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The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1976
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THE ROLE OF WOMAN DEPUTIES IN THE GERMAN
NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND
THE REICHSTAG: 1919-1933

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Patricia Leonard Fessenden, B.A., M.A.

* * * * * *

The Ohio State University
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PREFACE

In the political climate of the late 1960's and early 1970's new women's movements grew up in most Western nations. Seeking to play a greater role in society, women stressed equal rights, equal pay for equal work, and increased educational opportunities for women. Political activity soon became the focus of these women's movements and numerous bills advocating reforms were presented to national legislatures. There were significant increases in the number of woman candidates for political offices and large numbers of women entered government positions. In the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), the United States, and Great Britain between 3 and 7 per cent of the legislators elected in the late 1960's were women. After initial increases, however, the number of woman legislators seemed to stabilize at levels which were far below the percentages of women in society. Again, as in the first two decades after women's suffrage was granted, initial momentum subsided in both the national legislatures and the broader area of women's rights.

This study examines the role of the women who served in the German National Constituent Assembly, 1919-1920, and in the Reichstag from 1920 until the end of the Weimar
Republic in 1933. The challenges these women faced and their participation in a national legislature provide an interesting study of both German political history and the politically active woman in the twentieth century. Indeed, many of the concerns of this first generation of women legislators are shared by women today in the West German Bundestag, the U.S. Congress, and the British House of Commons.

Throughout this study I have been assisted by the cooperation of library personnel at The Ohio State University, at the Leo Baeck Archives of New York City, and at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. I wish to thank Dr. Sybil Milton, Bernice Nichols, and Professor Claudia Koonz for their helpful comments about the study of women in the Weimar Republic. I also wish to thank Professor Robert Bremner and Professor Carole Rogel for their help and interest in this study. My special thanks are for Professor Andreas Dorpalen for his continuing guidance and advice throughout this study. He has encouraged all his students to strive for accuracy, objectivity, and scholarship. I would like to thank my parents, Bruce Riley Leonard and Laura Mae Peterson Leonard, who have shared their lives and their interest in history with me. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Robert M. Fessenden, for his encouragement and support throughout this study.
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CHAPTER I
THE GERMAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: 1848-1918

In the middle of the nineteenth century the nascent women's movement (Frauenbewegung) in the German states focused on the moral, educational, and social concerns of women. Political and economic progress for women was urged by a small number of writers and activists including the "amazons of the German Revolution" of 1848-1849 to which Clara Zetkin (1857-1933), socialist theorist and Frauenbewegung leader, referred in her history of the socialist women's movement.¹ The women's movement did not yet have cohesive, developed organizations with well-defined programs, but consisted of several individual leaders who advocated goals for women in their writings.²

During the 1860's there was a flurry of activity in the women's movement that centered around the creation of schools for young women and the founding of numerous publications for women, such as Neue Bahnen (New Paths), a paper that professed to serve rather than exploit women. Luise Otto-Peters (1819-1895), a writer and educator who helped found a school for women (Frauenbildungsverein) in Leipzig in 1865 and published the first German women's newspaper (Frauenzeitung), was one of the most prominent
members of the early German Frauenbewegung. Leaders such as Otto-Peters, Auguste Schmidt (1833-1902), and Ottilie von Steyber (1809-1970), co-founders of the Frauenbildungsverein, spoke throughout the German states at women's conferences and exhorted women to be more independent, especially economically, from the men in their lives. In 1865 Otto-Peters founded the Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein (German Women's Union) which demanded women's rights to equal education and employment opportunities.

In the 1870's activity on behalf of women's rights continued. In 1872 members of the Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein petitioned the new Imperial Government concerning the right of women to receive solid academic training. The Government rejected the petition, but women's groups were not discouraged, and they began a more vigorous campaign to gain greater educational opportunities for women from the primary levels to the universities.

In the 1880's women such as Helene Lange (1848-1930), a leading educator and feminist writer during the early Frauenbewegung, were working to create better secondary schools for girls or to support those already in existence. By 1891 women were admitted to German universities as auditors (Gast-Hörerinnen) and it was no longer necessary for German women to go abroad for their higher education.

Another faction within the Frauenbewegung, separate from the liberal, bourgeois groups represented by Luise
Otto-Peters, Helene Lange, et al., was the proletarian movement which began to organize in the 1870's. Socialist leaders organized women of the working classes into groups seeking equal treatment and equal pay for women and men of all classes. Early socialist leaders stressed that the emancipation of women would come as an integral part of the emancipation of all men and women from the capitalist system. The first organized expression of the German women proletariat was the Arbeiterfrauen- und Mädchenverein (Union of Working Women and Girls), founded by Socialists Berta Hahn and Pauline Stügemann in 1873. Progress was slow and gains by the Arbeiterfrauen- und Mädchenverein and other groups were often thwarted by the hostility of male workers and trade unionists who felt threatened by the demands of equal pay for equal work.

Die Frau und der Sozialismus (1879), by the socialist theorist August Bebel (1840-1913), was the first major theoretical work about the proletarian women's movement. To Bebel the enslavement of women was an integral part of capitalism and would be remedied only when the capitalist system was overthrown. Bebel and Clara Zetkin stressed that the socialist Frauenbewegung did not grow out of the bourgeois women's movement, but grew from the class-conscious proletariat.

Many concerns of socialist women's groups focused on the betterment of working conditions: reducing the number
of hours in a working day; equalizing pay between men and women for equal work; and improving the health and insurance benefits for all workers. Socialist women joined their liberal, middle class counterparts in the *Frauenbewegung* in supporting protective legislation for working women who were pregnant and for working mothers who had young children at home, and for separate dining facilities and rest areas for women in factories. In 1878 the German government did pass a limited Maternity Insurance Law (*Mutterschaftsversicherungsgesetz*) which prohibited the employment of new mothers for a period of three weeks after delivery of a child. This law was not as much a reflection of the strength of the *Frauenbewegung*, as it was a result of the Government's concern about the falling birthrate in the mid-1870's. In 1882 the government went further and mandated that up to half of a working woman's wages were to be paid to her by her employer during the enforced three week "recess" following childbirth. In 1891 the recess period was extended to four weeks and in 1903, to six weeks.

A third wing within the German *Frauenbewegung* was the Christian women's movement which developed largely from existing church organizations. Christian women's groups generally concentrated their energies on the betterment of social conditions, joining liberal and socialist groups of the *Frauenbewegung* in supporting special protective laws
for working mothers. By the end of the century most Christian women's groups were affiliated with the large blocs of women's unions being formed by Frauenbewegung leaders.

Most small women's groups and associations had joined these larger umbrella organizations by 1900, but individual groups maintained their independence and their differences. All the socialist, bourgeois, and Christian women's groups had developed as part of the organized response to the new demands of women in an industrialized society and their goals reflected this origin. As women assumed greater roles and responsibilities in the work force and in public life, women's groups demanded greater rights in all fields of endeavor. Most of the progress of the Frauenbewegung in the nineteenth century had been in the area of educational reforms and social benefits; in the twentieth century, attention would turn to political rights as a key to promoting desired reforms.14

Not all women leaders in Germany in the nineteenth or twentieth century supported the Frauenbewegung. Frequently newspapers and journals carried articles by women either endorsing the current position of women in society or calling for more gradual progress than women in the Frauenbewegung advocated. One significant faction of women who were active in unions and political organizations but would not be labeled as members of the Frauenbewegung were
the socialists who believed that the woman's question could not be treated separately from the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes.

The best known socialist woman who refused to be called a feminist or Frauenbewegung supporter was Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919), the Polish-born publicist and Marxist theorist. Luxemburg emphasized action in the struggle against society, but from a socialist rather than a feminist perspective. Luxemburg maintained a close friendship with socialist and feminist Clara Zetkin, but never shared Zetkin's commitment to the Frauenbewegung. As J. P. Nettl concluded in his biography of Luxemburg, "Her sex was irrelevant; she indignantly refuted the official suggestion that, like Clara Zetkin, she might find her natural habitat in the women's movement."

Despite progress in some areas, women had been unable to penetrate the leadership circles of the political parties or the trade unions; they could only pressure male delegates to present women's demands to these inner circles of power. Women were being recognized, but usually in an auxiliary role. On the international level German women's unions were represented for the first time at a meeting of the Second International in Paris in 1889 by Clara Zetkin and Emma Ihrer (1857-1911), a prominent trade union organizer from Berlin.
From 1900 to 1914 activities and membership rolls of the women's organizations grew. The women's groups focused much attention on the issue of "Mutterschutz," a term which included many aspects of protective legislation for women in their roles as workers and mothers. On this issue middle class women, most vocally represented in the Bund für Mutterschutz (Union for the Protection of Motherhood) founded in 1905, urged the protection of motherhood by granting women better pre-natal care and longer periods of maternity leave from their employment. Dr. Marie Baum (1874-1964), a chemist and one of the first female factory inspectors in Germany, helped to found a union for the protection of infants and children (Verband für Säuglingsfürsorge und Kinderpflege). The Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein addressed this Mutterschutz issue by emphasizing that maternity should be recognized as a service to the state and that women, whether working or not, should be reimbursed for wages lost during the first few months after childbirth and that new mothers should receive state aid of some kind during the first three years of a child's life. In 1911 the Imperial government extended the mandatory recess with half-time wages for women workers from six to eight weeks, and specified that only six weeks had to be taken after childbirth; if desired, women could take two weeks of the recess prior to confinement in order to reduce the risk of injury during this time.
Frauenbewegung leaders also campaigned against prostitution. Socialist women strongly opposed prostitution, which they considered the worst evil of the capitalist system. Liberal women sought reform of sexual ethics as they petitioned the Government and appealed to the public to end prostitution, venereal disease, and the obscene literature they believed to be related to other social evils. A leading social welfare worker and writer, Dr. Helene Stöcker (1869-1943), organized a society for the conquest of venereal disease which encouraged public discussion of this problem. Concerned with the large number of deaths of illegitimate children each year, German women's groups advocated equal benefits for married and unmarried mothers. As a corollary, in 1905 the program of the Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein included a platform calling for more legal responsibilities for illegitimate fathers. Other notable platforms in this 1905 program of the Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein called for the right for women to join political and trade union associations, and for the enlistment of women to serve as jurors in legal proceedings.

Great strides were made between 1900 and 1914 by women seeking admission to German universities. In contrast to the few "guest auditors" who entered universities in the 1890's, there were 4,117 women students registered in German universities by the summer of 1914. The leaders
who had struggled for these educational reforms in the early twentieth century belonged to the last generation of women who had not enjoyed the opportunity for advanced academic training in Germany.27

Movements to encourage the improvement of secondary education for young women in Germany had made equally impressive gains by 1914. Educators such as Anna von Gierke (1874-1943), child welfare worker and writer, supported the professional training (Fachausbildung) for young women and repeatedly petitioned the government for more diversified school curricula for girls.28 The Prussian Government led other German states in creating separate educational facilities (the Lyzeum for girls which was similar to the Realschule for boys), while blocking any co-educational institutions proposed by Frauenbewegung leaders.29 If schools for boys and girls were to be separate, protested educators such as Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954), founder of several women's schools and a prominent author, then women should be in charge of the schools for girls and men should be in charge of only the schools for boys.30

The demands for gaining more opportunities to work and for creating better working conditions for women were important parts of the women's movement in Germany prior to the First World War. By 1907 one-fourth of all German women, or approximately nine million women, were working; the number was higher than in other western nations, e.g.,
less than one-seventh of the women in the United States were employed during this era. Over half of these working women in Germany (four and one-half million) were involved in agriculture, often for minimal wages or as part of their family responsibilities. Many leaders in the socialist women's groups came from jobs in industry; bourgeois women leaders generally came from the teaching or social welfare professions. Women wage earners in all fields agreed that women should be paid more especially vis-à-vis the higher salaries of their male counterparts.

With experience in newspapers and journals, many Frauenbewegung leaders had learned to value the importance of marshaling public opinion in their struggle to make even small gains. Overall, German women maintained a revisionist rather than a rebellious approach, such as that adopted by British and American suffragists. Members of the Frauenbewegung were deeply involved in philanthropic work and social welfare agencies; some women hoped that their good works in these organizations would convince political leaders that they could contribute valuable services to German society and should be rewarded with greater responsibilities.

The growth of the women's press continued in the early twentieth century. The woman's paper of the German Social Democratic Party, the "Gleichheit" founded in 1907, was just one example of the new voices of the
Frauenbewegung. Circulation of women's papers and journals rose during this era, and the papers provided a wide audience for women's demands on business, industry, and government agencies.34

In addition to basic political, social, and economic reforms, organizations in the Frauenbewegung urged changes in dress: more loose-fitting, one-piece outfits which did not impede movement; and in titles: the "Einheitstitel" movement urged that all women be called "Frau" to prevent discrimination against unmarried women.35 Dr. Gertrud Bäumer and other educators stressed the great culture building and creative roles that women could play in society.36 Finally, German women enjoyed increasing contacts with other women in Europe and the United States at international meetings and conferences, where German women compared stories of progress and disappointment with women from other nations.

In contrast to German women, women in Great Britain were popularly viewed as militant rabble-rousers who forced confrontations with the British police. Women in the United States also had a long history of suffragist and feminist activities, personified by the career of the indefatigable Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), famous reformer and suffragette.37 Women from Great Britain, the United States, and Germany joined suffragists from other western nations in founding the Weltbund für
Frauenstimmrecht (World Union for Women's Suffrage) at the International Congress of Women held in Berlin in 1904. In 1891 at the Erfurt Congress, the German Social Democratic Party, after much encouragement from Clara Zetkin and others, endorsed suffrage for women. Other major political parties in Germany rejected similar platforms which supported the enfranchisement of women. In the early years of the twentieth century Dr. Gertrud Bäumer and Helene Lange repeatedly pressured leaders of various political groups to be more responsive to the goals of the women's movement. Increasingly, Bäumer and Lange stated, women were feeling more frustrated about their inability to vote in elections and their subsequent inability to exert political pressure on leaders.

The increased participation of women in both international and domestic women's organizations, plus the increased publicity about the militant activities of suffragettes abroad were making an impression on the members of the Reichstag and officials of the Government who were being asked to respond to legislative proposals from the various wings of the Frauenbewegung. By 1906 many groups, both within and outside the women's movement, supported expanding the franchise to all males and females of legal age.

Although the Reichstag was not prepared to extend suffrage to German women, it did reconsider the proposal
that women be allowed to join coalitions and associations, a proposal many women thought to be an essential first step to suffrage. In 1908 the Reichstag passed such a law (Reichsvereinsgesetz), and further, the Reichstag agreed to study the suffrage petition, after having repeatedly rejected any suffrage petition prior to 1908. The legislators hoped that this action would prevent the international flood of women's militancy from spilling into the generally reformist German Frauenbewegung.\(^2\)

On the eve of the First World War women had made some strides on the road toward full economic, social, and political equality. In the industrial realm, women were entering the factories and work places in increasing numbers. As women sought these greater work opportunities in industries, they also asked for greater protection from the dangers of industrial life.\(^3\) The government, mindful of the important child-bearing duties of women in society, was willing to grant many of these special protections to women. By 1915 women could work a maximum of ten hours per day Monday through Friday and a maximum of eight hours on Saturday. Night work was prohibited for women, as was dangerous work. Married women with children could have one and one-half hour lunch breaks (compared to one hour for other workers), presumably to devote more time to family needs. Women were to take an eight-week mandatory rest after childbirth and, during this rest, to be paid up
to one-half of their regular wages. The Government hoped that such recess time would lower the infant mortality rate in the nation.\textsuperscript{44}

In other fields such as banking or international traveling, the special status of women was perceived to be more and more restrictive as women sought greater freedoms. In banking, a married woman could not open a bank account without the consent of her husband. This restriction was countered, to a limited extent, by a private woman's bank (Frauenbank) in Berlin which gave women greater access to banks and credit.\textsuperscript{45} Concerning travel, women could not have passports in their own names prior to the First World War.\textsuperscript{46}

In some areas, the figures were discouraging to supporters of the women's movement. There were relatively few in responsible positions in government service. Most women teachers were at the primary (Volksschule) level in education or in auxiliary roles in the medical and health service fields. With increased access to universities, most women were studying art, literature, and music, rather than the professional fields which many Frauenbewegung leaders had encouraged.\textsuperscript{47}

The Frauenbewegung groups were most frustrated with the slow progress of the political reforms. The hopes raised by the 1908 law allowing women to join associations, the Reichsvereinsgesetz, had not been converted by women
into political power. There was no female franchise and there were no female representatives in the Reichstag. There was some limited participation of women in party committees; the most prominent position was held by Clara Zetkin on the Control Committee of the German Social Democratic Party. Some Social Democrats suggested that Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin might be considered as candidates for the Reichstag elections of 1912, but the party executive managed to squash this proposal. Women more frequently exerted special pressure on Reichstag members, as did Helene Stöcker when she appealed to Reichstag deputies in August, 1914 to extend a bill providing benefits to war widows and orphans, to illegitimate children and their mothers.

Increasingly, women from all parts of the Frauenbewegung believed that it was necessary to gain direct political power in order to implement further advances. Like their American and British counterparts, German suffragists believed that the right to vote would give women the power and influence that they desired. These political goals and other aims of the Frauenbewegung would be affected greatly by the international tensions of 1914 which climaxed in the First World War.

During the First World War (1914-1918) the role of women in German society, as in other societies, expanded as men went to war, and more and more women entered
business and industry. Temporarily, women's groups turned their attention away from the goals of women's suffrage and turned toward the tasks of organizing a work force and a nationwide relief effort to aid the wounded, widowed, and orphaned. Women did not drop their desires for suffrage, but concentrated less and less time on this issue.52 Official praise for the effort by German women was frequently given by party as well as government officials.53 The war showed many opponents of the Frauenbewegung how valuable women could be in the work force, although the salaries paid to women during the war years were lower than those of their male counterparts doing the same work. Early resistance by trade unionists to the increased number of women workers declined as the need for laborers grew and the acceptance of women's work spread.

From the outbreak of war in 1914 until the spring of 1915 the supply of male applicants for most jobs was generally adequate. By March, 1915 the number of male applicants for open positions was insufficient and continued to decline until the low point of October, 1918.54 Women applied in increasing numbers for positions in order to support themselves and their families as their fathers or husbands went off to war.

There was an extraordinary increase in the number of women working in the telegraph and postal industries as well as in heavy industries. During the war the total
number of working women grew from nine and one-half million to over fifteen million. Although forbidden to perform dangerous or nighttime work, many women employees were engaged in such labor during the war. Great increases in women's illnesses were side-effects of the increased work load and less favorable working conditions.

When women replaced men in business and industry, they were paid less for performing the same jobs. The government did seek to compensate those working women who were also mothers and housewives by paying them a special wage called Soziallohn. Some forms of aid were also extended to unmarried working mothers.

The role of women as mothers producing future soldiers and as participants in a national work force received much national attention during wartime. Some government leaders expressed concern that the increased number of working women would detract from the duty of motherhood, but with the need to keep industries at full production, the Soziallohn seemed to be the most effective way to provide both mothers and laborers for the nation.

The participation by women leaders in relief efforts to help those in need during wartime was widespread. Women's groups founded to campaign for equal rights focused instead on the best ways to feed the hungry, tend the sick, and relocate the lost. In 1916 Dr. Marie Baum organized groups to feed hungry children, and Anna von Gierke organized
relief workers to aid children of mothers who were working long hours in the munitions factories. Socialist Toni Sender (1888-1964) worked for a brief time in a war hospital, but she became very depressed and she spent the rest of the war working, first, for a metal company and, later, as an employee of the War Ministry.

Working on a wider scale, the prominent educator Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (1878-1966) established a central control organization (Frauenarbeitszentrale) for all women's activities contributing to the war effort. Women worked in all kinds of occupations to help Germany mobilize its resources for the war effort. Lüders called the female work force on the homefront the unknown army ("Das unbekannte Heer"). Dr. Gertrud Bäumer also organized a national women's service organization (Nationaler Frauen­dienst) which provided women volunteers and workers, including Dr. Helene Stöcker and Luise Zietz (1865-1922), Social Democratic Party worker, to the government and to private relief agencies as needed. The efficiency of these large women's organizations and the quality of the work provided raised the popular estimation of the mental and physical capabilities of women.

As the war continued into 1917 and 1918, protests against the government and its policies grew. The agitation by women for equal rights, which had been put aside to contribute to the war effort, resumed, and then
accelerated as the end of the war looked inevitable in the autumn of 1918. Women who felt that they had contributed much to the German nation during the war were eager to preserve the employment opportunities and resulting social prestige they had gained during this era. Most women believed that gaining the right to vote would give them a voice in determining public policy and the means to gain further rights in public life.63

As the Imperial German government crumbled under the pressure of military defeat, revolutionary groups squabbled over which one would assume the reins of power. The November Revolution which swept through the German states began with great socialist hopes for an overthrow of both the monarchy and the capitalist economy, but became essentially bourgeois in nature as it continued.64

On November 10, 1918 the Provisional Government led by Friedrich Ebert (1870-1925), the Social Democratic Party leader who was eager to prevent widescale revolution, assumed control of the German nation. The Provisional Government sought to maintain order, promote necessary reforms, and conduct elections for a constituent assembly which would be charged with the drafting of a constitution for the new German government. In November and December, 1918, this Provisional Government instituted a rapid series of reforms in an attempt to stave off a full-scale socialist revolution. The reforms included: expansion of the
social welfare system, recognition of the eight-hour workday, extension of the rights of unionization to agricultural workers, legislation to provide jobs for demobilized soldiers and improved benefits for the sick and the unemployed, and passage of a provisional electoral law granting suffrage to all men and women over the age of twenty.65

Germany was not the only nation to grant women's suffrage after World War I. Several western nations extended the franchise to women during World War I or shortly thereafter. During wartime (1915) Norway and Denmark adopted voting rights for women. As the war was ending both Germany and Austria adopted women's suffrage laws. Individual states within Germany soon followed the action of the national government and extended the franchise to women. In the postwar era the United States (1920), Sweden (1921), and Great Britain (1919) also adopted women's suffrage.66

Most German women eagerly welcomed the news that they could vote in the upcoming election, and many women's groups published information about voting procedures and major issues for their members. Even with the decades-long activity of the Frauenbewegung, there was an air of confusion about the newly enfranchised voters as well as among the political leaders who were trying to determine women's electoral preferences.67 The major political parties were eager to win the women's vote and most parties scrambled to
find women candidates willing to run on their electoral lists. Party leaders believed that women voters would prefer to support parties that included women candidates on their electoral slates. Political parties also issued statements in their platforms supporting equal rights for women in all areas of public life.\textsuperscript{68} Party leaders hoped their appeals would prevent women from voting as a bloc, either for the party endorsed by their church officials, or for the Socialist Party which had given them the right to vote.

The political climate in Germany in December, 1918 and January, 1919 was volatile, but the Ebert government, relying on the support of the army, scheduled elections for the National Constituent Assembly (\textit{Nationalversammlung}) in January, 1919. In the election, four hundred and twenty-three delegates were to be elected, according to a system of proportional representation. The most important issues in the electoral campaigns were the conclusion of peace with the Entente nations and the tasks of the government in postwar society. Fears that the German people would have little to say about the final peace treaty and that domestic order would be difficult to maintain were strong undercurrents in the campaign.

