n.d., fldr 3, box 2.

48. Affidavit, Catherine J. Penney, Butte, n.d., fldr 8, box 7, Montana Attorney General's Office Records, 1893–1969, RS 76, MHS; Ella W. and W. A. Grandey, Whitehall, to JR, n.d., fldr 5, box 10.

49. "Congress, House of Representatives, Representative Rankin of Montana speaking on the Production of Copper and the Labor Unions," 65th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (Aug. 7, 1917), vol. 55, pt. 6, p. 5896.

50. C. F. Kelley to JR, Aug. 12, 1917, fldr 9, box 1; G. E. Snell, Billings, to JR, Aug. 29, 1917, fldr 10, box 1; O. H. McGill, Great Falls, to JR, Aug. 7, 1917, fldr 9, box 1; Lavinia T. Fisher and Emma Reid, Butte, to JR, Aug. 8, 1917, fldr 9, box 1; Lawrence A. Wilson, Butte, to JR, Aug. 25, 1917, fldr 9, box 1; Louise H. Bunnett, Lewistown, to JR, Aug. 26, 1917, fldr 11, box 2.

51. Grace Rabbitt Kloeckner, Butte, to JR, Aug. 1917, fldr 9, box 1.

52. The issue of women finding a language and voice to discuss war is analyzed in Melissa Hall, "Militarism, Gender, and the Imagery of the First World War," *Phoebe* 3 (Fall 1991): 26–52; and Margaret R. Higonnet, "Not So Quiet in No-Woman's-Land," in Cooke and Wool-lacott, *Gendering War Talk*, 205–26.

53. Despite how geographically isolated many Montanans were, they were also remarkably well informed. Birdie Runnells told Rankin her family subscribed to newspapers from Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri, and Great Falls as well as a temperance newspaper and five or six leading magazines. Birdie Runnells, Winnett, to JR, Aug. 24, 1917, fldr 1, box 7. Percy Wollaston in his memoir, *Homesteading* (New York, 1997), described how neighbors agreed to subscribe to different publications so they could share them.

54. Ellis and Waldron, *Atlas of Montana Elections*, 61.

55. Edith M. Mutchler, Chester, to JR, June 24, 1917, fldr 6, box 2.

56. Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 11. For case

studies of the WW I draft in four states, see Gerald E. Shenk, "Work or Fight!" *Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One* (New York, 2005). See Kimberley Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women and the First World War* (Urbana, IL, 2008) for an analysis of how women conceptualized citizenship in the specific context of WW I.

57. Muriel Zimmerman, Butte, to JR, Apr. 11, 1917, fldr 6, box 10.

58. See Work, *Darkest before Dawn*, for an account of these events across Montana. Also see *Lewis and Clark County in the World War: A Record of the Achievements of Those Who Sacrificed Abroad and at Home* (Butte, MT, n.d.) for a general description of the surveillance activities of the American Protective League in Montana.

59. One of the earliest iterations of this claim was in Tom Stout, ed. *Montana: Its Story and Biography* (Chicago, 1921), 651–52.

60. Keith, *Rich Man's War*, 5. Also see Shenk, "Work or Fight!"

61. Susie Yundel, Butte, to JR, June 14, 1917, fldr 7, box 2.