A total of three hundred and ten women were nominated as candidates on the electoral lists of major political parties. Many women were political novices, but most of
them campaigned enthusiastically for their parties. A large proportion of the women candidates were members of groups in the Frauenbewegung and pledged themselves to the expansion of women's rights; suffrage was to be the key to further reforms. Women candidates were vocal in their concerns about the food shortages in Germany resulting from the shipping blockade imposed by the Entente nations, the increased social programming and benefits that would be needed in the postwar years, the aid to be extended to war veterans and to the widowed and orphaned, and the need to international cooperation and disarmament. When the elections were held, many men did not vote because of the chaotic demobilization of the army and the resulting dislocation of soldiers throughout the nation. Women, however, turned out in impressive numbers to cast their first ballots in a national election. 69

In the election a total of thirty-seven women from seven political parties, from the right-wing, monarchist German National People's Party (DNVP) to the left-wing, radical Independent Socialist Party (USPD), were elected as delegates to the Constituent Assembly. 70 Of the thirty-seven elected, nineteen belonged to the Social Democratic Party (SPD), five to the German Democratic Party (DDP), five to the Center Party (Z), three each to the German National People's Party and the Independent Socialist Party, and one each to the German People's Party (DVP) and
the Bavarian People's Party (BVP). The women elected included many who had been active in the Frauenbewegung, such as Dr. Gertrud Bäumer, Dr. Marie Baum, Anna von Gierke, and Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders. Some Frauenbewegung leaders did not run in the election because they had joined the German Communist Party (KPD) during the war, and the KPD refused to participate in the elections for the Assembly.

On the eve of the first session of the National Assembly, women faced the common tasks confronting all members of that body. Additionally, they faced doubts of colleagues and constituents about their qualifications as the first woman members of a national decision-making body in Germany. These thirty-seven delegates were also aware of the attention of feminists in other Western nations, who were watching to see if women's suffrage would lead to the emancipation of women. The activities and achievements of these women in the National Constituent Assembly and later in the Reichstag would be an important chapter in the history of women in Germany and the role of women in politics during the twentieth century.
Footnotes

1 The "amazons," according to Clara Zetkin, were Amalie von Struve, Mathilde Anneke, and Emma Herwegh, women who demanded rights as people, not as women. Clara Zetkin, Zur Geschichte der proletarischen Frauenbewegung Deutschlands, ed. by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Berlin [East]: Dietz Verlag, 1958), p. 18.

2 In her history of the Frauenbewegung, Clara Zetkin stated that the German women's movement did not yet have "clear goals" in the mid-nineteenth century. To Zetkin, clear goals for the socialist Frauenbewegung included those which would lead to a socialist society and economy. Zetkin, Geschichte der Proletarischen Frauenbewegung, p. 20.

3 Socialist women including Zetkin later insisted that even at this early date there were two distinct women's movements: the bourgeois and the proletarian. At the time the distinction was not well-defined and the Frauenbewegung was generally perceived as a loose, widespread movement with several prominent members. Zetkin, Geschichte der Proletarischen Frauenbewegung, p. 243.


6 According to Kasuya, most women admitted as "guest auditors" in the 1890's were foreigners because few German women could pass the matriculation tests required for entrance to the universities. Kasuya calls Helene Lange the greatest leader of the Frauenbewegung. Indeed, Lange was an important leader of the movement who interpreted the Frauenbewegung to other inside and outside of Germany. Kasuya, Comparative Study, pp. 22-23.

7 Zetkin, Geschichte der Proletarischen Frauenbewegung, p. 133.

8 Ibid., p. 143.

9 Werner Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation: Politik und Literatur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zur


11 Zetkin, Geschichte der proletarischen Frauenbewegung, pp. 57, 115-18; and Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation, p. 6; Bebel, Frau und der Sozialismus, pp. 3-6.

12 Kasuya, Comparative Study, p. 25.

13 Anthony, Feminism in Germany, pp. 125-129.

14 Kasuya, Comparative Study, Chapter IV, passim.


17 In 1914, when frustrated with the lack of progress in the socialist movement, Luxemburg arranged to accompany Clara Zetkin to an International Women's Conference in Holland. Luxemburg was arrested before departing and never did attend the conference. Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, Vol. I, p. 136; Vol. II.

18 Zetkin, Geschichte der proletarischen Frauenbewegung, pp. 218-19.

19 Helene Stöcker Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Box I, Folder B.


21 Anthony, Feminism in Germany, p. 117.

22 Ibid., pp. 128-29.

23 Stöcker Papers, Box I, Folder A.

24 Anthony estimates that 180,000 illegitimate children were born in Germany in 1914. Infant mortality rates in Germany, she reports, were higher than in many other western countries. Anthony, Feminism in Germany, pp. 84, 125.

26 Ibid., pp. 20-26.
27Die Frau in unserer Zeit, p. 191.
28Ibid., pp. 193-94.
29Anthony, Feminism in Germany, Chapter 2.
30Ibid., p. 47.
31Ibid., p. 172.
32Some women served on committees in political parties, but women were excluded from most trade unions by complex membership regulations. By 1911 progress had been made and there were over 250,000 women in the Free Trade Unions, Christian, Hirsch-Duncher, and Commercial unions, but relatively few women served on decision-making committees in the unions. Anthony, Feminism in Germany, p. 194.
33Ibid., Chapter 3.
34Circulation of the "Gleichheit" eventually reached 100,000. Zetkin, Geschichte der Proletarischen Frauenbewegung, p. 219.
35Anthony, Feminism in Germany, p. 106.
36Ibid., p. 106.
37Die Frau in unserer Zeit, p. 89.
38Gertrud Bäumer, Lebensweg durch eine Zeitwende, 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1933), p. 202. In the next eight years numerous suffrage unions were established throughout Germany. Kasuya, Comparative Study, p. 27.
39Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation, p. 86.
40Die Frau in unserer Zeit, p. 193.
41In the German states there was no equality yet for all males. Voting in some states depended on income levels or other restrictive qualifications. Zetkin, Geschichte der Proletarischen Frauenbewegung, p. 85; Anthony, Feminism in Germany, p. 209.
42Anthony, Feminism in Germany, pp. 215-17; Die Frau in unserer Zeit, p. 193.
Many socialist women were concerned with the conflicting aims of the Frauenbewegung for equality and special protection laws. Author Mathilde Wurm (1874-1935) in a 1913 pamphlet pointed out that women were frequently excluded from certain jobs because night work for them was forbidden, yet women in other occupations worked twelve and thirteen-hour days that lasted well into the night. Mathilde Wurm, *Die Frauen und der Preussische Landtag* (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts Paul Singer, G.m.b.H., 1913), p. 10.

Anthony, *Feminism in Germany*, pp. 195-96.

Ibid., p. 200.

Women were to be covered in passports of fathers or husbands. Toni Sender, a young Social Democratic Party worker, complained about this restriction on passports which hindered her travel from France to Germany. Toni Sender, *The Autobiography of a German Rebel* (New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1939), p. 60.


This extension supported by Stöcker was included in the final bill. Stöcker Papers, Box I, "Kriegstagebuch."

Direct political power meant both voting and serving as elected officials. Mathilde Wurm explained this position well in her pamphlet about women and the Prussian Landtag. Wurm, *Frauen und der Preussische Landtag."

Activity for women's suffrage was finally centralized in 1916 in a union (Deutscher Reichsverband für Frauenstimmrecht) which consolidated many related organizations and prepared for action when the war ended. Kasuya, *Comparative Study*, p. 28.

Thönnessen, *Frauenemanzipation*, p. 87.


Thönnessen, *Frauenemanzipation*, p. 93; Jürgen Juczynski, *Der Lage der Arbeiterin in Deutschland von 1700*
bis zur Gegenwart (Berlin [East]: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), p. 204.

56 Geyer, Frauenenerwerbsarbeit, pp. 30-31, 56.


58 Geyer, Frauenenerwerbsarbeit, p. 56; Kasuya, Comparative Study, p. 25.

59 Die Frau in unserer Zeit, pp. 193-94.

60 Sender, Autobiography, pp. 61-64.

61 Die Frau in unserer Zeit, p. 37.

62 Bäumer's Nationaler Frauendienst was better known than Läders' Frauenarbeitszentrale. Helene Stöcker Papers, Box I, "Kriegstagebuch"; Bäumer, Lebensweg, pp. 271-74.

63 Not all women wanted the right to vote, but by 1917 even conservative religious women's unions such as the German Evangelical Women's Union (Deutsch-Evangelischer Frauenbund) advocated voting rights for women. Regine Deutsch, Die Politische Tat der Frau: Aus der Nationalversammlung (Gotha: Verlag Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1920), p. 1.

64 Kuczynski, Der Lage der Arbeiterin, p. 203.

65 The provisional electoral law was to be valid only for the elections to the Constituent Assembly. William Carr, A History of Germany, 1815-1945 (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1969), p. 279.


67 Bremme, Politische Rolle der Frau, p. 10.

68 This was no longer the controversial issue it had once been. After the Provisional Government granted women the right to vote in the election to the Constituent Assembly, there was general acceptance of the fact that
women would be granted the right to vote as part of any new constitution that would be drafted.


70 The seats were 8.74% of the total 423 seats in the Assembly. During the tenure of the Assembly, four more women were appointed to vacancies that occurred; thus, a total of 41 women (or 9.69% of the Assembly) served in this body. Deutsch, *Politische Tat der Frau*, p. 1.

71 Of the four women appointed later, three were members of the Social Democratic Party and one belonged to the Independent Socialist Party. Max Schwarz, *MdR, Biographisches Handbuch der Reichstage* (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, G.m.b.H., 1965), pp. 531-38.

72 Ibid., pp. 531-38.

73 The most notable was Clara Zetkin; Rosa Luxemburg, had been murdered on January 15, 1919.

74 There were more women elected to the National Assembly in Germany than to any other parliament or legislative body at that time.
CHAPTER II

THE GERMAN NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY:
1919-1920

In the afternoon of February 19, 1919, a thirty-nine year old Socialist deputy from Potsdam rose to address the National Constituent Assembly about an addendum to the national budget. To a cheerful Chamber, Deputy Marie Gohlke Juchacz (1879-1919) opened the first speech by a woman deputy in a German parliament with the greeting, "Gentlemen and Ladies." "As evidenced by my speech in this Chamber," continued Juchacz, "there has truly been a revolution in Germany.

Voting for the first time in a national election, German women made up 54 per cent of the electorate of thirty million voters that went to the polls on January 9, 1919. This participation of women encouraged supporters of women's suffrage, such as Clara Bohm Schuch (1878-1936) and Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders (1878-1965), who had hoped that an impressive vote in the first election would lead to more legal reforms for women, progressive social legislation, wage equalization, protective legislation for women workers, and expanded educational opportunities for women. Although women were elected to only thirty-seven out of 421
seats (9 per cent) in the National Assembly, they were optimistic that once in the Chamber they would be able to urge male colleagues to back women's concerns by promising future support of women voters and representatives. As the electoral campaign had demonstrated, there was no unified woman's party platform or bloc voting, and the impact that women would make on the German parliamentary system was unknown in February 1919.

For the thirty-seven woman deputies who entered that first meeting of the National Constituent Assembly in Weimar on February 6, 1919, this was a time of great opportunity. Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954), an educator and author who had been active for many years in the Frauenbewegung, felt that her strenuous electoral struggle in Thuringia for the German Democratic Party was well worthwhile as she entered the Chamber that day in February. As she took her seat she was filled with hope that she could creditably represent the German people who were now weakened by military defeat, and that she could help to build a new Germany. Bäumer's main concern was that there would be too little time to complete the numerous tasks facing the Assembly: restoring domestic peace, concluding peace with the Entente nations, drafting a constitution for the new German state, and legislating social and economic reform.
No other parliament in the world had as many woman representatives as the German National Constituent Assembly. During the chaotic months after military defeat in a World War, the political system in Germany was more open to political novices. Postwar Germany adopted the electoral system of proportional representation which meant that electors voted for parties rather than individual candidates. Thus, political committees eager to win the votes of the newly enfranchised women voters had placed several women high on their lists and ensured their entrance into the National Assembly. During the term of the Assembly (February 6, 1919 to May 21, 1920), there was only one woman (Conservative Party member Lady Nancy Wicher Astor, 1879-1964) in the English House of Commons and one woman in the United States House of Representatives (Republican Jeanette Rankin, 1880-1973). Thus, interest in the role of women parliamentarians was high in 1919 and foreign women visiting Germany were eager to know more about these female deputies.6

The thirty-seven women elected in January 1919 and the four additional women who were elected to vacancies during the term of the Assembly came from a variety of backgrounds. Of the forty-one women, the majority (22) were members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), six belonged to the German Democratic Party (DDP), six were members of the Christian People's Party (which was called
the Center Party again shortly after the election), three belonged to the German National People's Party (DNVP), three to the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), and one to the German People's Party (DVP). Thus, thirty-four of the women belonged to the three political parties, Social Democratic, German Democratic, and Center, which made up the Weimar Coalition government that was formed in February 1919.

Most of the women who were elected to the Constituent Assembly were employed; fourteen women were school teachers or administrators, six were laborers, four were authors, three worked for political parties or trade unions, two were secretaries, and one was a social worker. The remaining eleven women (representing 26 per cent of the total) were housewives in 1919, and several of them had worked as laborers prior to their marriages. Thus, the majority of these women deputies would have observations to add during discussions in the Assembly about sickness insurance for working mothers and about the economic hardships women faced when they were dismissed from their jobs when they married.

Other personal experiences of woman deputies shaped their political opinions about the issues which they debated in the Assembly in 1919 and 1920. Lore Agnes of the Independent Socialist Party had lost her only son during the World War and would passionately demand the
return of German prisoners of war. In another example, the mother of Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders had died from undernourishment during the Allied blockade of Germany and Lüders would appeal to the women of the Entente nations to urge their governments to end this inhumane suffering.  

Many of the woman deputies had been active in the Frauenbewegung or in political organizations prior to 1918. Several deputies had been leaders in the Frauenbewegung, including Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP), Dr. Marie Baum (DDP), Anna von Gierke (DNVP), Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders (DDP), and Dr. Käthe Schirmacher (DNVP). These deputies had worked for many years for women's rights, not only in the political spheres, but in the social and economic spheres as well. Lüders thought that experience in the Frauenbewegung was the best leadership training a woman deputy could have. Other woman deputies had been active in women's political groups or committees, including Social Democrats Minna Bollmann, Minna Eichler, Marie Juchacz, Elisabeth Röhl, and Independent Socialist Luise Zietz. Unlike Lüders however, Marie Juchacz did not believe that these earlier experiences had prepared women adequately for political leadership in 1919. Lüders did recognize that with or without experience, the challenges for women in the Assembly were great:

It was hard for the most active female deputies without parliamentary experience—one had to stand firm and win over colleagues...In the
parliamentary techniques, maneuvers, women were secondary to men. However, women did acquaint themselves with the parliamentary regimen rapidly; they did not remain "fellow-travelers" very long. 13

Furthermore, women were not the only political novices elected to the National Assembly. Of the 421 Assembly members, 143 male deputies had belonged to the Reichstag prior to 1918, and even to the political veterans the tasks assigned to the Assembly were markedly different than in previous terms of the Reichstag. 14 Another similar experience shared by the men and woman deputies was that most of them had been born in small towns or in suburban areas near cities, then had moved into the larger cities as they sought education or employment.

Fewer women than men deputies had attended institutions of higher education. Indeed opportunities for such education were very limited in the nineteenth century and several women had spent years campaigning to create more openings for women students in universities. Of the forty-one female deputies, four had earned doctorates; Gertrud Bäumer, Marie Baum, Marie Elisabeth Lüders, and Käthe Schirmacher. Undoubtedly this advanced educational experience helped prepare these women to speak frequently in Assembly discussions.

There was also a difference between the average age of woman deputies and their male counterparts. The first American women in Congress tended to be older than the male
parliamentarians. This was not true for the women in the German National Constituent Assembly. These women ranged in age from 29 to 65, and over half (57%) were 40 to 49 years old. Only 35 per cent of the men were in this age bracket and more men in the Assembly were in older age brackets than the women members. The relative youth of these women meant that, after their service in the National Assembly, many of them could sit in the Reichstag throughout the Weimar Era. Thus, several women would enter the future German parliaments as experienced politician.

Married women were well represented among the women deputies. Twenty-two of the women were married or widowed, and nineteen were single. The marital status of these women would be of interest as the Assembly debated economic exclusionary clauses which barred married women from working if their husbands were employed.

One traditional fear of those who opposed women's suffrage was that a large percentage of women would vote according to their husbands' preferences or their religious backgrounds. Thus, there was interest in the religious upbringing of these women. The religious backgrounds of the female deputies were divided into three major categories; Evangelical, Catholic, and Dissident (a mixed group including Jews and non-believers). Of the forty-one women, almost half (20) were of the Evangelical faiths
(Lutheran or other Protestant churches), seven women were Catholics, and fourteen were Dissidents. The religious backgrounds and philosophies of the Catholic and Evangelical members would be evident in Assembly debates over the future of denominational schools and the need for a national system of film censorship boards to protect the morality of youth.

Several of the women shared another common trait which would affect their activities in the National Assembly: poor health. Because of postwar scarcities of food and fuel in Germany and the pressures of an electoral campaign, many of the men and women deputies succumbed to exhaustion and illness. For many of the women these strains were compounded by their fears about their lack of political experience. Candidates Marie Elisabeth Lüders and Toni Sender were so exhausted by their strenuous campaigns that they spent part of January 1919 in hospitals. Dr. Gertrud Bäumer also discussed the health problems which resulted from the long hours that women kept in order to keep up during the National Assembly. An examination of the requests for absences from duty during the Assembly reveals that women were ill a little more frequently than their male colleagues, although only two women had prolonged illnesses.

If there was any typical female deputy who entered the Assembly Chamber in 1919, she would have been a
forty-five-year-old Socialist who had been raised as a Protestant and had attended school beyond the *Volksschule* (elementary level). She had become a *Volksschule* teacher at nineteen or twenty and had continued teaching after she married. This typical deputy would have been knowledgeable about the *Frauenbewegung*, but she had not been a leader of any women's organization. Politically, she was interested in legislating equal rights for women in politics, law, employment, and education; enacting protective measures for working women and children; and increasing welfare, maternity insurance, and health care payments.23

According to the directives of the Council of People's Commissars, the members who were elected to the National Constituent Assembly met for the first time on February 6, 1919 in Weimar, a small town in Thuringia. As the one-time residence of the great German poet Goethe (1749-1832) and distant from strife-town Berlin, Weimar was a quiet place which was to encourage undisturbed thought and accomplishment. Two major issues dominated the Assembly's agenda during the first six months; drafting the constitution for the new German state and making peace with the Entente nations. Shortly after the opening of the Assembly the first draft of the constitution, written by Dr. Hugo Preuss (1860-1925), legal scholar and professor, was presented and then referred to the committee that was charged with preparing a final draft. The second task, to
conclude peace with the Allied and Associated Powers, was complex and would prove to be an especially frustrating assignment. Completion of these two tasks would depend on diligent work and, above all, the maintenance of domestic order within Germany.

The first few sessions were devoted to electing officials for the Assembly and a president for the nation. Dr. Eduard David (1863-1930), a Social Democrat, was elected President of the National Assembly and several secretaries of the body were elected, including Lore Agnes, an Independent Socialist from Düsseldorf. Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925), who had headed the Council of People's Commissars, was elected to be President on February 11, 1919, and the Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939) was appointed Minister-President. Scheidemann presented his cabinet of Social Democrats, Centrists, and Democrats (including Dr. David to be a minister without portfolio) to the Assembly on February 13, 1919. To replace Dr. David as President of the Assembly, the members elected the Centrist Constantin Fehrenbach (1852-1926). In this election for Assembly President, an Independent Socialist woman, Luise Zietz (1865-1922), received one vote.24

In Minister-President Scheidemann's first speech to the Assembly on February thirteenth he was loudly applauded when he stated that the German government now recognized
women as equal colleagues. On behalf of the government, Scheidemann welcomed the great number of women who had been honored by the people by being named as their representatives. This warm greeting was an optimistic sign that women's participation as political deputies would be continued into the new German state.

At the center of the Assembly were the twenty-eight committees which were established between February 1919 and April 1920. Major committees patterned after the former Reichstag committees included those on: Petitions, Budget, Political Economics (formerly called Business and Trade), Rules, Taxes, Social Affairs, and Electoral Scrutiny. In addition a Constitutional Committee was charged with the task of preparing a final draft of the constitution. Special committees established during the Assembly included those dealing with: Population Policies, Housing Conditions, Investigation of the Causes of the War, Foreign Policy Matters, Domestic Order and Protection, School Reform, the National Railway System, and Abolition of Military Courts.

Women served at one time or another on all of the committees mentioned above. Deputies in the Assembly could serve on several committees and could be appointed to a committee for a limited period of time to discuss a specific issue in which they were interested. Major committees had twenty-eight members, other committees had
fifteen members or, in some cases, twenty members. The committee on which the greatest number of women (21) served during the Assembly was the Committee on Social Affairs. Ten or more women served at one time or another on several other committees: Constitutional (10 women), Budget (18), Petitions (15), Economics (14), Population Policies (17), Housing Conditions (10), and School Reform (12). Women were not as numerous on committees which dealt with foreign policy matters (2) or military affairs (1). Five women served as secretaries of committees, and one woman (Anna von Gierke, DNVP) chaired an Assembly committee, that on Population Policies.

Another official committee, the Council of Elders, was a powerful body which advised the leadership on various matters. Membership was limited to members who had experience and influence in political affairs. Although women were officially welcomed as political equals on the Assembly, they did not penetrate this inner circle of power in 1919 or 1920. As the women themselves recognized, they lacked both experience and influence.

The focal point for women's activities in the National Assembly was the Chamber floor where deputies spoke in the plenary sessions. In the Chamber women appeared without hats and usually dressed in clothes of black or subdued colors. On the floor of the Assembly, women were almost always addressed as "Frau" whether they were married or
Deputies addressed the Assembly to read a report or proposal of a committee, to represent the views of their political factions, to make personal observations, to make a point of order regarding parliamentary procedure, or to interpellate a government official. The party leadership determined who would represent the delegation on various issues. Speeches delivered on the Assembly floor were more formal than those in the committees. In the Assembly the President, or in his absence the Vice President, kept order and did not hesitate to rule vociferous deputies out of order. Unofficially, however, deputies frequently voiced or gestured their approval or disapproval of a speaker on the floor.

Of the forty-one female deputies, thirty delivered major speeches on the floor of the Assembly. Of the eleven women who did not speak during the plenary sessions, nine were members of the Social Democratic Party. It was not that SPD women were less vocal about the issues discussed, but there were twenty-two woman deputies in their party and speaking assignments were very competitive. The thirteen SPD women who did speak represented views shared by all the women of the faction. All in all woman deputies spoke on a variety of issues, but few women discussed foreign policy in their speeches. The most prolific woman speakers were Independent Socialist Luise Zietz (who spoke 48 times), German National Anna von Gierke (31
times), and Democrat Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (18 times).

When votes were taken in the Chamber the President simply asked for "yes" and "no" votes, or if a roll call vote was to be taken, he instructed members to leave the room through either a door marked "yes" or another marked "no." Party discipline in the Assembly was very strong and party members were expected to vote as the faction decided. Individual members could be released from voting with their factions, but this happened only on rare occasions. If deputies disagreed with the party's position, they could absent themselves when a vote was taken, but on crucial votes party discipline was strongest and members were requested to be present.30

The first speeches by women in the Assembly were watched with curiosity by male deputies. When Marie Juchacz rose to speak on February 19, 1919 the Chamber was quiet. The issue on the floor was the third addendum to the national budget, but Juchacz's speech covered a wide variety of topics. She began by endorsing equal rights for women and equal duties too. She praised her own party (the SPD) for being the first in Germany to call for women's suffrage. She also stated with optimism that, "the woman's question (Frauenfrage) in its oldest sense exists no longer in Germany...it is solved." The struggle for more rights for women will continue, Juchacz predicted, but in other forms. At least, she said, women will not
have to deny their femininity in order to enter the political realm.\textsuperscript{31}

Juchacz also urged more women to seek positions in public agencies, especially in areas with which they were familiar: schools, maternity assistance, children's relief, housing conditions, public health, and the plight of the elderly. We women, said Juchacz, are most interested in creating innovative social policies which will serve as the basis of the new German nation. Juchacz concluded with an appeal to the Entente nations to lift the inhumane blockade and to return the German prisoners of war to their homeland.\textsuperscript{32}

Representatives were sensitive to the presence of women in the Assembly, as was evident in the next plenary session. A male representative of the German People's Party, Dr. Wilhelm Kahl, created dissension in the Chamber when he began his speech, "Gentlemen!" (\emph{Meine Herren!}). When a deputy shouted "and Ladies," Dr. Kahl protested that a greeting such as \emph{Meine Herren} referred to deputies of both sexes. Indeed, said Dr. Kahl, we welcome the entrance of women into political life.\textsuperscript{33}

Later in that same session Luise Zietz (USPD) addressed the Chamber concerning the national budget and she began her remarks, "Honored Assembly." Zietz had a reputation as a fiery orator and she proved to be so in this wide-ranging maiden speech. She attacked
government surveillance, political repression, and martial law. When she referred pejoratively to the military and the Iron Cross (Germany's most widely awarded military decoration), calls of "Stop!" and "Out With Her!" rang out in the Chamber. Zietz concluded her first speech by stating that she had signed the women's petition demanding removal of the blockade and the speedy return of German prisoners of war, and she urged other deputies to join her.

Several deputies responded to Zietz's comments, including Democrat Dr. Gertrud Bäumer on February 21, 1919. As Juchacz and Zietz had done, in her first speech Dr. Bäumer spoke on several topics. She discussed briefly Germany's relations with foreign nations, and she appealed to women of the Entente nations to urge their own governments to end the shipping blockade of Germany. Bäumer also expressed her confidence in Germany's ability to recover without an era of violence or revolution. Finally, Bäumer encouraged women's participation in all areas of politics and government; a process which Zietz had said would be automatic, Bäumer thought would involve constant vigilance and struggle.

The most significant theme in the first speeches by woman deputies in the National Constituent Assembly grew out of the assumption that the electoral right granted to women by the Council of People's Commissars would be
supplemented by rights in other spheres of life in the new state. Not all deputies were as positive about this as the woman speakers. In an early session Dr. Peter Spahn, of the Center Party, insisted that women were different and would have to accept the maxim of the medieval scholars; "there's ruling in service, pride in humility, power in obedience." These two views would clash in the committees and on the Assembly floor, and not just between men and women, but among the women themselves.

One question which had puzzled party leaders and political observers was the degree to which women in the Assembly would cooperate across party lines. The first collective women's action was taken on March 1, 1919 when a bill sponsored by Lore Agnes (USPD) and women from all other factions were presented. The bill was an appeal to the Entente nations to end the "Hunger Blockade" and to return the German prisoners of war. Women from all factions supported this bill, and Centrist Agnes Neuhaus urged women of other nations to "Help Us!" end policies which only hurt the weak and the blameless.

The National Assembly approved this bill unanimously. President Fehrenbach paid tribute to the women who had selflessly worked for the hungry, sick, and weak of the nation. Fehrenbach expressed "the heartfelt thanks to the women of this National Constituent Assembly for this noble bill" and the Chamber erupted in lively applause.
Certainly the bill was honorable, but hardly a controversial issue in the German Assembly which eagerly accepted the proposal. After this first successful attempt, women's collective action in the Assembly was limited to other non-controversial questions. Party loyalty was too strong; there would be no women's bloc within the Assembly.

The most pressing concern facing the National Assembly in February 1919 was the conclusion of peace with the Allied and Associated Powers. Little could be done until the negotiations opened, but the National Assembly did select a Committee of Experts for the Peace Conference, which included one woman deputy, Socialist Marie Juchacz. When the Allied nations finally presented their terms to the German delegation on May 7, 1919, the harshness of the proposals shocked the Germans. The leadership of the National Assembly, reeling under this shock, called a special session for May 12, 1919 in Berlin to discuss the Allied proposals and the government's response.

At the May 12th meeting in the New Hall of the University of Berlin, Chancellor Scheidemann delivered the keynote address expressing German outrage at the proposed treaty. Then representatives from all the political parties in the Chamber rose to denounce the treaty, and especially the war guilt clause, the proposed trials of war criminals, and the extensive territories that were to be ceded to Poland. Among the speakers were two women,
Clara Bohm Schuch (SPD) and Helene Weber (Center). Clara Bohm Schuch stressed that now was the time to put aside all the horrors and suffering of war. Peace, she maintained, could not be built on the enslavement of the German people; peace should be built on the basis of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. Helene Weber spoke against the occupation of German lands by foreign conquerors. "We women were so optimistic about our political experiences in government, but with this harsh treaty the international community has killed our hopes."

The German government presented counterproposals at the peace negotiations, but when the Allies replied on June 16, 1919, they made few concessions. Furthermore, the Allies demanded that the German government reply to the proposals within five days. The Government and the National Assembly vociferously protested, but the Allied nations stood firm and the Scheidemann cabinet fell.

A new government of Socialists and Centrists headed by Gustav Bauer presented the treaty to the National Assembly. In the Assembly vote, twenty-four women voted in favor of the treaty, nine women voted "no," and five women were absent or ill. Clara Bohm Schuch and Helene Weber chose not to vote with their political factions (i.e., in favor of the treaty). Schuch announced before the vote that she would be ill during the roll call and Weber voted against the treaty and thus against the instructions of
Centrist Party. Thus, ultimately the treaty was accepted by a vote of 209 to 116. On June 28, 1919 a delegation appointed by the new government signed the peace treaty at Versailles.\textsuperscript{42}

In a 1920 article in a women's journal, \textit{Die Frau}, Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP) suggested that most women would have voted against the treaty had they been released by their delegations. Regrettably, said Bäumer, most women gave in to the demands of their factions and the treaty was passed.\textsuperscript{43} The implication that an independent action by women might have changed the outcome of the vote was misleading. Even if all the women had voted against the treaty, the result would not have been affected. Indeed, Dr. Bäumer probably concluded that herself when, instead of voting against her faction, she chose to absent herself from the Chamber during the vote. Above all, the forty-one women in the Assembly represented only 9.6 per cent of the total membership. This small number, rather than their political inexperience, became the most limiting factor for women in the National Constituent Assembly.

The majority of women's speeches in the Chamber concerned the main task facing the Constituent Assembly—drafting a constitution for the new German state. Women from all factions spoke as representatives of their parties concerning some article in the constitutional drafts. Additionally, women who were members of
coalition parties sponsored numerous bills to amend constitutional articles which were supported by the government. Two women, Antonie Pfülf (SPD) and Anna von Gierke (DNVP), were elected to the Constitutional Committee and they diligently attended its forty-eight sessions. Committee membership changed frequently and, at one time or another, nine other women served on the Committee: Social Democrats Minna Bollmann, Marie Juchacz, Ernestine Lutze, Frieda Hauke, and Clara Bohm Schuch; Democrat Gertrud Bäumer; Centrist Hedwig Dransfeld; Independent Social Democrat Lore Agnes; and Clara Mende, a deputy of the German People's Party.

With so many mothers and teachers among the women deputies, it was not surprising that several women were selected to present their party's views on the constitutional provisions dealing with the issue of public education. Early in the term, Luise Zietz (USPD) had urged that the Assembly endorse strict separation of church and state, the standardization of the national school system, and mandatory school attendance through the elementary (Volksschule) level. Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP) also spoke in favor of the standardized school system which she hoped would teach democracy and freedom, and foster the growth of tolerance in young people. In sessions of the Constitutional Committee Socialist Antonie Pfülf also agreed with Zietz's ideas. Pfülf heartily recommended that
religious instruction be banned from the state schools and taught only in religious establishments. By the time this question reached the floor, however, Anna Blos announced that the Social Democratic Party was willing to compromise with the Centrists and allow some religious instruction in state classrooms, if it were allowed on a voluntary basis.  

In its final form, the Constitution provided for the standardization of the Volksschule throughout Germany, for compulsory school attendance, the separation of church and state (with the proviso that religion could be a subject taught in state schools), and a guarantee that educational opportunities would be open to all children regardless of the socioeconomic status or the religious beliefs of their parents.  

Women also participated in the debate about the age of majority and the minimum age for voters in national elections. Prior to 1918 men who were twenty-five years and older had voted in elections. In 1919, in the elections for the National Constituent Assembly men, and women over the age of 20 were eligible to vote. The republican parties (SPD, DDP and Center) favored the adoption of universal suffrage for those over twenty years old. Frieda Hauke (SPD) and Luise Zietz (USPD) described the maturity of twenty-year olds, many of whom were experienced laborers, soldiers or mothers of young children. Perhaps with
the right to vote, suggested Hauke, young women would be able to end their exploitation in home industries and factories. Zietz pointed out that with the standardization of schools, all young people would be prepared to vote and act as responsible citizens by the time they were eighteen. On the opposite side of the Chamber, women of the rightist parties wanted to raise the minimum electoral age from 20 to 25. As Margarete Behm (DNVP) explained from the elitist perspective of her party which looked on parliamentary politics as dirty business, "we want to protect young people from the burdens of politics as long as we can." In the end, the arguments of the Socialists were more effective than the alleged desire to shelter twenty-year olds, and universal suffrage for those twenty years and older was adopted.47

One of the most lively constitutional debates in which women participated concerned the article which represented over fifty years of women's agitation. Article 108 of the constitutional draft (which became Article 109 in the final form) concerned the rights and duties of German citizens. In the second reading of the constitution the first section of the article proposed the abolition of nobility in Germany, and the second section proclaimed that "men and women have basically the same rights and duties." Controversy abounded because the word "basically" in the second section had not been included in the original draft.48 If
any political leaders still believed that women deputies might desert their parties and form a united woman's bloc, the debate about the word "basically" shattered that illusion. Women representatives in the National Assembly were more loyal to their political parties than to a narrow feminist bloc.

If the word "basically" remained in the constitution, Lore Agnes (USPD) predicted, women's right would be eroded one by one. Agnes then presented a bill to strike the word "basically" from the article. Socialist Marie Juchacz agreed with the Agnes proposal, but she also wanted to strike the phrase "and duties" in order to "avoid erroneous interpretations." Centrist Christine Teusch, who wanted to protect women from employment which might endanger their health and thus the health of any children they might conceive, disagreed with Juchacz and Agnes and she insisted that the word "basically" must remain. Luise Zietz (USPD) rose to speak in favor of the bill proposed by her party colleague (Lore Agnes) and delivered a stinging attack on the "hypocritical opponents" of the bill. "You praise women," she said, "at your party conventions, but you oppose equality for women in the constitution."

Also tackling the issue avoided by other speakers, Zietz said that equality did not mean that women would be drafted into military service. Certainly, argued Zietz, motherhood
should be considered equal to military service as a duty for the good of society.49

During the voting on this article, the woman deputies again demonstrated that their main loyalties were to their parties. The party leadership of the Social Democrats, Independent Socialists, and Democrats supported this proposal and the majority of the women in these three parties voted with their delegations. Three Social Democratic women and three women Democrats chose not to follow their party leadership and absented themselves from the Chamber during the vote to strike the word "basically" from the phrase "men and women have basically the same rights and duties." Twenty-one women (16 Social Democrats, 3 Independent Socialists, and 2 Democrats) voted to strike the word "basically," six (5 Centrists and one German National) voted against the motion to strike the word, nine women (3 Social Democrats, 2 German Nationals, 3 Democrats, and 1 German People's Party members) absented themselves, one woman (Centrist Hedwig Dransfeld) abstained, and one woman (Social Democrat Clara Bohm Schuch) was ill. Altogether 119 members of the Assembly voted in favor of striking the word "basically" and 149 voted against it. Thus, the limiting word remained. Juchacz's proposal to strike the phrase "and duties" was also defeated in a subsequent vote.50
An issue which was also a major concern of women's groups, but evoked less rancorous debate, was the treatment of prostitution. In the nineteenth century, women's groups urged that prostitution be eradicated in order to protect the morality and family life in Germany. There was also growing concern about venereal disease which might become an epidemic if allowed to spread unchecked throughout the nation. In 1919 the question was whether to treat prostitution as a crime or as a social problem, i.e., as a matter to be dealt with by the police or by social agencies. Deputies were also divided as to whether prostitution should be regulated by a constitutional provision or ordinary legislation. The debate on this issue was overwhelmingly dominated by woman deputies who agreed that legislation regarding prostitution was urgently needed.

The Independent Socialists (USPD) protested that female prostitutes were arrested by the police, while male customers were not penalized. The USPD urged passage of a constitutional provision to prevent police harassment of prostitutes. Women in other political factions, including Centrist Agnes Neuhaus, Democrat Marie Baum, and Social Democrat Anna Blos, believed that social reforms such as improved housing conditions, more jobs for young women, and better health care centers, would be the best weapons to combat prostitution. These reforms, they argued, should be legislated by the Assembly, but they
should not be part of the basic rights and duties in the constitution. The majority parties prevailed and no article concerning prostitution was included in the constitution. Unfortunately, as these women later discovered, it proved very difficult to pass any of the social legislation desired to combat prostitution because of Germany's economic difficulties.

After the debate on prostitution the Assembly briefly turned its attention to another controversial topic, the abolition of the death penalty. Social Democrat Antonie Pfülf spoke on behalf of those who opposed the death penalty as inhumane and pointless punishment. In the Constitutional Committee and on the floor of the Assembly, Pfülf stressed the ineffectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent to criminals. "I do not pretend to have juridical knowledge equal to that of an esteemed lawyer [referring to DNVP member Dr. Adalbert Düringer who had spoken in favor of the death penalty]," said Pfülf, "but this is not a legal question, it is a question of humanity." Although other women did not speak at length about the death penalty the majority were opposed to it. Subsequently, twenty-two women voted for the abolition of the death penalty, nine voted against the abolition, and seven were ill or absent from the Chamber.

Officially, the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Socialist Party supported the abolition of
the death penalty, and on this issue women followed the directives of their party leadership. Of the 22 women, who voted "yes," 18 were Social Democrats, 3 were Independent Socialists, and one was a Centrist (Hedwig Dransfeld). Dransfeld was the only woman deputy who voted against her party colleagues. Ultimately, the bill was defeated in the Assembly by a vote of 153 against and 128 in favor of the abolition.54

Of all the constitutional issues proposed, women's participation was greatest in the long debates concerning the protection of motherhood, marriage, and children. Women from all parties agreed that marriage and motherhood should be protected by the constitution and should receive the attention and, in some cases, the financial support of the nation and the states. Three Socialist women, Marie Juchacz, Antonie Pfülf and Elisabeth Röhl, proposed that in addition to this basic protection, unmarried mothers and illegitimate children should also be entitled to state protection equal to that provided for married mothers and their children. Further, illegitimate children were to be entitled in the same support, educational opportunities, and rights of inheritance as legitimate children.55 The Independent Socialists and Social Democrats joined to sponsor another bill which would give illegitimate children the constitutional right to carry the names of their fathers. Simultaneously, Democrats Elisabeth Brönner,
Elise Ekke, and Katharine Kloss proposed an amendment to the article that large families should have the right to state aid which would be proportional to their size.

The Centrists were opposed to any constitutional guarantees granting equal rights and protections to illegitimate children. Centrist Agnes Neuhaus said she was sympathetic to the Social Democratic plea that society should not blame the blameless, but she argued in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church, that, where possible, parents of illegitimate children should marry and accept mutual responsibility for the care of the child. Neuhaus was not unresponsive to the shameful treatment of illegitimate children, however, and she suggested a more moderate proposal than that of the Socialists that illegitimate children should have conditions created for them that would be conducive to their emotional, physical, and social development.

Democrat Elisabeth Brönner joined Agnes Neuhaus in her opposition to the bills proposed by the Social Democratic women which would greatly enhance the position of illegitimate children. Brönner and German National Party member Anna von Gierke argued that some future legislation concerning the rights of illegitimate children might be desirable, but that only the original article guaranteeing the sanctity of marriage and the family should be included in the constitution. Concerning this view, Democrat Marie
Baum defended Brönner and other Democrats from Social Democratic charges that they had abandoned their women's interests because of their opposition to these bills related to illegitimate children. Later, Brönner also spoke against the amendment which would have allowed illegitimate children to carry their fathers' names. On this topic she created a stir in the Chamber when she queried, "Can you imagine the confusion if one unmarried mother had several children by different fathers?"57

On a variety of issues relating to women, the USPD supported expanded rights. Opposing the moderate and rightist woman deputies, Independent Socialists Lore Agnes and Luise Zietz as members of their party of the most equality-minded, argued that the proposals of the Social Democratic women were too limited. Agnes proposed an amendment that women should not be denied the opportunity to acquire or keep an office solely because they married. Both Agnes and Zietz (of the USPD) disputed the claim of conservative Anna von Gierke (DNVP) that once a woman married she belonged in the home where she would raise children. Zietz also wanted to expand the rights of women, whether working or not. She suggested that mothers of illegitimate children should have the right to be called "Frau" in official business. Finally, both Agnes and Zietz urged the government to pay greater attention to the health of child-bearing women. They sponsored a bill to
end the high rate of infant mortality by providing free medical services for pregnant women which would be administered through a Government Health Ministry.58

After much debate the Assembly accepted the original proposal (that marriage and motherhood were under the protection of the constitution) and the amendments that large families had equal claim to the protection of the state and that illegitimate children were entitled to conditions conducive to their physical, mental, and social development. The bill to allow illegitimate children to carry the names of their fathers was favored by the women (22 "yes" votes, 12 "no" votes, and four absent or ill), but was defeated by a total vote of 165 to 125. The Independent Socialists and the Social Democrats supported this bill. All three USPD women and 19 of the 20 SPD women voted for the proposal; the twentieth woman (Frieda Hauke) was absent from the Assembly that day. The other amendments were defeated. The supporters of the defeated bills could only hope that at a later time their proposals would be reviewed by the Assembly.59

After the long debates concerning the protection of motherhood and illegitimate children, the discussions about the protection of youth and the rights of female civil servants seemed almost anti-climatic. Author Wilhelmine Kähler represented the Social Democratic Party in the debate about a constitutional article to guarantee the
protection of youth. Kähler maintained that an increased educational budget would be the key to improved conditions for youth. Going beyond Kähler, Lore Agnes (USPD) urged that improved educational opportunities be extended to the prisons to give help to youthful offenders. The more conservative Centrist Agnes Neuhaus and German National Anna von Gierke argued that religious institutions should handle the correction of youth and the education of youthful offenders because their past work in youth rehabilitation had been so admirable. The women's proposals were too specific for most members of the Assembly; only a brief statement, that states and communities were to protect youth against exploitation and neglect, was included in the Constitution.60

In the constitutional provision that all civil service posts were open to all male and female candidates, many women deputies saw an important key to women's economic equality. Lore Agnes (USPD), Marie Juchacz (SPD), and Antonie Pfülf (SPD) spoke enthusiastically in favor of this proposal. Pfülf was particularly concerned about the dismissal of women employees when they married. She pointed out that employers did not concern themselves with the marital status of male employees, and she insisted that an employer should only judge the quality of work, not the personal lives of his employees. Democrat Marie Baum believed that it was very difficult for women to combine
marriage and a career, but she agreed with Pfülfl that women should have full personal freedom in this matter. Only Clara Mende (DVP) and Maria Schmitz (Center) spoke against the adoption of this article. They believed that when a woman married, she gave up part of her freedom of opportunity. To the dismay of the women who had opposed the bill, the proposal to remove all exceptions affecting women civil servants was passed by the Assembly and it was adopted as Article 128 of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{61}

On July 31, 1919 the final draft of the Constitution was accepted by the Social Democrats, Centrists and Democrats over the opposition of the far left (USPD) and the rightist parties (DVP and DNVP). The Constitution as approved was a product of compromise and a complex document of 181 articles. Germany was to be a federal state, but many powers remained with the state and local governments. The ultimate power of the German nation was to be held by the people who would be represented by the Reichstag deputies they elected. The second part of the Constitution guaranteed basic rights and duties for all German citizens.

Women's suffrage was guaranteed in the Constitution (Article 22) and exclusionary clauses affecting women were to be removed (Article 128). Women were to have "basically" the same rights and duties as did men (Article 109). Leaders of women's organizations who had sought equal
political, social, and economic rights for women were disappointed with the final Constitution, but there was strong optimism that more legislation strengthening the position of women would follow. For women, the fact that forty-one female deputies had participated actively in the compilation of this new document was the most encouraging fact. The Constitution was promulgated on August 11, 1919.

With the conclusion of peace on June 28, 1919 and the promulgation of the Constitution on August 11, 1919, the main tasks of the National Constituent Assembly were finished. The pace of this work had been hectic and the accomplishments significant, but the activities of the Assembly were not completed. According to the Constitution, the National Assembly was the authorized legislative body until the Reichstag assembled. Thus, the National Assembly moved from quiet Weimar to bustling Berlin and turned its attention to several thorny legislative matters.

During the spring and summer months which were dominated by debates about the peace negotiations and the Constitution, other business had been conducted on the Assembly floor. Legislation concerning the restoration of order in Germany had been discussed and passed. Petitions on emergency matters had been presented to the Assembly and deputies had interpellated government ministers about various policies. A USPD bill (backed by USPD women deputies Lore Agnes, Anna Hübler, and Luise Zietz)
proposing the socialization of major German industries was defeated on March 13, 1919. A bill expanding the Demobilization Decree of the Provisional Government to ease the transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy was passed by the Assembly on March 28, 1919. One provision in the bill stipulated that married women were to be dismissed if their husbands were employed, in order to create job vacancies for returning veterans. Often this led to massive dismissals of woman employees (married or single) and in the summer of 1919 female deputies in the Assembly began charging that women workers were shouldering too large a part of Germany's economic woes.

Woman deputies interpellated government ministers about a variety of topics during this time including: the cruel treatment of political prisoners during the imposition of martial law in Essen (by Lore Agnes, USPD); the imprisonment of German nurses in Belgium (Clara Mende, DVP); the need to raise support payments for dependents of German prisoners of war (Luise Zietz, USPD); and the security of Germans living under Polish administration (Dr. Käthe Schirmacher, DNVP, and Elise Ekke, DDP).61

After the Constitution was adopted and the pressures to meet deadlines eased, women spoke more frequently about several areas including foreign policy. In late July Dr. Büumer (DDP) discussed Germany's relations with France and her party's concern for German minorities
living in other nations. Bäumer was concerned that the French would prevent Germany's reintegration into the international community. The most prolific woman speaker on the topic of Germany's foreign policy was Dr. Käthe Schirmacher, a German National deputy from Danzig. On seven occasions between July 1919 and May 1920, Dr. Schirmacher addressed her colleagues about the desirability of sending foodstuffs to the starving residents of Vienna, the need to pressure the international community (especially England, France and Japan) for the return of German prisoners of war, and the need to protect the welfare of Germans living in the eastern lands now administered by the Polish government.62

The most heated foreign policy debate in which women participated erupted in one of the last meetings of the National Assembly. Social Democrat Elisabeth Röhl, from Cologne, urged that the National Assembly make a formal protest to the French and Belgian governments concerning their use of black troops to man garrisons along the Rhine. Black soldiers from French and Belgian colonies did not have the same morals as white German women and children, she insisted. "We Germans are not encouraging racial hatred," maintained Röhl, "we just want to protect women and children from the horrible acts we are hearing about along the Rhine." Clara Mende (DVP) and Dr. Käthe Schirmacher (DNVP) related cases of rapes and attacks in
the area as proof of Röhl's charges. Luise Zietz (USPD) agreed that the safety of German women and children was important, but she was most distressed with the overtones of racial hatred in the comments. In fact, Zietz suggested, Germans should worry more about the conduct of German soldiers who were raping German women and should speak out loudly against the anti-Semitic slanders at the meetings of the rightist German National People's Party and the German People's Party. The uproar of protest in the Chamber that followed Zietz's comments was long and loud.63

A formal protest was made by the German government concerning crimes committed by occupation troops in Alsace and Loraine—the protest was due largely to the insistence of women from all political factions except the Independent Socialists. In other matters of foreign policy, women's speeches and interpellations were generally expressions of regular party views; it was in the domestic area that women had more of an impact on Assembly actions.

In domestic policy, the first major area of women's participation was in the preparation of a bill expanding maternity assistance (Wochenhilfe). The Committee on Social Affairs on which so many women served was charged with drafting a bill to replace wartime legislation which gave maternity payments to wives of soldiers and to working women. Women on the Committee were divided about the
amount of money to be allocated for maternity insurance, and on the question of whether this insurance (or assistance) should be part of a broader reform of the national insurance system or should be passed independently. The Socialists who dominated the Committee favored increases in the payments to pregnant women and urged the immediate passage of the bill, rather than delaying its enactment until reform of the entire insurance system could be legislated.

Luise Schroeder (SPD) read the report of the Social Affairs Committee in the Assembly, including the proposed bill that the assistance payments be extended from eight to ten weeks, with at least four of the weeks to be taken before confinement. Payments for delivery costs were to be increased from 25 to 50 marks and hospitals were to be empowered to extend a mother's benefits to a total of thirteen weeks. Centrist Helene Weber was sympathetic with the goals of the bill, but urged that the costs could be reduced if only the government would make fathers liable for the costs of their illegitimate children. Democrat Katharine Kloss, German National Anna von Gierke, and Clara Mende, of the German People's Party, attacked the high costs of the bill which they feared would severely strain the Germany economy. Luise Zietz (USPD) expressed disappointment that this measure was not part of a broad reform of the national insurance system and prodded her
colleagues to begin work on such reform. After the debate was over, the Assembly passed the bill increasing maternity assistance payments as read by Schroeder, without any of the rightist or USPD amendments.  

Two other issues which were debated almost exclusively by woman deputies on the floor of the Assembly were the creation of a national film censorship board and the protection of women employees in inns and taverns. In January 1920 conservative Anna von Gierke (DNVP) rose in the Chamber to request that the government draft a film censorship bill, and the matter was referred to the Social Affairs Committee. During the next three months, the Committee reviewed questionable films in the Berlin police headquarters ("a nauseating experience," proclaimed one woman) and discussed the most effective ways to censor films and protect impressionable youth from immorality.

The bill the Committee presented to the Assembly in April provided that censorship boards be established throughout the nation to review questionable films. These boards were to be composed of members of the film industry and the general public, and they were to have the power to prevent the showing of films they considered to be obscene. Women speaking for the more conservative parties proposed amendments that mothers with young children be included on these boards and that the authorities of these boards be extended to cover acts of performers who were traveling
abroad and might give foreigners an unfavorable impression of Germany. These amendments were defeated in the next plenary session, however, to the dismay of the sponsor Anna von Gierke (DNVP). Finally, the Independent Socialist women spoke against any form of censorship, but the Assembly did not concur and passed the bill as presented by the Social Affairs Committee.65

The Population Policies Committee, chaired by Anna von Gierke (DNVP), was assigned to draft a bill regulating the working conditions of women employees of inns and taverns. Many of the Committee's eighteen sessions from December 1919 through March 1920 were devoted to the problem of eradicating licentiousness in these establishments. Luise Zietz favored a social agency to regulate inns and taverns, but Margarete Behm (DNVP) and Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders (DDP) successfully urged the Committee and then the Assembly to call for police regulation instead. The police would not needlessly harass women, Behm and Lüders insisted, but would protect them effectively from moral and physical dangers.66

Another important legislative concern of the National Assembly was the passage of a Work Councils Bill, to establish employer-employee councils in all factories, businesses and agencies, and to ensure all groups within these firms a voice in management decisions. In the leftist and moderate political parties, women were
particularly concerned that women workers should be well represented on these councils. As Dr. Marie Baum (DDP) explained, the effect of the Demobilization Bill of March 1919 had been to severely reduce the number of women in the labor force. Many women who were the main wage earners of their families were being dismissed. Furthermore, the wage gap between male and female employees which had narrowed during the war was once more increasing sharply. Antonie Pfülf (SPD) protested that dismissals of women were taking place not only in factories but in schools in Bavaria, where the Landtag had ordered the dismissal of any woman teacher who married. There was no such provision for male teachers and Pfülf pointed out that this was a violation of the new Constitution. Many woman deputies had repeatedly petitioned the government about individual cases of inequities, but a broader legislative remedy was needed and it was hoped that the Work Councils Bill could be just that.67

Dr. Gertrud Bäumer and Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders of the Democratic Party called for the mandatory inclusion of women on the councils in order to represent the long-ignored special interests of women employees. Lüders answered charges by male deputies that women were trying to take control of the councils by pointing out that, "We women do not want to push men out of jobs, we just want to be fairly represented." On the conservative side Anna
von Gierke (DNVP) agreed that women's concerns should be considered by employers, but she opposed the Work Councils Bill as an infringement on private ownership. Von Gierke's colleague Margarete Behm suggested that if work councils were legalized they should be extended to cover the employees in home industries who had been exploited for a long time. On the left Luise Zietz (USPD) urged the Assembly to pass a Work Councils Bill giving much more power to the employees; anything less, she said, would be a betrayal of the November Revolution.  

Finally, without the support of the USPD or the two rightist parties (DNVP and DVP) the bill was passed and went into effect on April 1, 1920.  

The bills concerning the work councils and censorship were the last two major pieces of legislation passed by the National Assembly. In other work during the last half of the Assembly, women interpellated the government on a variety of subjects including: the deplorable conditions of German prisons (Luise Zietz, USPD); the mistreatment of strikers in Berlin (Zietz, USPD); and the inequities in the rationing system (Lore Agnes, USPD; Luise Schroeder, SPD; Antonie Pfülf, SPD; Elisabeth Röhl, SPD; and Johanna Reitze, SPD). Several woman deputies presented bills which were rejected, including proposals to socialize agriculture in Germany (Gertrud Lodahl, SPD); decrease the budget for the Central Youth Agency (Marie Zettler, Center);
and forbid school officials to force students to take part in religious instruction (Antonie Pfülf, SPD). One bill proposed by several parties and supported on the floor by Anna von Gierke (DNVP) and Marie Zettler (Center) concerning homesteading in the border areas of Germany was passed after some revisions were added which restricted its application.  

One worry often voiced in the National Assembly concerned the influence of outside pressures or events on the Chamber. In March 1920 such developments interrupted the legislative work. In that month free corps elements and conservative officials led by Wolfgang Kapp (1858-1922), a former government official and rightist politician, staged a coup d'état (the Kapp Putsch), seeking to overthrow the young republican government. Remarkable cooperation by the trade unions, which joined in a general strike and paralyzed the rebel government, convinced Kapp and his fellow conspirators that their attempt was hopeless, and after four days they fled. The abortive Kapp putsch which revealed the fragile nature of the legal government's position also set off leftist counter-risings throughout Germany which embroiled the government in the task of restoring domestic order and the Assembly in passing legislation to prevent further disorders.

After this violent interruption, the Assembly addressed itself to its last major task; setting the date for the
election of the new Reichstag (June 6, 1920). Once this date was set, the work of the Assembly focused on the reports which would be passed on to the committees of the new Reichstag. On May 21, 1920 the National Assembly completed its work and voted itself out of existence.

For the members of the Assembly the fifteen months of long discussions, late nights, and missed meals were over. Initially observers were euphoric about the accomplishments of the first women to serve in a German parliament. Much of the progress made by the Assembly, said writer Regine Deutsch, was due to the strong initiative of the women members. Women did not merely represent party views, she said, they served their constituents and all German women. There was no reason a woman would not be president of a future Reichstag. 72

From the views of many of the deputies themselves, however, Deutsch's evaluation seemed overly optimistic. Dr. Gertrud Bäumer was pleased with individual accomplishments (such as the standardization of schools), but was less enthusiastic about the overall accomplishments of the Assembly. 73 Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders was fearful that the articles concerning women's employment rights and the rights of illegitimate children, for which woman deputies had worked so hard, would eventually threaten family life in Germany. 74 Some of the Socialist women, notably Marie Juchacz, were disappointed that women in the Assembly had
not been able to legislate more rights for women in the social, economic and legal spheres. The disillusionment of these women deepened as time passed and they saw the hopes of the National Assembly era fade.

Furthermore, women's activities in the committees and in the Assembly had been focused on health, education and welfare issues, i.e., the "women's issues" of the nineteenth century. It was not surprising then that many women were frustrated that their activities were limited to these three major areas. What many women did not accept was the fact that their experiences were limited. The woman deputies were teachers, authors, welfare workers, and homemakers; they were not lawyers, diplomats, and union leaders. Considering this fact, their participation and contributions were remarkably wide-ranging.

Disappointment and disillusion did not end the participation of women in German politics. Of the forty-one women who served in the Assembly, twenty-three later served in the Reichstag at one time or another between 1920 and 1933. Women also ran for state parliaments and local councils. As the economic situation in Germany worsened and the society was more fragmented, state and local governments became more powerful and women could make an impact on bread and butter issues. What was most frustrating to the women who had worked so hard to safeguard women's rights in the national Constitution was to see these rights eroded by
local courts, demobilization committees, and relief agencies.  

In the Assembly the hopes of woman deputies had not been dashed in all instances. Women had made gains in electoral rights, social legislation, working conditions, and maternity assistance, but these were not precedent-breaking innovations. As was often discussed during the plenary sessions, most of these matters had been studied or discussed by committees in the prewar Reichstag. Women were undoubtedly in some cases catalysts who urged more rapid action and cajoled party leaders, but with less than 10 per cent of the total seats in the Assembly, women had only limited influence and lacked power. Women were treated by party leaders as if they were a vocal minority wing that needed to be pacified.

Furthermore, women had failed to gain significant leadership positions in the Assembly. Only two women, Lore Agnes and Anna von Gierke, held official posts in the Assembly and these posts (Secretary of the Assembly and Chairman of the Population Policies Committee, respectively) were not considered to be powerful positions. Women did not gain leadership positions within the party delegations either. Hedwig Dransfeld was referred to as a leader of the Centrist faction, but in fact she was only a spokesman for the six women members of her faction. The tight party structure which remained intact during the Assembly debates
and votes was the largest factor in preventing any shared leadership or the rise of new members within the traditional power structure.79

In conclusion, women's accomplishments in the National Assembly were limited to "Kleinarbeit" (small work, one piece at a time) and women had to console themselves with the hope that they would gain more power in future Reichstags. The system of proportional representation had helped women gain seats in the elections for the National Constituent Assembly because the parties were eager to secure the votes of the newly enfranchised women. Now women felt they were at the mercy of the male-dominated party leadership councils and nominating committees. For the future role of woman deputies much depended therefore on the outcome of the Reichstag elections in June 1920.
Footnotes

1 Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung, 1919-1920 (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei, 1920), v. 326, p. 177.


4 Clara Bohm Schuch, "Die Politik und die Frauen," in Frauenstimmen aus der Nationalversammlung; Beiträge der sozialdemokratischen Volksvertreterinnen zu den Zeitfragen (Berlin, 1920), pp. 16-17.

5 Gertrud Bäumer, Lebensweg durch eine Zeitenwende (Tübingen: R. Wunderlich, 1933), pp. 356-60.

6 Regine Deutsch, Parlamentarische Frauenarbeit I (Gotha: Verlag Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1920), p. 1. This account has been the most useful work to date on the Assembly and committee activities of the woman deputies, although there are several inaccuracies in names and dates.

7 One member (Marie Zettler) who sat with the Center Party belonged to a splinter group, the Bavarian People's Party (BVP). Of the four women who entered the Assembly in later elections, three were Social Democrats (Marie Behncke, Helene Grünberg, and Gertrud Lodahl) and one was a member of the German Democratic Party (Dr. Marie Elisabeth Lüders). Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, Appendix.

8 Schwarz, MdR, pp. 608-794; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, pp. 1-2; Wer Ist's? (7th ed.; Berlin: Verlag Hermann Degener, 1922), passim; Cuno Horkenbach, ed., Das Deutsche Reich von 1918 bis Heute (Berlin: Verlag für Presse, Wirtschaft und Politik, G.m.b.H., 1930), pp. 632-774. These figures are not quite as clear as they appear to be. Several women had multiple careers, such as teachers and author, social worker and laborer. I have classified the women according to their major source of employment. Significantly, many women worked as volunteers for
political parties or trade unions in addition to their roles as housewives or employees. The most active women volunteers included Socialists Minna Bollmann, Else Höfs, Johanna Reitze, Elisabeth Röhl, and Elfriede Ryneck.

As women in the teaching profession had dominated the leadership of the Frauenbewegung, teachers made up the major group among these women deputies. In an interesting observation about American women in politics, Martin Gruber says that a preponderance of political women came from teaching backgrounds—a field which did not produce as many leaders of western society as law or business. Martin Gruber, Women in American Politics: An Assessment and Sourcebook (Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Academic Press, 1968), Chapter 6.


10After women's suffrage was granted, the Frauenbewegung generally declined. Its main goal was attained and the center of activity for women's rights moved from the women's organizations to the political and parliamentary arenas. Contact between women on the international level which had been so important to the Frauenbewegung declined in the tense postwar society and did not resume until the second half of 1920.

11Lüders, Fürchte Dich Nicht, pp. 4, 93, 96.

12Prior to 1918 women who had belonged to women's organizations were most likely to join the German Democratic Party; women who had been active in political parties or trade unions were usually Socialists. Marie Juchacz, Sie lebten für eine bessere Welt; Lebensbilder führender Frauen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts (Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz, Nachfolger, 1955); Gabriele Bremme, Die Politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland; Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Frauen bei Wahlen und Ihre Teilnahme in Partei und Parlament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), p. 10.


15Frieda Gehlen attributed this to the fact that women frequently raised children, then turned to politics at an older age. Jane Jaquette, Women in Politics (New York: Wiley, 1974), p. xxviii.
<table>
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Totals: 421 | 100 | 41 | 100. 380 | 100

16 Horkenbach, *Das Deutsche Reich*, pp. 632-774.


22 In March 1919 Elisabeth Bröchner (DDP) requested a leave of four weeks because of illness and in July Margarete Behm (DNVP) requested a similar leave for four weeks.

23 As with any profile of a typical member, no one woman fit this description. Two women who most closely resembled this profile were Social Democrats Anna Tomaszewska Blos (1866-1933) and Antonie Pfülü (1877-1923).

24 There were no women in Scheidemann's cabinet. Women were a long way from achieving powerful positions either in the Assembly or the government.

25 When the Committee on Social Affairs was created only five women were elected as members but this number
swelled during the summer of 1919. The topics discussed by this Committee were issues of interest to deputies who were concerned about equal rights for women and with improving the quality of social conditions in Germany. Thus, many women served on the Committee during their tenure in the Assembly.

26The committee secretaries included: Elise Ekke (DDP); Anna von Gierke (DNVP); Antonie Pfülf (SPD); Luise Schroeder (SPD); and Christine Teusch (Center). In addition several women deputies served as acting secretaries at various times during the committee sessions. Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 2.

27That women deputies did not wear hats was more significant than it might have appeared. Prior to 1919 women officials used to wear hats, a practice which, if continued, would have made them very conspicuous on the floor of the Assembly. Ibid., p. 2.

28Many Frauenbewegung leaders had long advocated this form of address and it became standard practice without any special debate or resolutions.

29Verhandlungen, v. 344, "Register."

30Party pressure did not prevent members from voting against their party factions, but certainly did discourage such independent stands. The party's position was powerful because of the proportional representation system used in German elections from 1919 to 1933. The party prepared a list of candidates to be elected in each district and one's position on the list was crucial. Too many independent votes in the Assembly might relegate a member to an obscure position on the district list thus lead to the end of a political career.

31Verhandlungen, v. 326, pp. 177-78.

32At one point during her speech, the President interrupted Juchacz and asked for quiet around the speaker's table so that her speech could be heard by all delegates. The President did not ask her to come to the tribune to speak, but he could have so ordered. (Later in the session his order to Luise Zietz to do so touched off a confrontation between the two.) Juchacz used the phrase "we women" for the first time in the Assembly and it was to be used frequently during the next 15 months. Women recognized that they had different experiences which meant
their viewpoints and contributions—as women—were distinct from those of the male deputies. Ibid., V. 326, pp. 179-81.

33"Meine Herren" would be used again by other deputies, but "Ladies and Gentlemen" was the most common salutation used by Assembly members. Ibid., p. 216.

34Thus special deference was not paid to speakers just because they were females. President Fehrenbach also reprimanded Zietz for her comments. Ibid., pp. 232-34; Sender, German Rebel, pp. 94-95.

35Verhandlungen, v. 326, pp. 272-76.

36Ibid., p. 381.

37Ibid., p. 410.

38Ibid., p. 411.


40Verhandlungen, v. 327, pp. 1089-91.

41Ibid., p. 1105.

42Ibid., pp. 1421-23.


44Independent Socialists Luise Zietz and Lore Agnes, and Anna von Gierke of the German Nationalist People's Party were most active in their efforts to amend the constitutional draft.

45Verhandlungen, v. 326, pp. 693-96; v. 328, pp. 1706-7, 1911; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 12. In an interesting speech, Anna Blos stressed that although the teaching of religion might be tolerated in state schools, it ought not to be considered a substitute for the arts and sciences or the "important subject of international conciliation." Blos also suggested a reform in the teaching of history. "It is time to study the people," said Blos, "and not just the princes...Let us be much more concerned," she concluded, "with the effects of a peasant war on the people who fought and suffered."
Articles 142-149 of the Constitution of the German Reich, adopted on August 11, 1919.

Verhandlungen, v. 327, pp. 1266-70.

Antonie Pföhl had tried unsuccessfully to strike the work "basically" from the article before it came to the plenary session for a second reading. Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 5.

Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1560-61, 1563-64. The similarities between the debate over Article 109 in Weimar Germany and the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution today are interesting. Prominent in both debates are the fears that motherhood will be endangered and that women will be drafted into military service if equal rights and duties are guaranteed in the Constitution.

Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1568, 1580-82; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 6.

"The police already do too much for us" (referring to the surveillance of political leftists), said Luise Zietz (USPD), "they should not be bothered with arresting prostitutes." In Denmark, Zietz pointed out, "the government had removed all penalties for prostitution (as of 1906) and the result was a significance decrease in venereal disease. Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1576-78.

Ibid., pp. 1575-79.

After Pföhl's speech, Dr. Düringer belittled her legal expertise saying, "I have specifically said that the youthful appearance of Frau Pföhl prevents me from crediting her with great experience in criminal matters." (Düringer was 64 years old, Pföhl was 41 years old.) Ibid., pp. 1588-89; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 7.

Centrist Hedwig Dransfeld was the only non-Socialist woman who voted in favor of abolishing the death penalty; others who were sympathetic were "absent" during the vote. Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1615-17; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 7.

In the Constitutional Committee Socialists Pföhl and Ernestine Lutze and Democrat Gertrud Bäumer had proposed that all existing legal and social prejudices against illegitimate children be removed. The Socialist bill sought to guarantee this equality. Verhandlungen, v. 328, p. 1600; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, pp. 7-8.

57 Ibid., pp. 1603, 1605, 2131.

58 Ibid., pp. 1600, 1605-6, 1608.

59 Articles 119, 121 of the German Constitution (1919); Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1665-67.

60 Article 122 of the German Constitution (1919); Ibid., pp. 1624-28, 1629.

61 Verhandlungen, v. 327, pp. 504-5, 533, 1074, 1161, 1164, 1165, 1375.


63 Verhandlungen, v. 333, pp. 5690-96, 5723.

64 Verhandlungen, v. 329, pp. 2463, 2598-99, 2601-2, 2603-6, 2608.


66 Verhandlungen, v. 331, p. 4172; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 23.

67 Anna Geyer, Die Frauenerwerbsarbeit in Deutschland (Jena: Thüringer Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, G.m.b.H., 1924), p. 18; Jürgen Kuczynski, Der Lage der Arbeiterin in Deutschland von 1700 bis zur Gegenwart (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), pp. 206, 211, 225; Verhandlungen, v. 329, pp. 2235, 2709-12; v. 330, p. 3199; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 22.

68 In fact, in January 1920, on the steps of the Reichstag building, a leftist demonstration was held and Zietz went there to talk with several protesters. The demonstrators were urging a stronger Work Councils Bill which would be more sympathetic to the needs of the workers. When the police moved in to break up the protest, the peaceful demonstration became bloody, much to the horror of many Assembly deputies. In a fiery clash the next day (January 14) Zietz and Wolfgang Heine, a government minister, argued about her participation in such a demonstration.
69 Verhandlungen, v. 328, pp. 1910-11; v. 330, pp. 3277, 3283; v. 331, pp. 4263-68, 4270, 4308-9; v. 332, p. 4411; v. 333, p. 4722; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 27.


71 Heilbron, Nationalversammlung, v. 9, p. 699.

72 Deutsch conceded that fewer women in the Danish parliament had accomplished significant reforms of marriage rights, but this was due to the difference in socio-economic conditions in these two nations after the war, not to a lack of initiative among the women parliamentarians in Germany. Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, pp. 1-2, 41-42.

73 Bäumer, Deutsche Schulpolitik, pp. 38, 158-59.

74 Lüders, Furchte Dich Nicht, p. 106.

75 Werner Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation; Politik und Literatur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zur Frauenbewegung, 1863-1933 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), p. 95.

76 Deutsch, Frauenarbeit, p. 3.

77 Duverger, Political Role of Women, pp. 123, 130.

79 Walter Tormin concluded that the party structure remained important because of the severely limited time in which so many legislative tasks had to be completed. Tormin, in Schwarz, MDR, p. 515.
CHAPTER III

OPPORTUNITIES AND HOPES: WOMEN IN THE
REICHSTAG, 1920-1924

The electoral campaign of 1920 was filled with much tension. During the campaign the leftist parties lashed out against the bourgeois parties for thwarting the revolutionary advances and supporting institutions left over from the former imperial government. The conservative parties pledged to prevent further revolutionary changes in Germany and to return Germany to her prewar greatness. One major underlying topic of the campaign was the inability of the Weimar coalition government to counteract the antidemocratic trend that had touched off the Kapp Putsch. Many voters were disillusioned and sought to express their dissatisfaction by voting for the more radical parties of both the right and the left.

All the parties faced the severe challenge of rallying their supporters in 1920. Only about 15 per cent of German voters were organized in political parties. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) which had been the largest party in the National Constituent Assembly and one of the best organized parties in Germany had 1,180,208 members in 1920. It had been the first party to support women's suffrage and
had the largest faction of women in the National Assembly, although only 17.5 per cent of the party membership were women. Thus, much of the party's time was directed at organizing women members and voters. Other parties shared this concern and directed much of their political propaganda at women. The unwritten law for parties was to nominate at least one female candidate from each district.³

The election was to be conducted on the basis of proportional representation and a system of national lists. Sixty thousand votes were needed to elect a deputy; any excess votes would be counted toward candidates listed on a national at-large slate. Ranking on the lists was crucial and was used by the parties to reward loyalty of members.

The election, on June 6, 1920, was disheartening for the parties of the Weimar Coalition (the Social Democrats, the Centrists, and the Democrats). The Coalition parties won only 225 seats of the 466 seats in the Reichstag; the opposition parties won a majority of 241 seats. The Independent Socialists (USPD), the National People's Party (DNVP), and the People's Party (DVP) gained the voters that the Coalition parties lost.⁴

General voter participation declined from 83 per cent in 1919 to 79 per cent in 1920. The participation of women was not as high as in the National Assembly election in 1919. In the 1920 election 56.9 per cent of the eligible
voters participated in Cologne, Germany; 63.3 per cent of those were men and 51.2 per cent were women. The excitement of voting for the first time did not last into 1920. Voting percentages of women during the Weimar era never again reached the 1919 levels. This loss of enthusiasm was not unique to Germany; women's voting participation declined after the first elections in most western nations, including Austria, Denmark, and Great Britain.

Thirty-six women were elected to seats in the June 6th election and a total of forty-two women served in the Reichstag from 1920 through May 1924. Thirty-two women were elected from districts and four women won their seats because of their positions on the National Electoral List. Of the thirty-six women originally elected, five women left the Reichstag during the 1920-24 term and six entered the legislature after winning by-elections.

The number of women elected to the Reichstag (36) was less than the 37 elected to the National Constituent Assembly. The two parties with the highest percentage of women in the National Assembly (the Social Democrats and the Democrats) declined in total strength. The percentage of female Reichstag members in relation to male members declined from 9.7 per cent in the Assembly to 8 per cent in the 1920-24 Reichstag, because the total number of seats had increased from 421 to 466. Not only on the national level, but on the local level the number of woman
representatives decline. Gabriele Bremme speculates that economic concerns were becoming more and more important to voters on all levels and many voters questioned the ability of women to handle complex fiscal matters.⁹

Of the 42 women who served in the 1920-24 Reichstag, 16 women belonged to the Social Democratic Party (SPD), 10 to the Independent Socialist Party (USPD), 4 each to the Democratic Party (DDP) and the National People's Party (DNVP) and the People's Party (DVP), 3 to the Centrist Party, and 1 each to the Communist (KPD) and Bavarian People's Parties (BVP). Thus, as in the National Assembly, the majority of women deputies were leftists (27 of 42 women were members of the SPD, USPD, or KPD).¹⁰

As in the National Assembly, most of the women in the Reichstag were housewives, teachers, or writers. Of the 13 women who called themselves housewives, six had worked outside the home at some time. Ten women or 23 per cent were teachers or academic administrators. In contrast, only 4 per cent of the male representatives in the Reichstag during the Weimar era were educators. Eight women were writers which was proportionate to the number of male journalists. Six women were employed in factories or small businesses and one did piece work at home. Finally, two women were full-time party workers, one was a labor organizer, and one was a secretary.¹¹
Most of the women had attended women's schools and had left school between the ages of 15 and 19. Six of the women had completed some advanced university work and one woman was an honorary medical doctor. As in the National Assembly, the better educated women were the leaders of the parties of the middle and the right.

Only five women among the forty-two considered themselves as "religion-less." Sixteen women were members of the Evangelical Church, sixteen members were Dissidents (e.g., atheists or Jews), and five were Catholics. As in the National Assembly, religious affiliation would surface as an important issue during the debates about assistance for unmarried mothers and illegitimate children and the censorship of German films and literature.

Women in the 1920-24 Reichstag were elected in similar numbers (23 and 19, respectively) from large city districts and rural areas. Thirty-three of the women had been born in small German towns and villages, but as adults only 18 lived in the smaller communities. Twenty-eight of the women were married or widowed in 1920 (compared with 91 percent of women in their age group) and 14 were single. More women in the Social Democratic Party were married than women in the parties of the right or the middle. These married women felt the conflict between their careers and motherhood and they worked for legislation to guarantee equal rights to married working women. Somewhat younger
than the men in the Reichstag, the women representatives on the average were 45 years old.\textsuperscript{12}

The attendance of the women and the men in the Reichstag was similar. Two women (Clara Zetkin, KPD, and Paula Mueller-Otfried, DNVP) requested absences from the Reichstag for more than one hundred days, but these were exceptional cases. Zetkin missed many sessions to attend conferences and deliver speeches, and Mueller-Otfried was very ill during the spring of 1924.

The most significant difference between the newly elected woman deputies in the Reichstag and the women representatives to the National Assembly was political experience. Twenty-two of the women elected to the Reichstag had served in the National Constituent Assembly. Reassured by the record of women's activities in the National Assembly, the male party leaders were confident that the women would not desert their own factions to form a "women's bloc."

The June election, which was a setback for the parties of the Weimar Coalition, led to a new government headed by Centrist Constantin Fehrenbach (1852-1926). Compared to its predecessors, it was a more conservative government from which the Social Democrats were excluded. Since women did not constitute a powerful force in national politics, there were no women in the Fehrenbach cabinet. Neither did any woman lead any political faction in the Reichstag.
For many male politicians, election to a Reichstag seat was the first step toward a high position in the national government. Now membership in the Reichstag opened to women the door to high posts in the governmental bureaucracy. During the 1920-24 Reichstag session the first women who were appointed as ministerial counselors were two Reichstag deputies. Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP, 1873-1954), who had served in the National Assembly, been a prominent educator for more than twenty years, and written extensively on domestic issues in Die Hilfe (the Democratic journal she edited), was appointed a counselor in the Ministry of the Interior. Her party colleague Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP, 1878-1965), a well known educator and international relief organizer, was appointed as a counselor in the Ministry of Labor. These were the highest positions which women attained during the Weimar Republic.\(^{13}\)

When the Reichstag convened on June 24, 1920 the oldest member, seventy-seven-year-old Heinrich Reicke of the Social Democratic Party, had the honor of opening the session. He appointed four acting secretaries including Lore Agnes (1876-1953), an Independent Socialist from Düsseldorf, who had served as a secretary to the National Assembly. All of the 36 women who were elected were present during this first meeting. Franziska Eschholz, the SPD representative named to hold a seat until a by-election
could be held in the First Electoral District (East Prussia), was also present.

During the next three meetings of the Reichstag, elections were held for the President, Vice Presidents, and secretaries of this body. The Social Democratic leader Paul Löbe was elected president of the Reichstag and Wilhelm Dittmann (SPD), Dr. Hans Bell (Z), and Hermann Dietrich (DDP) were elected as the three vice presidents. During the election the vice presidents, three women (Lore Agnes, USPD; Luise Zietz, USPD, 1865-1922; and Clara Zetkin, KPD, 1867-1933) received one vote each. Of the four permanent secretaries elected, two were women: Lore Agnes and Clara Böhm-Schuch (SPD, 1879-1936). Later Centrist Christine Teusch (1888-1964) was elected to be a secretary of the Reichstag.

Women served on five of the major Reichstag committees: Budget, Petitions, Economics, Social Affairs, and Foreign Policy. Women served on every one of the nine committees that dealt with social or health problems. On the other hand, they rarely served on budget committees. The greatest preponderance of women (13 out of 28) was on the committee charged with drafting a national youth welfare law. Women were most influential (as measured by success in pushing their bills through the subcommittees, committee, and on to successful adoption on the floor of the Reichstag) on the Social Affairs Committee of whose
twenty-eight members, seven were women. Women on this Committee were considered experts on social matters because of their experience in schools and social welfare agencies. Work on the committees was less dramatic than speaking on the floor of the Reichstag, but served as an excellent parliamentary training ground for those women who had not served in the National Assembly.

In the first part of the 1920-24 session, most of the women who spoke out in plenary or committee sessions had served in the National Assembly or, as in the case of Clara Zetkin, had extensive political or speaking experience throughout Germany. In contrast to the National Assembly, woman speakers were now more relaxed about their speech making in the plenary sessions and they were not as concerned about how the male deputies would react to them. Clashes between men and women deputies continued to erupt occasionally. When Josef André of the Centrist Party challenged the authority and expertise of woman speakers such as Mathilde Wurm (USPD), Wurm's Independent Socialist colleague Anna Ziegler protested André's attack and criticized the Centrist deputy because he did not know "how to treat women as political opponents!" The USPD faction shouted "Bravo!" to Ziegler, but there was much commotion and laughter in the Centrist faction.

The one woman who had spoken frequently in the National Assembly and emerged as one of the most prolific
speakers early in the 1920-24 session was Luise Zietz, party secretary of the Independent Socialists. Her sudden death at the age of fifty-six in 1922 deprived the Reichstag of one of its best known woman members. As Reichstag President Paul Lübe eulogized Zietz:

Frau Zietz was one of the first German women to have fought for the political equality of her sex. She was one of the first women who entered the German parliament...In this room she struggled for German women...We in the Plenum knew her as the high-spirited combatant, who did not avoid explosive arguments; she gladly participated in any quarrel. I have known her through two decades and I have known that beneath the armor of the combatant...beat a motherly, caring heart that could never be destroyed through the harshness and vehemence of the struggle.15

Next to Zietz, the most active woman deputy was Communist Party member Clara Zetkin. Zetkin's activities in her party made her well known throughout Germany. She was the most vociferous woman speaker on foreign policy issues, but like Zietz, her activity in the Reichstag was also cut short. Late in the 1920-24 session the government moved to arrest and try several political figures including Clara Zetkin and four other deputies for "insults of and attack on the polity of the German state." This action embroiled the Reichstag in a debate about immunity for Chamber deputies and diverted Zetkin's attention toward answering the charges against her.16

Throughout the 1920-24 session woman deputies spoke less frequently than male deputies on the floor of the
There was no women among the speakers in the Chamber. On foreign policy issues women's rhetoric echoed party lines. Only on domestic issues concerning health, education, and welfare could women refer to their own experiences and those of women experts in these fields. In general, conservative women appeared more willing to accept arguments or views of male party leaders (even on domestic issues) than did leftist woman deputies.

The 1920-24 Reichstag was especially concerned with gaining a better position for Germany internationally and with restoring social and economic order at home. Woman deputies in the Reichstag spoke about foreign policy issues much less frequently than did their male counterparts. When women deputies did speak about foreign policy they emphasized the effects of policy decisions on domestic and social issues. Only one woman, Independent Socialist Toni Sender (1888-1964), served on the Foreign Policy Committee. As housewives, teachers, writers, or factory workers, most of the women deputies lacked experience in foreign affairs.

Democrat Elizabeth Brönner (1880-1943), the first woman to speak in the Reichstag in 1920, talked about the strained relations between Germany and Poland and she appealed to the Interior Minister, Democrat Erich Koch-Weser, to investigate the interruptions in rail service between the two nations. On other issues, Brönner, as a
representative of the Democratic Party, favored negotiations with former enemy nations in order to improve Germany's international position and to allow greater freedom of action.

Clara Zetkin (KPD) repeatedly addressed the Reichstag about Germany's borders and Germany's relations with other nations. In all her speeches, on foreign policy issues, Zetkin stressed the Communist view that the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat and closer ties with Soviet Russia were the only way Germany could survive. In her most vehement speech Zetkin denounced the government's policy toward French imperialism during the Ruhr invasion in January 1923. Zetkin expressed the concern of the Communists that passive resistance would ruin the German state and reduce Germany to a colony of the United States. As was their custom in the case of foreign policy issues, Zetkin and other woman deputies voted with their parties on the proposal to protest officially the occupation of the Ruhr, and the protest bill was passed by a large margin.18

Toni Sender (USPD), as a member of the Foreign Policy Committee and of the International Trade Subcommittee, spent long hours researching proposed trade agreements. Sender had lived and worked in France before the First World War, but she had no previous experience in trade negotiations or legislation. In her first speech before
the Reichstag, Sender criticized Germany's aggressive representatives (led by industrialist Hugo Stinnes, 1870-1924) who had made an unfavorable impression on the Allied delegates at the Spa Conference (1920) concerned with Germany's ability to pay reparations. In an excited tone, Sender decried what she feared would become "the enslavement of the Weimar Republic." Later, Sender recalled her great nervousness before this speech and her admiration for Luise Zietz who had shared her excitement.19

Sender's colleague Lore Agnes (USPD) urged the Reichstag to investigate the growing Rhenish separatism and its potential effects on Germany's foreign relations. On another matter concerning Germany's relations with other nations, Social Democrat Clara Bohm-Schuch requested that the Reichstag investigate the causes of the World War and determine the question of responsibility for the war. An investigation committee was subsequently established, but it included no women members. Only leftist women, including Agnes and Bohm-Schuch, discussed the important policy of fulfillment (i.e., the attempt to win favor with the Allies by trying to fulfill the reparations obligations) advocated by the Centrist Chancellor Joseph Wirth (1879-1956) and his Foreign Minister, Dr. Walther Rathenau (1867-1922).20 In the middle of the Chamber, finally, Democrat Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (1878-1965) spoke against the abusive treatment of residents in the
occupied area of the Rhineland by the occupation forces. In the aftermath of the Kapp Putsch and in light of the growing tensions in the Ruhr area, the republican government was blamed for the declining economy and for Germany's loss of international prestige. Attempts to win concessions from the Allied Powers were futile and in 1922 Germany signed a treaty of friendship, the Rapallo Pact, with the Soviet Union. This action, however, alarmed the Western powers and did nothing to aid Germany's economic plight. When French and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr area in 1923, the Germans instituted a policy of passive resistance. This action decimated Germany's industrial output and pushed the young republic to the brink of economic collapse. In this climate of political and economic chaos, the deputies of the Reichstag worked to preserve order and the vulnerable republican government.

Domestically, massive unemployment and a faltering economy plagued the young republic. The woman deputies lacked experience in fiscal planning and few spoke about large-scale economic reform. The Socialist parties advocated the adoption of a planned economy and the "socialization" of the major industries. Thus Luise Zietz (USPD) urged deputies of the conservative parties to support such economic changes. As Clara Zetkin frequently stated, the Communists agreed with the Social Democrats' demands, and added that the Reichstag should heavily tax all industrial
profits, then funnel the money to the workers. Conservative women disagreed with their leftist counterparts and once again women represented the views of their parties, not of a united women's bloc.\(^2^2\)

Above all, however, women of all parties were concerned with issues affecting especially women and children. Woman deputies were particularly worried about the employment of women. Women who had worked for several years outside the Reichstag to improve working conditions for male and female workers, now worked to pass such legislation. One such reformer was Democrat Marie-Elisabeth Lüders who was concerned that woman employees were becoming the scapegoats of Germany's poor economy. During economic retrenchment, woman employees were usually the first to be fired. Lüders and the Democratic Party supported proposals to guarantee equal rights for woman employees and they urged the government to set an example in its own hiring and firing practices.\(^2^3\)

Social Democrat Luise Schroeder (1887-1957) complained that unmarried women with children were being fired by employers and she called on the government to discourage such dismissals. Independent Socialist Mathilde Wurm was bitter about these dismissals, "Women were highly praised for their war work, but their position has not improved after the war." Luise Zietz (USPD) vehemently attacked deputies such as August Beuermann (DVP, 1878-1930) who
upheld existing hiring and firing practices in government agencies. Schroeder, Wurm, and Zietz supported equal rights for all working women, whether married or unmarried, because they believed that the ability to earn a living was an essential prerequisite for further political and social gains for women.  

German Nationalists and other conservatives did not believe that women should be granted expanded employment rights at the expense of their roles as wives and mothers. As Paula Mueller-Otfried (DNVP) stated, the complaints of discrimination should be investigated, but the government should not displace male wage earners to protect the positions of married woman workers.

Luise Zietz (USPD) insisted that some of the worst cases of discrimination against married woman workers existed in the Postal Ministry and she read bitter complaints from several postal workers who were dismissed because of "budget restrictions" at the same time the ministry was hiring new employees. Marie Wackwitz (USPD, 1865-1935) expressed the Social Democrats' concern that conservative ministry officials were using inflation as an excuse to fire Socialist workers, then replaced them with political conservatives. The Socialist women requested a full investigation of government hiring practices and linked this request with a proposal to reform the civil service by equalizing pay scales and employment opportunities.
In spite of these efforts, as the inflation worsened and the German economy moved close to collapse in 1923 the government dismissed most of its married women workers. These women were given bonus payments to minimize their protests. This action violated equal rights provisions of the Weimar Constitution, but the government's policy was accepted by the Reichstag and remained in effect until 1928. This dramatic failure to preserve equal employment rights for married women was a painful setback for the leftist woman deputies who feared that the loss of economic power would also lead to the loss of the political and social rights women had gained.

Dr. Margarethe Behm (DNVP, 1860-1929), who had been the president of the Union of German Home Workers, had worked for years to upgrade the wages and working conditions of workers who did piece work in their homes. Most of the home workers were women, working in the textile industries and most of them were grossly underpaid. All political factions in the Reichstag supported the gradual betterment of working conditions and wages for home workers, but only Margarethe Behm aggressively pushed to complete legislation for home workers during the 1920-24 session. Behm also pushed for companion legislation to protect women and children who were working in factories. In 1923 the Reichstag agreed to act on Behm's proposals and passed a bill which set maximum working hours for women and children
and established minimum working conditions for home industries. The law was unofficially called Lex Behm (Behm's Law) in honor of the German Nationalist deputy, "an honor to female parliamentarianism."^7

For those workers who were unemployed, the Reichstag deputies sought emergency assistance. Several woman deputies spoke in the Chamber about the Social Democrats' proposal to increase assistance payments for the unemployed. Independent Socialists Anna Ziegler (1882-1942) and Luise Zietz supported additional assistance payments to lessen the economic burdens of the unemployed. Ziegler worked hard for passage of such legislation, but the majority of deputies feared that any extra burden might overtax the weakened German economy.28

Toni Sender, now SPD, after the demise of the USPD, and her party colleague Robert Dissman (1878-1926) presented a bill from the Economics Committee to shorten the waiting time for unemployment relief from one week to three days. The Communists wanted no waiting time, but the Reichstag passed the Sender-Dissmann bill as a reasonable compromise between the current practice and the Communists' proposal. Generally, the women in the Reichstag who spoke about unemployment assistance reflected the views of their parties. The major difference between the speeches of male and female deputies was that the women referred
specifically to the plight of women who were out of work and of wives of unemployed workers.\footnote{29}

Next to unemployment, the domestic issue which occupied most of the attention of Reichstag deputies was internal security. The question of how to protect the young republic from political terrorists vexed the German legislators. Leftist women, including Clara Zetkin and Luise Zietz, spoke against the controversial proposal to disarm civilians throughout Germany. Zetkin expressed the fears of the leftists that the government would disarm workers, but not the numerous rightist, para-military organizations. Such "civilian disarmament" would leave workers helpless if the rightist organizations ever attacked them. Limited disarmament was accepted by the Reichstag, but implementation was left to the state and local governments.

Zetkin and several Socialist women also called for a general amnesty for political prisoners, most of whom were leftists and workers. The Socialists insisted that domestic security would not be endangered by such an action. Although several women proposed amnesty, this was not a "woman's issue," and the speeches by Zetkin and Zietz on this subject were indistinguishable from those of their male colleagues.\footnote{30}

Another domestic issue about which the majority of woman deputies spoke was the health and welfare of German
women and youth. In 1920 woman deputies of all parties called on the Reichstag to adopt further restrictions of child labor and the conditions under which pregnant women could work. Their cooperation and their insistence that such a bill was needed immediately led to its passage early in the session.  

The health and welfare issue that was discussed most frequently by the woman members of the Social Affairs Committee was the proposal to increase weekly benefits to pregnant women and new mothers. The great economic pressures on the national treasury caused serious disagreement between the parties about this proposal. The parties of the right and center believed in the need to stimulate Germany's declining birthrate, but they wanted to postpone any increase in benefits until the economy improved. The Socialists wanted to increase benefits markedly, and the Communists wanted the government to pay all the medical expenses of pregnant women regardless of their financial status. The parties of the left also favored a bill aiding unmarried as well as married mothers, but the parties of the right refused to extend aid to unmarried mothers.

The Social Democrats, Democrats, and Centrists supported a proposal to double government payments to married pregnant women from fifty marks to one hundred marks weekly and to increase the amount of money that the government paid to doctors and nurses who assisted with deliveries.
Luise Schroeder (SPD) who reported on this proposal to the plenary session conceded that even more benefits were needed, but she asked "Where will we get the money?" Lore Agnes (USPD) replied that "if there is money for agriculture, the army, and roads, we can afford money for pregnant women." As a compromise, social worker Christine Teusch (Z) suggested that the leftists accept limited aid now and wait for more aid when Germany's economy recovered. After much debate, the bill proposed by the government parties was passed by the Reichstag in June 1922. As the parties of the right had insisted, all benefits were limited to married women.33

Linked with the declining birth rate and the death of many children during their first year of life was the lack and inadequate distribution of food in postwar Germany. The first issue which had united all the woman deputies in the National Assembly was the appeal to the Allies to end the "hunger blockade" of Germany. Problems of food scarcities and undernourishment continued into the 1920-24 era, but as solutions were discussed the unanimity of the woman deputies disappeared. Lore Agnes presented the view of the Independent Socialists that the government should control the distribution of basic food commodities to prevent profiteering and shortages. Mathilde Wurm (USPD) supported Agnes' statements and urged the Reichstag to increase daily rations immediately and to punish profiteers who took
advantage of the public. On the other side of the Chamber, Dr. Elsa Matz (1881-1959) and Katharina von Kardorff-Oheimb (1879-1962) of the German People's Party opposed increased governmental control in agriculture, but they did urge investigation of scarcities of milk and sugar throughout the nation.34

Other women stressed the need to provide adequate meat supplies for German children, especially during the winter of 1923-24 when so many wage earners (28 per cent of the total) were out of work. Woman deputies who spoke about tariff legislation movingly stressed the impact that higher (or lower) prices would have on young children. As representatives of their parties, Anna Nemitz (USPD) and Minna Schilling (SPD) opposed the high tariffs for imported meat and agricultural products that were sponsored by representatives of great agricultural interests. After much debate the Reichstag passed legislation to modify the tariffs on meat and to increase daily rations of basic foods. Women devoted a great deal of attention to this issue, but this was another area in which women reflected the views of their parties, not any unique woman's view.35

One issue on which woman deputies of all parties agreed, in opposition to their male colleagues, was the need to limit the sale and use of alcoholic beverages. Women saw alcohol as an evil contributing to the breakdown of morality and the family. Alcoholic husbands were often
unable to work, said women deputies, and alcoholics often took out these frustration on their families. German women deputies shared this concern with women legislators in other western nations. In the United States, women members of Congress had worked to prohibit the use of alcohol, and in Great Britain women legislators supported legislation to limit the use of alcohol. In Germany the women deputies were unable to influence the Centrist and Socialist male deputies who opposed proposals to restrict the use of alcohol.

Like the restriction of alcohol, the suppression of pornographic literature and the elimination of venereal disease were traditional concerns of the Frauenbewegung. The women of the conservative parties favored the strict censorship of literature and films, but the Socialist women did not agree. Leftists feared that censorship based on moral principles could be broadened at a later date to censorship based on political viewpoints. Debates on a proposed censorship bill were dominated by conservative women who linked the need for censorship with the morality and future of the German family, and ultimately, the German state. Dr. Elsa Matz (DVP) argued that "the German woman is and remains the soul of the German family...if the morality of the people declines, we women are responsible in the first place." To avoid being burdened with such a responsibility women ought to support a censorship bill, according
to Matz. The film industry lobbied against all censorship proposals and with this pressure and the opposition of the leftists, the final bill passed by the Reichstag did not delineate standards but left much discretion to a National Film Censorship Board.36

The desire to eliminate the spread of venereal disease was shared by all parties in the Reichstag, but deputies could not agree on the best method for combating it. Women of the conservative parties, including Milka Fritsch (DVP) and Thusnelda Lang-Brumann (BVP), believed that prostitution caused most of the venereal disease. They stressed the need to enforce laws banning prostitution. Socialist women, on the other hand, emphasized the treatment of those ill with venereal disease and encouraged leniency toward, even legalization of, prostitution. Lang-Brumann protested that "focusing all our attention on treatment is virtually a capitulation to prostitution." No compromise could be affected between these differing viewpoints and in a close vote, the bill stressing the treatment approach and free medical assistance for victims of venereal disease was rejected.37

The final health and welfare issue addressed by women deputies was the development of a National Youth Welfare Law. The purpose of this law was to limit child labor and to protect abandoned or ill-treated children. In an inter-party interpellation Lore Agnes (USPD), Margarethe Behm
(DNVP), Clara Mende (DVP, 1869-1930), and Marie Juchacz (SPD, 1879-1956) asked the government to present a national youth welfare program to the Reichstag. Thirteen of the twenty-eight members of the Youth Welfare Committee were women and they played a major role in drafting a bill to deal with the concerns of youth. Leftist women wanted greater funding to alleviate the economic problems of German youth. On the other side, the women of the right wanted to emphasize stronger family ties, to expand the roles of private organizations, and to minimize government actions. The prolonged debate about a youth welfare program lasted over two years. In 1923 a compromise bill was passed authorizing limited funding for social agencies that would serve troubled youth.38

Another thorny domestic issue about which women spoke frequently in committee sessions and on the floor of the Reichstag was the National School Law, a bill which was to standardize public schools in Germany. A majority of the woman deputies were teachers, school administrators, or mothers, and women were recognized by their male colleagues as especially qualified speakers on this issue. Women did not monopolize the debate about this law, but many of them spoke at length from their experience in school teaching. Several Centrist women and Thusnelda Lang-Brumann of the Bavarian People's Party spoke passionately in favor of preserving the right of parents to send their children to
confessional schools. Lang-Brumann insisted that, "we should not ignore parents' preferences concerning the education of their children." The Socialists and Communists called for the secularization of all public schools. Indeed, Clara Zetkin (KPD) asserted that religion was a private matter, not the concern of public education. Antonie Pfühl (SPD) spoke out against religious instruction in public schools in Bavaria. Throughout the 1920-24 session the opposing political factions refused to compromise and, although several limited laws concerning school funding were passed by the Reichstag, no sweeping National School Law was adopted. 39

One other area of interest which absorbed woman deputies, apart from their male colleagues, was the expansion of women's political and legal rights. During the economic crises in 1923 the rights of married women had been sacrificed by the government in favor of bolstering the economy and preserving the jobs of male breadwinners. Thus, woman deputies became convinced that equal rights for women in government and the judicial system would have to be firmly secured to prevent the further erosion of women's rights. Specifically, deputies in the 1920-24 Reichstag session focused their attention on proposals sponsored by woman deputies to guarantee the representation of women on civil, criminal, and trade juries and courts. Women from all political parties supported the right of women to serve
as jurors or lay assessors, but the political factions disagreed about how to guarantee such rights. Democrat Marie-Elisabeth Lüders voiced the concern that without equal rights under the law which would be specified in legislation, women would be reduced to second-class citizenship. 40

On the other side, Katharina von Kardorff-Oheimb (DVP) warned that women should not demand participation on juries, as the leftists advocated, but only encourage it. She insisted that the role of women in the Reichstag was not to threaten men, instead "the role of women in this House should be to influence men!" Leftists Luise Zietz and Marie Wackwitz countered that depressed economic times threatened all of the basic hard-won women's rights and that women urgently needed the right to participate equally in the judicial system in order to preserve what rights they had.

The debate between women of the right and left encompassed the whole question of how far to push the legislation for women's equality. The woman members of the conservative parties feared that extensive legislation guaranteeing women's political equality would lead to the eventual destruction of the institutions of marriage and the family. As a compromise between the right and the left, Centrist Hedwig Dransfeld urged caution in extending the rights of women gradually, "What help will political
equality be if the will of the great majority of women [to maintain the role of wife and mother] is violated by the women of this parliament?" 41

Conservative male deputies were apprehensive about granting equal rights to women to serve as jurors and court officials. In one committee session, male members proposed that if bills mandating women's participation on juries were adopted, laws should be passed to guarantee that every jury must include at least one man. Among conservative male deputies, there was still a fear of concerted women's actions.

The leftist women (KPD and SPD) voted with their parties in favor of the bill to specifically guarantee the equal rights of women to serve on juries. On the other side, Katharina von Kardorff-Oheimb (DVP) voted against this proposal, the remaining eight women of the middle and right were absent or abstained from voting. The conservative parties stood firmly against this proposal and their woman deputies chose to refrain from voting rather than provoke intra-party confrontations. At the end of the voting, the Reichstag adopted a general law recognizing the right of all citizens, including women, to serve in offices involved with the administration of justice. 42

This victory in favor of extending women's legal rights remained a hollow one throughout the Weimar Republic, because it was not enforced. Woman offenders in
Germany in the 1920's and early 1930's faced all-male juries and courts. Other bills to give women active and passive electoral rights on national commissions and boards were passed in the 1920-24 session and were more successfully implemented. As Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders commented on the need to pass legislation in this area, "we have been kept waiting too long for this law and other laws concerning women's full equality."

These debates on the legal status of women were the last major ones in the 1920-24 session in which specific women's proposals woman deputies spoke on a variety of other domestic issues, including increased assistance for war veterans and their dependents, the establishment of importation quotas and tariffs, the free election of union shop stewards, the investigation of industrial accidents, and the increase in personal taxes. The positions that the women advocated on these issues followed party lines and were not markedly different from those of their male counterparts.

Throughout this Reichstag session the importance of political party affiliation was emphasized by the party leadership. Party loyalty determined a candidate's position on the electoral lists which were crucial under the proportional electoral system. Woman deputies who were eager to maintain their mandates sought to strengthen their party ties and to expand their circle of party supporters.
Some of the woman deputies led women's caucuses or committees within their political parties. Marie Juchacz chaired the Socialist Women's Conference in 1921 which was held in conjunction with the Social Democrats' party congress. Centrist woman deputies were instrumental in founding a Women's Advisory Council at the annual Centrist party convention in 1922. By 1924 a trend was emerging in the party organizations that would be reflected in the Reichstag. Instead of assuming leadership roles in the central party committees, woman deputies and even woman party leaders were usually segregated into special women's committees or groups within the parties.\footnote{13}

Outside of party activities, the pace of work during the 1920-24 Reichstag session was more relaxed than during the hectic National Assembly and the deputies had more time to travel throughout Germany and abroad. For the woman deputies contact with women of other nations was important because of their inexperience in national politics. Earlier foreign travel and international women's conferences had been important for women in the Frauenbewegung; now such activities proved very helpful to woman deputies in the Reichstag. During the session, Communist deputy Clara Zetkin traveled extensively throughout Europe, often without official permission, to address Communist Party rallies. Another leftist, Toni Sender (SPD), represented German Socialists and workers at several conferences in
1922 and 1923. International contact was not limited to leftist women, although the anti-nationalist philosophies of socialist parties was more conducive to international activities. Centrist Hedwig Dransfeld toured the United States for eight weeks, meeting with woman leaders and attending a conference on Germany. These and other woman deputies who traveled abroad were well received and these experiences reinforced their beliefs that parliamentary activity brought important international, as well as national, recognition which could further the role of women in society and politics.44

The woman deputies who traveled abroad or attended international conferences also met woman legislators from other nations. The experience of women in national parliaments was only a few years old and woman legislators were very curious about the gains made or roles played by women in other nations. As Frauenbewegung leaders had looked to British and American suffragists, German woman deputies were interested in learning more about British and American woman parliamentarians.

In Britain only ten women served in the House of Commons between 1921 and 1928 and three woman members of Parliament exerted little influence on their male colleagues. The only bill sponsored by a woman legislator (Lady Astor) that was passed during the early 1920's was the Intoxicating Liquor Bill which restricted the sale of
alcohol in Britain. Woman members of Parliament were unsuccessful in their attempts to alter party positions on several welfare and social issues. Throughout the 1920's woman members faced much more hostility in the British Parliament than did German women in the Reichstag.45

Even fewer women served in the United States' House of Representatives from 1920-24. Of the three women in the House, one ironically had opposed the suffrage of women, and the other two were widows named to fill out the unexpired terms of their late husbands. They were treated by male colleagues, not as fellow representatives, but as spokespersons for special interests, and essentially conservative legislators who supported legislation against alcohol and against inflationary bonus payments to the veterans of the World War.46

Thus, there were many more German women in the Reichstag and they played a greater role in drafting social and welfare legislation than did woman legislators in Britain or the United States. Women in Germany appeared to be more comfortable in their roles as legislators. Two woman deputies were honored by receiving appointments as ministerial counselors, and three served as secretaries of the Reichstag.

On the other hand, the overall position of women in German society did not improve noticeably despite the presence of women in the Reichstag. On the contrary,
women were losing ground in employment in the worsening economy, although the woman deputies kept the issue of equal employment opportunity constantly before the Chamber. The law granting women the right to serve in all judicial offices was a progressive step in women's rights, but the law was never truly enforced.

Most significantly, the participation of women in the Reichstag continued to be limited to health, education, and welfare issues. Even the woman deputies who advocated immediate reform in marriage and property rights for all women remained loyal to their party factions. They worked to mold opinions within the factions, rather than move aggressively and risk confrontations and possible loss of their positions on party electoral lists. The woman deputies did not have national constituencies and German women in general did not show great interest in seeing women play a more active role in German politics.

The lack of participation by most women in debates about Germany's precarious foreign policy and economy emphasized the tendency for women to act as deputies interested in traditional "woman's issues." The women themselves were not optimistic that they would be able to play a greater role in future Reichstag sessions. As Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP) pointed out, "I have always wondered why human civilization always made it so hard for all but males to lead. I believe women should be represented in
the debates of the plenary sessions in proportion to their numbers and their influence." The number of women to serve in the next session of the Reichstag would not be determined according to the standards Bäumer advocated, but according to the party discipline of the women and their positions on the electoral lists. The question facing women in the Reichstag sessions of 1924 and 1924-28 would be whether to continue their labors in social, welfare, and educational issues, or to work for broad reform in the status of women.
Footnotes

1 Karl Dietrich Erdmann, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik (Boppard am Rhein: Harold Boldt Verlag, 1971), p. LXIV.


5 Cologne was the only major city in Germany in which electoral results from 1919 to 1933 were recorded according to sex. Bremme, Politische Rolle, pp. 29-35, 39, 64-65; Hans Beyer, Die Frau in der politischen Entscheidung: Eine Untersuchung über das Frauenwahlrecht in Deutschland (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1933), pp. 8-10.

6 Some accounts (the most noted is Bremme, p. 122) list only 41 women, but 42 women served. The woman frequently overlooked is Franziska Eschholz (SPD) who served during only 9 plenary sessions.

7 The four women were: Hedwig Dransfeld (Z), Paula Mueller-Otfried (DNVP), Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP), and Clara Mende (DVP). Lüders who won a seat in the 1920 election, lost her seat after a court decision, then ran again in March 1921 and won a seat again.

8 The five women who left were: Wilhelmine Kähler (SPD), Elisabeth Brömer (DDP), Frieda Hauke (SPD), Marie Baum (DDP), and Luise Zietz (USPD) who died in 1922. The six women elected were: Franziska Eschholz (SPD), Milka Fritsch (DVP), Maria Schott (DNVP), Wilhelmine Eichler (SPD), Elise Bartels (SPD), and Hedwig Hoffmann (DNVP).
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9 Bremme, Politische Rolle, p. 127.

10 Schwarz, MdR, pp. 608-794, passim. During the 1920-24 period there was a significant change in political parties. In the summer of 1922 the right wing of the Independent Socialists joined the Social Democratic Party to form the United Socialist Party of Germany (VSP, Vereinigte Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), One member of the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, sat with the Centrist delegation.


13 As was the practice during the Weimar Republic, Bäumer and Lüders retained their seats in the Reichstag while serving as ministerial counselors. Verhandlungen, v. 345, pp. 784-86; v. 346, pp. 1750, 1758; Gertrud Bäumer, Lebensweg durch eine Zeitenwende (Tübingen: R. Wunderlich, 1933), pp. 390-91.


15 Ibid., v. 352, pp. 5440-5575.

16 Ibid., v. 361, pp. 11911-12.


19 Verhandlungen, v. 344, pp. 335-42; Sender, German Rebel, pp. 158-64.

20 Verhandlungen, v. 344, p. 194; v. 345, p. 1019; v. 346, p. 1827.
Economic reform was crucial and Toni Sender vividly remembered her relief when the currency was stabilized. Reichstag members were paid through the post offices and because of the rampant inflation in 1923, the mark fell drastically between the time her salary was sent out and the time she received it. Like millions of her countrymen, she was frequently without funds in 1923. Sender, German Rebel, p. 214; Verhandlungen, v. 344, pp. 163-68, 246-47, 250, 345, 650-51; v. 345, pp. 727-30.

Indeed this practice did exist. Without retraining or relocation programs, ministry officials often found it more expedient to fire old employees and hire new ones.


Ibid., v. 344, pp. 246-47, 250, 345, 650-51.


Sender, German Rebel, p. 166; Preller, Sozialpolitik, p. 272.

Verhandlungen, v. 350, pp. 4458-60.

Women pointed to their position as representatives of all German womanhood, as did Dransfeld, whenever women deputies seriously disagreed over issues in the Reichstag; otherwise, they were not as concerned about how representative a group they were. Ibid., v. 348, pp. 2731-32, 2734, 2737, 2740; v. 354, pp. 6878, 6911-12, 6917-18, 6922-26.

Political activity of women in Germany at the local level was less than at the national level; between 1920-24, 106 women (of a total of 1408 members) served in the state legislatures. This figure represented 7.5 per cent of the total membership; women in the Reichstag represented 8 per cent. Bridenthal, Kinder, pp. 54-55; Sender, German Rebel, pp. 179-80; Reicke, Frauenbewegung, p. 63; Luise Dornemann, Clara Zetkin, Ein Lebensbild (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, G.m.b.H., 1957), p. 316.

On the other side of the Atlantic, from 1920-24 only one woman (Labourite Agnes C. Macphail) sat in the Canadian House of Commons. Women's participation varied throughout Western nations, but did not approach the 8 to 9 per cent participation of women in the German Reichstag.

An air of expectancy greeted the election of a new Reichstag in May 1924. Germany's unemployment remained high, but the stabilization of the currency a few months before and increased international trade signaled the beginning of a brighter era for the weary nation. Woman candidates hoped that once the economy improved, the Reichstag could devote more time to the complex problems of social reform and to the status of women in all spheres of life.

As in the election of 1920 women did not campaign as representatives of special women's causes, but as loyal members of their parties. While leftist women stressed that liberation of the work classes would lead to equality for men and women, both liberal and conservative female candidates emphasized the need to protect the family as the basic unit of German life.

The candidates were more optimistic than the general public about Germany's future, as the electoral results showed. Although signs pointed to an improved economic picture, voters were obviously impatient. In the election
the Social Democrats suffered a setback, and the number of Socialist women deputies declined from sixteen to eleven. Of the more than twenty-nine million voters who went to the polls in May 1924, many expressed their dissatisfaction with government policies by voting for the radical parties such as the KPD on the left and the German-Racial Freedom Party (Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei) on the right.1

Of the 472 deputies elected to the Reichstag on May 4, 1924, twenty-nine were women. This number constituted 6.2 per cent of the total Reichstag membership, down from 8 per cent in 1920. In every party the percentage of woman deputies was lower than the percentage of woman party members. For example, in 1924 when 12.2 per cent of the SPD Reichstag faction was female, 15.8 per cent of the party membership was female.2 As in 1920 the majority of the women were leftists, including eleven Social Democrats and five Communists. Four women belonged to the Center Party and four to the German National People's Party. Finally, two women were members of the German People's Party, two women belonged to the German Democratic Party, and one to the Bavarian People's Party. Twenty-three of the women were elected from district lists and six were elected from the national lists.3

In drafting both district and national electoral lists, party leaders had favored woman candidates who had some experience in politics. Of the twenty-nine women
elected, fourteen had served in the National Assembly and twenty-one had served in the 1920-24 Reichstag session. Thus, the percentage of experienced politicians among the woman deputies was nearing that of male deputies, although the legislative experience of women represented a maximum of five years, compared to several decades for many of the male deputies.

The occupational backgrounds of the newly elected women were similar to those of the women who entered the Reichstag in 1920. Eight of the woman deputies were teachers or school administrators, seven were writers, six were housewives, and the remaining eight women held a variety of occupations including seamstress, secretary, doctor, laborer, gardener, philosopher, party worker, and landowner. One woman was a medical doctor (Anna Stegmann, SPD) three had Ph.D. degrees (Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and Gertrud Bäumer on the DDP, and Elsa Matz of the DVP), and one (Margarete Behm, DNVP) held an honorary doctorate.  

In many respects these woman deputies were similar to their predecessors in the earlier Reichstag. Of the twenty-nine deputies, nineteen were married, widowed or divorced and ten were single. Eleven of the women were members of the Evangelical Church, five were Catholics, and thirteen listed themselves as Dissidents or "with religion." The oldest woman was seventy-year-old Agnes Neuhaus of the Center Party, and the youngest member was
twenty-nine-year old Elfriede Golke (1895-1961, better known as Ruth Fischer) of the Communist Party. The average age of the woman deputies was 46.6 years, closer than before to the average age (48) of male deputies who served during the Weimar Era. Finally, the women again were elected from districts spread throughout the nation, and from urban as well as rural districts.

Two women served as ministerial counselors in addition to their roles as deputies. The more widely known was Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP) who served as a counselor in the Ministry of the Interior and spoke in the plenary sessions both as a representative of the Democratic Party and as a member of the Interior Ministry. Bäumer's party colleague Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders also served during part of the session as a counselor in the Labor Ministry.

The Reichstag session was short-lived. The opening session on May 27, 1924 was filled with Democrats and Socialists who opposed the actions of the newly elected rightists. During the first few weeks the deputies spent most of their time discussing legislation which was designed to fulfill the requirements of the Versailles Treaty. By August 1924 a majority of the Reichstag approved the Dawes Plan (over the opposition of the radical deputies of the left and the right), which provided for a more flexible schedule of reparation payments and for an Anglo-American loan to Germany. On the whole the tone of
the sessions was tumultuous and bitter clashes between the German People's Party (DVP) and German Nationalists (DNVP) finally forced Dr. Wilhelm Marx, the Centrist Chancellor, to call for the dissolution of the Reichstag. New elections were scheduled for December 7, 1924.

Women participated, however briefly, in this May-to-August session. Lore Agnes (SPD) was elected one of the secretaries of the Reichstag, as she had been in the earlier one. At the first meeting on May 24 only 26 of the 29 women deputies were present. Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP), Dr. Anna Stegmann (SPD), and Clara Zetkin (KPD) were excused for several weeks because of illness or pressing personal business. In the first few weeks the committees provided for in the Weimar Constitution were appointed and special committees to deal with the problems of war guilt and tax reform were created.

The session was so brief that women spoke only twenty-four times, and a majority of the speeches (14) were made by newly elected Elfriede Golke (KPD), the youngest woman deputy in the Reichstag. Golke entered the Reichstag with some experience in politics and speech making and she spoke frequently on foreign policy issues. In addition to Fischer, the remaining ten speeches by women were made by five deputies who were veterans of the 1920-1924 term: Paula Mueller-Otfried (DNVP), Christine Teusch (Z), and Antonie Pfülf, Luise Schroeder, and Toni Sender of the SPD.
As the first woman speaker, Ruth Fischer spoke against the imprisonment of workers involved in violent strikes and against the police harassment of leftist politicians and party leaders. Fischer was a young fiery speaker who often shouted as she spoke. She also had a penchant for lecturing deputies on the other side of the Chamber. In later weeks Fischer attacked the "government of the middle" which she accused of selling out workers on the domestic scene and risking a new war on the international scene. In August she delivered a major address, angrily attacking the government's policy and its acceptance of the "western imperialism" in the Dawes Plan. Interestingly, Fischer's views and speaking style were similar to those of her colleague Clara Zetkin who was ill during most of the session. As Zetkin might have done, Fischer concluded her passionate speech against the Dawes Plan with the plea, "Don't take us to London, take us to Moscow."

Concerning the domestic issues she discussed, she favored amnesty for all leftist political prisoners, not just for radicals of the right, as was proposed by the conservative parties.

Unlike Fischer, the other woman deputies who addressed the Reichstag discussed only domestic issues. Centrist Christine Teusch, who was very active in the Social Policies Committee, presented her party's views that social insurance should be increased for the ill, pregnant women, and home workers. Luise Schroeder (SPD), also a member of
the Social Policies Committee, agreed with Teusch and urged even higher levels of aid than were being advocated by the National Ministry of Work. Schroeder also urged the Committee, and later the Reichstag, to adopt a broad reform of social insurance, rather than pursue a piecemeal approach.11 German Nationalist Paula Mueller-Otfried countered that increased relief for the poor was needed, but disagreed with the high levels of funding proposed by the Socialists.12

Relating to the economy and the work forces, Toni Sander (SPD) urged major economic reform in Germany, as advocated by the Social Democrats as the only effective alternative to Communism on the left and conservative bourgeois society on the right. Sender's party colleague Antonie Pfülf supported a general amnesty for political prisoners in Bavaria, the majority of whom were workers, and throughout Germany. The Rights Committee studied the amnesty proposal at length, but defeated it in late August. Finally, a bill favored by Dr. Margarete Behm (DNVP) to create a special committee to investigate abuses in the home work industry was passed, but with amendments which weakened its effectiveness.13

Internally committees had geared up for a four-year term, but soon found themselves bogged down in bitter debates by the relentless opposition of the radical parties to the government's programs. After a total of
twenty-nine plenary sessions, the Reichstag was dissolved on August 30, 1924. The pattern of women's involvement in this short Reichstag session was similar to that of women in the earlier term. The challenge of broadening the role of women in the Reichstag remained and would confront deputies again in the next session.

After President Ebert dissolved the Reichstag citing "parliamentary difficulties," legislators were plunged into their second electoral campaign in less than seven months. The issues of the autumn campaign were similar to those in May, although a slight improvement in the economy gave encouragement to supporters of the democratic parties. In the election of December 7, 1924 the Social Democrats gained 31 seats (increasing their delegation from 100 to 131 seats) and the Communist and German-Racial parties lost seats (down from 66 to 45, and from 32 to 14, respectively). A new government led by Hans Luther, with the Nationalist Party, the People's Party, and the Bavarian People's Party, charted a course of continuing economic recovery and improvement of Germany's international position. Of the 493 deputies, thirty-three (or 7.09 per cent) women were elected including sixteen Social Democrats, five German Nationalists, four Centrists, three Communists, two members of the German Democratic Party and the German People's Party, and one member of the Bavarian People's Party. During this session two women members (Centrist Hedwig
Dransfeld, leader of the Catholic Women's Union, and Social Democrat Elise Bartels, relief worker from Hildesheim) died and two women (Centrist Klara Philipp and Communist Agnes Plum) entered the parliament through by-elections. Thus a total of thirty-five women served at some time or other from December 1924 through March 1928.

Of these thirty-five women, only six had not served in the National Assembly or in the previous Reichstag sessions. In other characteristics, these deputies again shared many similarities with the women in the previous seven-month session. The average age of the women was 46.7, compared to 46.6 in May 1924. Twenty-four of the women were married, widowed, or divorced, and eleven of the women were single. Again, most of the women were teachers, writers, or social workers (six, seven, and eight, respectively). Other woman deputies included housewives, laborers, party workers, secretaries, one doctor, and one land owner.14

Of the nine deputies who served as secretaries in the Chamber, three were women: Lore Agnes (SPD), Clara Bohm-Schuch (SPD), and Christine Teusch (Z). Social Democrat Toni Sender again served on a subcommittee of the Foreign Policy Committee and was joined by Communist Ruth Fischer. Women continued to play their most significant roles on the Social Affairs, School Reform, and Youth Welfare Committees.15
Although the backgrounds of these women were similar to those of their predecessors, the woman deputies in the new session spoke more frequently and on a wider variety of concerns. The slight betterment of economic conditions, a revision of the reparations payment schedule, and expectations of a more favorable relationship with other nations allowed the deputies the opportunity to spend more time on long-range programs aimed at improving the quality of life. In this area there were many challenges facing German women. Women's salaries in several major industries were less than 75 per cent of men's salaries. Even wider discrepancies existed in home industries and small businesses. Unsanitary working conditions in many plants contributed to the high rates of tuberculosis and miscarriages among women workers. The national government had dismissed married women workers as *Doppelverdiener* and continued to discriminate against such workers. Some leftists, notably Marie Juchacz (SPD), were concerned that marriage and property arrangements between men and women urgently needed to be reformed. On the other hand, conservatives continued to worry that changes in marriage rights would weaken the family unit. With all these concerns, the stage was set for the most active Reichstag session of the Weimar Republic.¹⁶

During the Locarno Era (1924-1929) German representatives led by Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929)
worked to revise the reparations imposed by the Allies and to reintegrate Germany into the international community. Discussion about Germany's foreign policy, specifically about the budgets of the Foreign Ministry and the Army as well as the trade and tariff policies, was an important part of the deputies' work in the 1924-1928 Reichstag session. Yet as in that of 1920-24, male deputies dominated these important discussions and only a few women spoke on foreign policy issues in either the Reichstag Chamber or the committee room.

One such woman again was Ruth Fischer, the fiery Communist speaker. She gave her party's major address, attacking Germany's acceptance of the Dawes Plan and the proposed closer ties with the West. Fischer used the usual Communist arguments, advocating in turn closer ties with Soviet Russia. Fischer spoke for her party in the Reichstag on several other occasions during 1925 and might have become a major woman parliamentary orator, but she was ousted from the Communist Party leadership in an intraparty struggle in August 1925 and did not speak on the Chamber floor again until 1927.17

Fischer's well known party colleague, Clara Zetkin, was ill during the first year of this Reichstag session and spend much time confined in a sanitorium in Moscow. When Zetkin did return to Berlin in the autumn of 1925 she launched into her Reichstag work and on November 26, 1925
appeared in the Chamber to exhort her colleagues to reject "the lying agreement," her name for the recently signed Locarno Pact. She also undertook an extensive speaking tour throughout Germany in an attempt to fan opposition to Stresemann and his policies. Zetkin was weak and no longer the young, eager party organizer, but she remained a forceful speaker inside and outside the Reichstag Chamber.

Social Democrat Toni Sender, who was by this time the most knowledgeable woman deputy on the subject of tariffs and international trade, spoke several times in the plenary sessions about proposed trade agreements and treaties with other European nations. Sender was becoming an influential deputy on the Trade Subcommittee and served twice as the Subcommittee's reporter in the Reichstag Chamber. In one address she skillfully countered the arguments of Dr. Bruna Schneider (DVP) who had urged the government to introduce higher tariffs for imported agricultural products. Sender stressed the interrelationship of foreign policies and domestic policies and as a Socialist she urged the government to lower tariffs to make agricultural products more accessible to working families in Germany. Sender, like Zetkin and Golke, was one of the few woman deputies who stressed economic data supporting the policies she advocated.

Other woman deputies who spoke in the Reichstag Chamber about foreign policy issues stressed the
interrelationship between these issues and their effect on the health and welfare of the German people. Social Democrat Marie Ansorge (1880-1955) spoke to the Reichstag about increasing government aid for persons displaced by German troops doing World War I and for families of former prisoners of war. Democrat Marie-Elisabeth Lüders spoke movingly in the Chamber about her concern for families living in Poland who were now separated from relatives in Germany. Fellow Democrat Gertrud Bäumer reported to the Reichstag about her role as a delegate to a Conference at the Hague in 1927 where the unity of Europe was discussed. As the Conference had stressed, Bäumer urged increased cultural and international exchanges between the European nations. Later in May 1927, Lüders (DDP) attended a World Economic Conference in Geneva to discuss international fiscal policy, but she attended not as a Reichstag representative, but rather as a representative of the German Women's Union.  

Again, as in previous Reichstag sessions, the focus of women's speeches, committee activities, and political activity in the Reichstag was not on foreign policy, but on domestic issues. The economy had improved, but there were still major policy decisions to be made about the direction of the German economy. As was the case with foreign policy, there were few speeches by woman deputies about economic proposals. In the first year of the session Ruth Fischer
(KPD) delivered two major Communist Party addresses attacking the economic policies of the government which she charged was too heavily influenced by the large industrial concerns. Later in the session, Social Democrat Toni Sender presented her party's views including another attack on the overly important role that heavy industries played in national policy making.21

The majority of woman deputies were more interested in the issue of food supplies and prices and at least one woman from every major party spoke on this issue in the Reichstag Chamber. Mathilde Wurm, who spoke seven times in the Chamber about food distribution, presented the Social Democrats' arguments supporting increases in the supplies of fresh and frozen meat and milk. Wurm challenged Germany's trade negotiators to be more mindful of domestic food supplies, and to base their treaties on domestic needs. Wurm concluded that because women had greater understanding and practical knowledge about food shortages and their effects on the family, the government should appoint a woman to the Food Ministry.22

The focus of the speeches by Martha Arendsee (KPD), Toni Sender (SPD), Clara Bohm-Schuch (SPD), Gertrud Bäumer (DDP), Helene Weber (Z), Clara Mende (DVP), and Maria Schott (DNVP) was on nutrition and the effect of food shortages on children. The women's speeches on these topics were moving and kept the attention of the Reichstag
centered on food policy. After several debates, the deputi­ties approved a Food Ministry budget in 1928 which included a provision to fund a program for children's nutrition. Parties of the left and middle had supported this provi­sion, while parties of the right were sympathetic but had opposed it because of the extra financial burden it would place on the economy. All the woman deputies voted with their factions on this issue except Centrist Helene Weber who abstained. Weber agreed with the basic concept, but said she could not support the high cost of such a program at that time.23

Another issue relating to the strained economy was the question of funding relief for unemployed workers and their families. As the Communists and Social Democrats favored a general increase of payments and benefits for unemployed workers, the Centrists supported limited payments, and the parties of the right opposed any increase in payments. The conservatives believed that the economy could not stand the strain and that increased payments would harm the individual initiative of German workers. Generally, women accepted the philosophy of their respective parties, but in their com­mittee work and speeches they focused not on payment levels but on the impact of unemployment on families and children and on the unequal treatment of unemployed woman workers.24

During the discussion of an Emergency Unemployment Relief Bill the Social Democrats Luise Schroeder and Luise
Schiffgens (1892-1954) supported emergency measures to aid the long-term unemployed and to provide extra assistance for workers with large families. Communist Martha Arendsee argued against conservative attempts to limit this relief proposal and she urged higher unemployment relief for as long as fifty-two weeks. Christine Teusch (Z) sympathized with the plight of the unemployed and urged deputies to support emergency relief action for the invalids, pensioners, and the newly unemployed, but she called for limited aid for those unemployed for a long time. Teusch shared Luise Schroeder's view that extra aid should be granted to workers with large families, as a means of protecting young children from having to enter the labor force. As Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders stated, the Democrats felt that government spending on the unemployed had to be kept as low as possible and those needing aid the most should therefore be helped first. Several emergency relief bills extending aid for unemployed workers were passed in the course of the session, and they extended relief to the most desperate cases and gave extra benefits to workers with prolific families.25

Women in this session who talked about unemployment focused on the inequities between male and female workers and male and female relief recipients. During this era the economy was improving steadily, yet the economic position
of female workers kept worsening. Married women were discriminated against if their husbands were employed. Thus most working women were single and they were usually paid less than male workers for doing the same job. As the economic recovery progressed, male workers gained extra pay or benefit much more readily than female workers. Finally, in a related inequity, when female workers lost their jobs they received less unemployed relief than male workers (usually two-thirds) because relief was based on previous salaries. 26

Faced with this picture of inequality, woman deputies grappled with the problem of how to solve the complex legal and social questions involved with employment discrimination against women. Communist and Socialist women called for better wages and working conditions for all workers, including women. Their demands also included a shorter work week, more frequent rest periods and vacations, greater opportunities for advancement, and more female factory inspectors. This call for the protection of woman workers, especially pregnant workers, was viewed sympathetically by male workers and male deputies and was not as threatening as the demands of equal pay for equal work. In the middle of the Chamber, women of the Democratic and Centrist Parties stressed the need for equal opportunity for all employees, along with their concern about the need to protect the role of women as mothers. On the other hand,
women of the conservative parties stressed the need to provide protective legislation for woman employees.27

A new rise in unemployment in 1925 led to debates in the Social Affairs and Budget Committees about employment statistics and the equalization of relief levels for men and women. On a Budget Committee session Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP) insisted that the advantageous position of men in the labor force should not be perpetuated and she urged the government to draft a bill protecting equal hiring practices. In the Social Affairs Committee Luise Schroeder (SPD) stated that inequities in salaries between men and women would be very difficult to correct, but that at least the Reichstag could equalize relief payments for all workers. Deputies as politically different as Martha Arendsee (KPD) and Maria Schott (DNP) supported higher relief payments for unemployed married women, although for different reasons. Arendsee wanted to do away with all discrimination because of sex, and Schott wanted more money for unemployed mothers with children to strengthen the family as an institution. Schott, furthermore, repeated a demand made frequently by woman deputies that a special women's department in the Labor Ministry be created and headed by a woman. Arendsee and other leftist women remained convinced that economic equality and security were stepping-stones to securing further rights for women. The influence of woman deputies at this time was not
great, however, and unemployment relief continued to be based on previous salaries of workers, which were traditionally higher for men and lower for women.28

In the Reichstag committees discussion about equal unemployment payments and employment opportunities also included a broader examination of women's rights. The thorny problem of implementing the equality guaranteed for women in the Weimar Constitution had not yet been solved and, led by woman deputies, the Reichstag again discussed legislation to enforce the constitutionally delineated rights. As a first step in the Rights Committee, Marie-Elisabeth Lüders introduced a proposal to grant equal citizenship rights for women. Lüders protested the fact that a woman who married a foreign citizen lost her citizenship, while this was not true when a man married a foreign citizen. Lüders proposed that the place of domicile after marriage be used as the decisive criterion for citizenship, rather than the nationality of the husband. In the Reichstag Chamber Antonie Pfülf (SPD) pointed out another discrepancy between men and women—taxation of income. Pfülf cited statistics showing that married working women paid higher income taxes than married working men. Pfülf's party colleague Marie Arning also talked about income tax provisions which unfairly taxed home workers, who were predominantly women, at a higher rate. On another topic Dr. Anna Stegmann (SPD), in her maiden speech, urged the
better treatment of women in national prisons although, as she granted, female prisoners were probably not treated worse than male prisoners. Finally, Democrat Lüders also challenged the Reichstag to remedy the great predominance of men on juries, as well as among court judges. All these concerns presented by woman deputies evoked strong feelings and discussions in the plenary sessions and in the committees, but these proposals were defeated or altered significantly so that the original intention was not fulfilled.  

The most controversial debate concerning the rights of women centered around proposals to change fundamental marriage and divorce rights by granting greater freedom of action to women. In marriage and divorce, a woman was subjected to legal as well as economic and social dependence on a man. Woman deputies were divided about proposals to reform marriage and divorce laws, but all agreed that the protection of children should be the central concern in any reform. Social Democrat Dr. Anna Stegmann discussed proposals to allow divorces not only if guilty actions were proved, but also if spouses were separated for more than one year, were wholly incompatible with one another, or if the marriage was contracted with undesirable motives. Centrist Helene Weber joined women from the People's Party and Nationalists to oppose any expansion of the grounds for divorce because she feared these reforms would lead to the destruction of the family. An attempt by Dr.
Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP) to guarantee the property rights of married women met with similar opposition. Repeatedly in committee sessions proposals to give women more rights in marriage or to ease divorce procedures were defeated by a coalition of conservative men and women joined by many male members of the Centrist and Democrat parties. Dr. Wilhelm Kahl (DVP), Chairman of the Justice Committee, lectured woman deputies against reform and cited religious grounds for his vehement opposition. With division among the parties and among the woman deputies it was not surprising that throughout the term of 1924-28 there was no compromise and no legislation concerning the rights of married women.30

Although leftist woman deputies were not able to attain reforms in the rights of married women, they were successful in promoting reforms in social insurance and legislation. As the economy improved more attention was paid to the proposals to improve national benefits for pensioners, orphans, invalids, and the infirm. German social insurance and welfare programs, one of the most progressive systems in the world, were still considered to be a "woman's field" in the Reichstag.

Communist and Socialist women spoke at length about the need to increase social welfare payments. Martha Arendsee (KPD) admired the goal of Soviet Russia to accept social responsibility for all citizens not able to care
for themselves. Socialist Johanna Reitze wanted widows to receive 50 per cent of their husbands' pensions, compared to the 30 per cent they were then receiving. Her party colleague Marie Juchacz also urged the government to create more innovative social programs moving beyond minimum relief payments.

On the other side of the Chamber, Democrat Marie-Elisabeth Ldders, who had been a social worker in Berlin, spoke on behalf of Democratic and Centrist women who favored limited increases in pensions, especially for the old and the weak. Democratic and Centrist women did not speak as frequently on this issue as did women of the People's Party and the Nationalist Party who were opposed to spending great sums of money on social welfare programs. As Dr. Elsa Matz explained, the parties of the right supported emergency assistance for those in need, but vigorously opposed the creation of an extensive social welfare system.

Proportionately, woman deputies spoke more frequently than men on social welfare issues. Woman deputies stressed the need to fund relief payments for orphans and widows much more than did their male counterparts. Generally, during the years of 1924-28 government pensions were improved, but there were still great economic problems for those recipients depending solely on government pensions. Moderate increases in pensions for the elderly, invalid, infirm, and orphaned were passed while larger increases for
all recipients were defeated by a liberal and conservative coalition. 31

Closely linked with the traditional "woman's concern" of social welfare was the issue of health care, especially for pregnant women and young infants. Deputies from all parties were concerned about the low German birth rate and the high rate of infant mortality during the first year of life. The principle of subsidizing pregnant women had been accepted by Reichstag deputies in the 1920-24 session when they funded a program of weekly assistance payments for mothers shortly before and after giving birth.

Woman deputies were the speakers on this issue for the major parties. On one day (January 25, 1927), only woman deputies spoke in the plenary session and all the speeches concerned weekly assistance. Communist Martha Arendsee passionately argued that the levels of assistance payments should be increased. She also attacked as inadequate the policies of the Socialists as expressed by Luise Schroeder. Arendsee particularly emphasized the plight of working mothers and of illegitimate children who faced even greater economic hardships without significant government assistance. She praised Soviet efforts to increase the Soviet birthrate by providing prenatal and postnatal health care programs. The Communists proposed that private relief efforts should be coordinated by national agencies, a proposal which upset the Centrist and Democratic woman
Socialist Luise Schroeder was the most frequent speaker on the issue of weekly assistance. As head of the committee charged with drafting assistance proposals for the Reichstag, Schroeder read several reports to the full Chamber on this issue. The Social Democrats, as Schroeder explained, wanted to increase the duration of assistance payments, to be in accord with proposed goals adopted by other western nations. Schroeder quoted government statistics that showed that of the 893,900 children born in Germany in 1923, 29,842 were born dead and 111,577 died during their first year. This depressing picture was due, insisted Schroeder, to poor medical attention for pregnant women and newborn infants. Schroeder called for the adoption of a national law to extend low-cost or free medical care for all expectant women. Schroeder favored a broad national program rather than a patchwork quilt of programs sponsored by the already financially pressed state and local districts.

Fellow Social Democrats Antonie Pfülf, Dr. Anna Stegmann, and Anna Nemitz were also active in the debate about levels of assistance payments. In the Justice Committee Pfülf raised questions about aid for mothers as an alternative to abortions. Dr. Stegmann countered the conservative position as stated by Dr. Kahl (DVP) by insisting...
that the psychology of the mother was most important and should be the major concern of legislators—whether male or female—while they drafted assistance proposals. In 1926, Anna Nemitz stressed the need to increase national aid and to relieve some of the cost (ninety million marks during the previous year) from local hospitals.34

The views of Democratic and Centrist women were similar on this issue. Both parties supported improved assistance programs, but favored continuation of private programs as well. Democrats Gertrud Bäumer and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders supported a closely coordinated program of assistance funded by the national and state governments in cooperation with private relief organizations. Lüders wanted the government to urge expectant mothers to cease working earlier than they usually did in their pregnancies, in order to protect their unborn children. After all, she said, "the rights of our children are bound up with our national future." Centrist Christine Teusch stressed the role of private agencies and cautioned the Reichstag against overemphasizing state-funded programs at the expense of these private organizations.

On the right of the Chamber Dr. Elsa Matz (DVP) and Else von Sperber (DNVP) sympathized with the plight of poor and pregnant women, but they were most concerned with establishing strict guidelines to limit government spending for this program which conservatives believed Germany could
not afford. Matz adamantly opposed the "generous national programs" supported by Martha Arendsee and her colleagues. In her maiden speech before the Reichstag von Sperber (DNVP) agreed with Matz that costs of such an assistance program should be reduced, and as the representative of a party that drew much of its following from the rural parts of the country, she urged that women in rural areas not be neglected in any of the national relief programs.35

Maternity assistance levels approved during the 1920-24 term of the Reichstag were continued and gradually raised by members of its successor in 1924-28. Additionally, the length of time for relief payments was increased. Bills proposing to raise significantly the level of support were defeated to the dismay of Communist and Socialist deputies. As the debate on this issue had been dominated by woman deputies, the final proposals presented to the Reichstag were largely drafted by woman deputies who worked to combine the pressing political concerns of their factions with the long-term interests of women's organizations in the issue of better maternity and health care for German women.36

Although debate on health care centered on the question of maternity assistance, other related issues were also discussed. Leftists urged greater spending for public health care plans and medical clinics. This concern for medical clinics was an outgrowth of a desire to provide
better treatment for victims of venereal disease. As Luise Schroeder stated, leftists were concerned not only with venereal disease but with the reduction of prostitution and with the rehabilitation of those young women who were "the victims of this degrading way of life." Schroeder and her colleagues urged the government to spend less time prosecuting prostitutes, and more time curing victims of venereal disease and establishing programs to aid "these confused young women." Women from the middle and right shared the concern about prostitution with leftists, and they called for a system of voluntary programs to persuade young women to seek alternative ways of life. The conservative woman deputies opposed leftist proposals to abolish all regulations against prostitution. Instead, women from the Centrists to the Nationalists successfully supported the continued enforcement of laws forbidding prostitution. On the other hand, women of the left enjoyed success in 1927 only in convincing their male colleagues and, then, the majority of the Reichstag deputies that greater national attention should be paid to the plight of prostitutes and the victims of venereal disease. No clear reform policy on the regulation of prostitution was adopted by the deputies, and this issue would face subsequent sessions of the Reichstag.37

Linked with this concern about the abolition of venereal disease was another traditional concern of the
Frauenbewegung, "the scourge of alcoholism." Abuse of alcohol led to the breakdown of the family, insisted women of both conservative and liberal parties, and to the ruin of countless numbers of individuals, added woman deputies of the Communist and Socialist parties. As in the 1920-24 session women were unable to convince the majority of the Reichstag to restrict the sale and use of alcohol, so they turned their attention toward supporting better treatment facilities for alcoholics. During the session, by an overwhelming majority (305 "yes" votes, 52 "no" votes, and 6 abstentions), the Reichstag adopted a general law to battle alcoholism although a national treatment program to combat alcoholic misuse was defeated.38

Some of the most emotion-filled debates by woman deputies on the floor of the Reichstag were about the regulation of pornography and the protection of the morality and welfare of German youth. In the Chamber and during the twenty-five committee sessions devoted to a proposal to eradicate pornography, conservative woman deputies such as Dr. Elsa Matz (DVP) and German Nationalists Paula Mueller-Otfried and Else von Sperber heatedly argued that the welfare of youth was facing great danger from the licentiousness they saw in the larger German cities. They sought to ban the pornographic books and movies as a first step in the protection of German youth. Dr. Matz and Paula Mueller-Otfried used their positions as speakers of their parties
on this issue to present views stressing the importance of family and religious training as cornerstones of German morality. This position, advocating censorship of pornographic books and films, was a traditional conservative view and was not unique to woman deputies. Women, however, spoke with more passion on this issue, stressing their roles as mothers and preservers of the nation's morality.39

In the middle of the Chamber, Democratic leaders Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and Dr. Gertrud Bäumer also stressed their party's concern for the welfare of children and their support of strong anti-pornography legislation. Centrists Christine Teusch and Helene Weber stressed what they believed to be the pressing need to pass a national censorship law in order to stem the immorality they saw in German society.40

Many leftist women were also opponents of the rapid proliferation of pornography in German society, but they were divided about how best to combat it. Ideologically, Communists and Socialists opposed censorship, thus some woman deputies in these parties struggled with the problem of supporting party ideology and at the same time protecting the morality of youth. Communists Martha Arendsee and Agnes Plum joined their male colleagues in attacking proposed censorship laws, but expressed a mutual concern with conservative women about the need to protect children from exploitation not only by publishers of obscene literature,
but also from tavern and theater owners who ran "houses of decadence." Socialists Luise Schroeder, Antonie Pfülf, Clara Bohm-Schuch, and Mathilde Wurm urged parents to take a greater role in protecting their children rather than forcing the government to adopt the role of censor.41

In the end, the Reichstag deputies passed a National Film Law in 1925 setting standards for motion pictures, but as in the 1920-24 session, they left much discretion to a national board established to oversee the new law. Again on the issue of censorship as on most social issues, woman deputies spoke passionately but not unanimously.

Another thorny issue which occupied the Reichstag throughout the entire term and ultimately led to its premature dissolution was the proposal to draft a comprehensive national school law. Since 1920 German legislators had been challenged by numerous leaders to draft a law establishing national standards for German schools. Many of the woman deputies who worked on the Education Committee and spoke on these proposed standards in the plenary sessions were school teachers, and they emphasized their extensive experience in public and private schools including the fiercely independent schools for girls. The crux of the long debate over educational standards focused on the amount of funding and the extent of government control that the Reichstag would mandate. There was also a corollary issue of the relationship between public and private
denominational schools. In the young democratic republic, public education and its role in training young citizens was a crucial task and involved debates about the future of the nation as well as questions about educational standards.

The woman who spoke most frequently about proposals to draft a national school law was Thusnelds Lang-Brumann of the Bavarian People's Party. Lang-Brumann, who had served as a school teacher for more than twenty years, applauded the commitment to education for the masses, rather than a school system based on class privilege. But when the Socialist women stressed equality of opportunity, Lang-Brumann stressed instead the need to increase the moral and patriotic teachings of the schools. On one occasion Lang-Brumann talked at length on this topic until Antonie Pfülf (SPD) interrupted, "Very good, Madame Colleague, but soon you will have talked this bill to death!" 42

In the conservative ranks Dr. Elsa Matz emerged as the major speaker supporting the preservation of private, denominational education for those able to pay for such, as distinct from a public system for those unable to pay. Rejecting such an elitist approach, leftists heckled Matz with cries of "The Middle Ages live!" Democrat Gertrud Bäumer, who was a leader of the National Teacher's Union, was more charitable in her criticism, but like the leftist deputies she insisted that the government must allocate
more money for the public education of Germany's young citizens.43

In April 1926 the Reichstag passed laws setting standards for vocational schools and apprenticeship programs. The debate over a more comprehensive national school law, however, continued to grow more heated during the session and in early 1928 the work of the Reichstag came to a standstill because of the fiery debate over this law. Finally in March 1928 President Paul Von Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag and called for a new election.

Outside of the Reichstag, the traveling and lecturing experiences of woman deputies during the 1924-28 term were similar to those of male deputies. Proficient speakers and active party campaigners traveled on national speaking tours during breaks in the session and discussed pressing social problems in Germany. Both male and female deputies who had expertise or interests in specific fields traveled to other nations to attend international conferences or meetings. On these occasions women spoke predominantly about pacifism, women's rights, and improved social welfare programs. Most of the women's congresses or meetings of international pacifist organizations. On the other hand, the conferences which male deputies attended were more varied, usually dealing with trade, economic problems, or international diplomacy. The notable exceptions to this pattern were the Communist woman deputies who frequently traveled to
Soviet Russia to learn more about the Soviet economic system and Soviet society. As in previous sessions, these activities both added to the prestige of individual deputies and were indicative of the reputation of the deputies outside the Reichstag Chamber.  

In the 1924-28 term, as throughout the Weimar Era, there were more women in the German Reichstag than in any other legislature in the world. For example, there were four women who served in the House of Representatives in the United States during the years 1924-28, including the first woman to be elected from the Democratic Party. The major interests of these American women were veterans' hospitals and protective labor regulations, but their roles on the whole were much more passive than that of their German counterparts. Unlike Germany, in the United States more conservative than liberal (or leftist) women were elected to the legislature during the first decade following the introduction of women's suffrage.  

In the British House of Commons eleven women served at some time from 1924 to 1928, including the gifted speaker Margaret Bondfield who later became the first woman Cabinet Minister in British history. Significantly, in 1925 British women supported and won passage of a reform bill improving the rights of unhappily married women and providing for their economic security after separation from their husbands. A bill proposing the registration of nursing homes, also
proposed by woman legislators, was accepted by Royal
Assent. Although there were more woman legislators in
Germany than in Britain or the United States, German women
did not make any unique strides toward either greater
rights for women nor did they attain more significant
positions of leadership in the legislature.

In the Reichstag session of 1924-28 the deputies had
been able to turn their attention to long-range problems
and plans, because much of the desperate urgency of the
first few years of the Republic had passed. The pace
with which women deputies introduced new proposals slackened
during the 1924-28 term, but woman members continued to
work at revising and resubmitting earlier proposals which
had not yet been passed by the Reichstag. The session was
busy and the deputies accomplished a great deal in the area
of social programs as well as in foreign policy. The lat­
ter area climaxed in the Locarno Pact and Germany's entry
into the League of Nations. Female deputies were particu­
larly concerned with protecting women in their roles as
wives, mothers, or workers and in more specifically defin­
ing the legal rights of woman citizens. In comparison to
male workers, the economic position of woman workers wors­
ened during the years 1924-28 and woman deputies were
unable to reverse this decline. Women received lower sal­
aries than did men, were frequently laid off before male
workers, and when unemployed, received lower relief payments
than did men. In many instances women worked hard not to progress, but only to maintain the relative position of women society.

Women were by now an accepted part of the electoral lists of political parties at both the national and local levels, where they consistently won 7 to 9 per cent of the seats. As throughout the Weimar Era, woman deputies were well accepted by male colleagues and generally their positions of power (or lack thereof) remained the same. In retrospect this session would mark the apex of women's participation and accomplishments in the national legislative process during the Weimar Republic. With the passing of the excitement of women's suffrage, the decline of the spirit of Locarno, and the rise of the National Socialists during the new session, the role of women in the Reichstag would diminish.
Footnotes

1The Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei won 32 seats out of 472 in the election of May 24, 1924. It had the support of many National Socialists whose own party was in eclipse after the ill-fated Beer Cellar Putsch. There were no women in that faction; it barred women from party membership. The rise of this party was to greatly affect the role of German woman legislators.


3Excess votes in districts would be pooled at the national level and elect deputies on the national lists. In May 1924 those elected from these lists were Paula Mueller-Otfrried and Margarete Behm (DNVP), Hedwig Dransfeld and Helene Weber (Z), Clara Mende (DVP), and Dr. Gertrud Bäumer (DDP).


6Verhandlungen, v. 381, pp. 2, 16.

7Verhandlungen, v. 381, pp. 43-44.


10Verhandlungen, v. 381, pp. 319-25.


16. Anna Geyer, Die Frauen erwerbsarbeit in Deutschland (Jena: Thüringen Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, G.m.b.H., 1924), pp. 61, 72; Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation, pp. 140-41, 146-47.


24. As Lüders commented, on the committee studying benefits for the unemployed, Socialists Dr. Rudolf Breitscheid, Antonie Pfülf, and Luise Schroeder were the most active
members working to raise unemployment benefits. Lüders, Fürchte, pp. 116-18.


Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation, p. 158; Kuczynski, Arbeiterin, pp. 204, 219, 231; Lüders, Fürchte, p. 99.


Verhandlungen, v. 384, pp. 385-89; v. 387, pp. 4080-1, 4096-7; v. 388, pp. 5059-60; v. 390, pp. 74-88-89; v. 393, pp. 11363-65; Deutsch, Frauenarbeit II, p. 41.


44 Bäumer, Zeitenwende, p. 438; Sender, German Rebel, pp. 250-51; Tomlin, in MdR by Max Schwarz, p. 322.


CHAPTER V

THE END OF OPPORTUNITY: WOMEN IN THE
REICHSTAG, 1928-1933

As the fourth Reichstag term opened in 1928, the woman deputies could not know how hectic the next five years would be. From May 1928 to May 1933 five different Reichstage were elected and their sessions were filled with fiery debates about political, economic, military, and international crises. As the economy worsened and the National Socialists gained more political power, women lost ground in employment and equal rights, and finally even women's participation in the Reichstag was challenged. After 1930, wrote one female deputy, "our life became almost like that in an insane asylum."\(^1\)

During the last five years of the Weimar Republic a total of fifty-two women served in the Reichstag, although only four of these served throughout the entire period from 1928 to May 1933.\(^2\) In the 1928 term a total of thirty-six women, or 7.5 per cent of the total number, were elected. In the 1930 election, forty-three women (7.5 per cent) were selected and in 1932 thirty-eight women (6 per cent) were chosen in the first election in
July and thirty-five women (6 per cent) in the second election in November. Finally, in March 1933 thirty women, or 5.5 per cent of the total, were elected to the Reichstag. As the focus of the nation and the Reichstag turned away from domestic social issues, women's participation in the Reichstag declined.

The profiles of these women were similar to those of women who had served in the previous Reichstag (1924-1928). The average age of the women who served in the five parliaments between 1928 and 1933 varied from 47 to 52, compared to the average age of 46.6 in the two previous sessions. Seventy-five per cent of the woman deputies were employed outside of the home, and the majority of these working women were teachers, school administrators, or writers. As in previous sessions, more than two-thirds of the woman deputies were married, widowed, or divorced, a figure that was lower than that of the general population of women in Germany.

Of the fifty-two woman deputies, thirty-seven entered the Reichstag for the first time between 1928 and 1933. After a decade of national service several woman deputies who were already middle-aged in 1918 chose to retire from public life in 1928. Also, as the economic picture worsened woman deputies in the Democratic and Social Democratic Parties lost their seats to the National Socialists and Communists. Several new Communist woman deputies were
elected to the Reichstag, and their numbers prevented a steep decline in the total number of woman deputies in the Chamber. This turnover of female deputies brought women into the Reichstag who were handicapped by their lack of experience in national politics, and they spent much of their time learning about the daily procedures of government.

The majority of the female deputies who served during this five year period belonged to the Communist and Social Democratic parties. Fifty-two per cent of the women in the Reichstag session from 1928 to 1930 were Communists or Social Democrats; 71 per cent in both the fifth (1930-1932) and sixth (1932) sessions; 72 per cent in the seventh (1932) session; and 73 per cent in the eighth (1933) session. This high percentage of leftist woman deputies meant that only these parties gave women a genuine chance to fight for the rights of woman citizens.

From 1928 through 1933, women held offices similar to those held by women in earlier sessions of the Reichstag. Social Democrats Lore Agnes and Clara Bohm-Schuch and Centrist Christine Reusch served as secretaries of the Reichstag. Toni Pfülf (SPD) served as a secretary of the committee studying the revision of the Legal Code and Martha Arendsee (KPD) was selected as Vice Chairman of the Population Policies Committee. Dr. Helene Weber (Z) served in the government as a counselor in the Ministry of Work.
in addition to her role as a Reichstag deputy. As in the past, the majority of women in the German Reichstag served on committees dealing with social affairs, that is, social welfare, health care, working conditions, and women's rights.

In other Western nations, as in Germany, concern for the role of woman deputies declined during this era of economic crises and international tensions. There continued to be many more women in the German legislature than in any other legislature in the world. In congressional elections in the United States in 1928 only eight women were elected to the House of Representatives; in addition, two women were appointed in 1929. Women were being appointed to serve in more agencies and departments in the American government, but attempts to win further rights for women lost momentum when the Great Depression began in 1929. Indeed, in the United States as in Germany, many married women with working husbands were dismissed after 1929. In spite of attempts by woman legislators, American women continued to receive lower wages than did men for the same work and a law that was passed to guarantee women equal pay for equal work was never enforced.5

The role of women in the British Parliament was limited, but woman members of Parliament were playing a more significant role by 1928. Fourteen women were elected to the House of Commons in 1929, and fifteen women were
elected in 1931. From 1929 to 1931 Margaret Bondfield, as mentioned before, served as Minister of Labour. From 1928 through 1933 the woman legislators in England successfully sponsored bills to assist the poor, aid illegitimate children, preserve citizenship rights for women who married foreigners, extend unemployment benefits to all women workers, and increase monies for health care programs for pregnant women. On the other hand, several bills sponsored by women to prohibit the sale of liquor were rejected by the Parliament. In England and the United States, as in Germany, the major concerns of woman legislators were health, education, and social issues. Woman legislators occupied less than 5 per cent of the total seats in the national legislatures in both England and the United States and women did not hold any major leadership or committee positions in either the House of Commons or the House of Representatives. The experiences of woman deputies in Germany from 1928 through 1933 would continue to be more alike than different from the experiences of their counterparts in England, the United States, and other Western democracies. 

Meanwhile, during the Reichstag sessions from 1928 through 1933, German women spoke less frequently than they had in earlier sessions because there were fewer sessions and in many sessions the debates were dominated by top party leaders. Leadership of all parties continued to be
exclusively male and in crises over the security of the Republic, women felt that their views were well represented by the male leaders.

From 1928 through 1933 sixteen woman deputies spoke about Germany's social welfare system. Communist Martha Arendsee was the most frequent speaker in the plenary sessions on this topic which Social Democrat Luise Schroeder spoke repeatedly in meetings of the Social Affairs and Population Policies Committees. The Communist and Social Democratic parties wanted the government to extend the social welfare system in order to cover more recipients. They argued that some of the money being spent for the military could be diverted to social programs. Centrists, Democrats, and representatives of the People's Party hoped to make more money available for social programs as the economy improved and, in the meantime, to provide the most needy with emergency funds. German Nationalists supported the continuation of major emergency assistance, but favored the reduction of long-term social programs which they believed to be an unwise drain on the national treasury.

Germany's declining birth rate and the high rate of infant mortality during the first year of life was a perplexing problem and was discussed by woman deputies from all parties. Communist and Social Democratic women wanted the Reichstag to accept increased support levels for a variety of health care programs, including increased
maternity assistance payments and better nursing care for new mothers and infants. Several times Communists Martha Arendsee and Helene Overlach pointed to programs in the Soviet Union which gave free assistance to pregnant women and new mothers. Socialist Luise Schroeder wanted the members of the Population Policies Committee to examine discrimination against working women which affected their abilities to earn a living wage. Higher standards of living afforded married and single women the opportunities to seek better health care, but discrimination against working women deprived them of the money needed to provide sound health care for themselves and their children. As Communist Maria Reese reminded her colleagues in the Reichstag, the frustration of women who could not earn enough money to provide for themselves was one of the contributing factors to Germany's record of a very high female suicide rate—18,625 in 1931. As Reese pointed out, women's attempts to solve this problem were all directed at increasing financial assistance, but maternity assistance payments which had been adopted earlier in the Weimar Republic had been ineffective to date in checking the declining birth rate or the rising infant mortality rate. The only realistic solution was a carefully designed health-care program.  

Centrist Christine Teusch, who had worked with private Catholic organizations to provide better care for pregnant women, new mothers, and infants, agreed with the leftist
deputies that the state should serve its citizens, but she opposed the proposals for the fully supported health care programs which were introduced by Martha Arendsee on behalf of the Communist Party. Teusch also wanted to protect the role of independent organizations from legislation presented by Social Democrat Marie Juchacz which would have subordinated all private relief organizations to a central agency of the government. 

On the right side of the Chamber, Dr. Elsa Matz (DVP) and her party colleagues opposed expansion of the weekly assistance programs, but did support limited increases in government pensions for the elderly. Such increases were much less costly, said Matz, and would aid those citizens who were no longer able to help themselves. Annagrete Lehmann of the Nationalist Party also supported the concept of government pensions for elderly citizens, but she called for a reduction in the funding for the program that was being sponsored by the government in 1929. The woman deputies of the rightist parties expressed concerns similar to those of the Social Democrats for the elderly and the invalids who relied heavily upon government assistance, but they opposed massive spending proposals and the creation of any powerful government agency which would regulate all social programs for the nation.

During debates in the Reichstag on other social welfare programs, including aid for illegitimate children and
unwed mothers, assistance for victims of occupational diseases, extra relief payments for large families, increases in the pensions of veterans' dependents and widows, a national insurance program for extended illnesses, treatment programs for victims of venereal disease, alcoholism, and tuberculosis, woman deputies supported the positions of their parties, as they had throughout the Weimar Republic. Other legislative concerns of woman deputies from 1920 through 1928—censorship, prostitution, and better housing—received less attention; the focus of the Reichstag shifted to fiscal questions and the preservation of law and order as the effects of the worldwide economic depression made themselves felt. 10

Woman deputies continued to dominate discussions in the Reichstag about a National School Law, in addition to other proposals providing for the welfare and nutrition of children. Debate about a unified national school system reflected the divisions between parties about the goals of the German state. Conservatives such as Dr. Elsa Matz (DVP) wanted to battle Bolshevism in the schools, while Democrat Marie-Elisabeth Lüders was concerned about protecting the jobs of married woman teachers. A National School Conference was held in 1930 to plan the reform of the German system, but broke up in chaos instead. This inability to produce a strong legislative program for education was one of the deepest disappointments for the woman deputies who
were teachers and administrators and who had worked for at least fifteen years for a unified national school system.11

Women spoke as frequently about the welfare and nutrition of children as they did about the educational system. Clara Weich (SPD), in her maiden speech in the Reichstag, expressed concern that the exploitation of youth in rural areas was continuing. She cited statistics about chronic illnesses in small villages and towns and blamed this on the abuses of child laborers. Heavy work loads also hampered children's school attendance. The Social Democrats supported proposals to protect child laborers by forcing employers to grant them longer rest periods and vacation time. When adopted, such proposals were largely ineffective because policing all districts and localities was not feasible. Children were overworked in the cities as well, but the legislators felt that improvements were brought about more easily because abuses were usually more open to public attention and care.12

Women of the People's Party, the Center, the Social Democrats, and the Communists united to call for an increase of the food supply for children all over Germany. These woman deputies were concerned specifically with how to increase the supplies of milk and of fresh and frozen meat. Leftists attacked the monopolies and large agrarian interests for opposing increased importation of food from abroad. Conservatives emphasized the need for housewives
to provide adequate care and nutrition for their children. To assist them, Dr. Doris Hertwig-Bünger (DVP) called for the creation of a new government department to deal with the special concerns of housewives. Ultimately, customs regulations were altered to allow more meat and milk to be imported into Germany, but distribution problems throughout the nation and a worsening economy after 1930 exacerbated the problem of improving the nutrition of children throughout Germany.  

A declining economy from 1930 through 1933 also complicated the task of granting women more rights in society. Ever since women had entered the first Reichstag of the Weimar Republic in 1920, woman deputies had worked to provide greater opportunities for women in government, employment, education, and other spheres of life. Gains that had been made in the 1920's, however, were largely offset by the deterioration of the economic position of women. The economic depression in the early 1930s' aggravated this picture and women worked hard just to prevent erosion of the rights they had won. Unemployment rose from under two million in 1928 to three million in 1930 and to over six million in 1933. Generally, the first to lose their positions were the woman employees, who were frequently the employees with the least seniority. The policy of dismissing married woman civil servants whose husbands were employed, which had been accepted by the Reichstag during
the economic collapse in the early 1920's, spread rapidly throughout industries and large firms after 1930. Communists and Social Democrats were joined by Democrats in calling for the equal treatment of women by employers in dismissals, as well as in hiring. On the other hand, conservative women accepted the views of their party leaders that married women, who already were receiving an average of less than 70 per cent of the wages paid their male counterparts, should not be retained when male breadwinners were being dismissed. As a result of this practice, female unemployment rose dramatically from 1929 to 1931, to a level of 29.9 per cent compared to the 6.6 per cent unemployment rate of male workers.14

A woman's income was frequently viewed as a supplemental income for a family, and there was little distinction made between women who earned part or all of their families' incomes. When women did lose their jobs they continued to receive lower unemployment assistance benefits, because such relief was based on previous salaries. To compound these inequities, as the economy worsened, the Reichstag passed an emergency decree on June 5, 1931 which gave unemployment relief to married women only if they were indigent. All parties except the Communists supported this bill. Determination of whether women would receive assistance or not was to be based on a needs test. Within a year, almost
35 per cent of unemployed women lost their relief payments because of the restrictive needs test.  

Centrist and conservative woman deputies were greatly distressed about rising unemployment, but did not deal only with this issue, but also used the debates about the rights of married woman employees to emphasize the related issue of protection of the rights of mothers and children. Disagreement between the right and the left about women's unemployment rights reflected a lack of agreement in society about the role of women. Because there was wide support in Germany in 1930 for the view that in times of economic crisis a woman needed to have a career only if she had no other means of support, the majority of male and female Reichstag deputies were willing to ignore the provisions granting equal rights to women contained in the Weimar Constitution of 1919.  

Although there was general agreement among all parties, except the Communists, on the issue of dismissing married woman employees, there was significant disagreement over the broader issue of women's rights. Both the number of women elected and their participation in the Reichstag declined during this era (1928-1933), but women's participation in state and local politics deteriorated at a rapid rate and declined to less than 1 per cent of the total representation. Most German women did not seem greatly concerned with this lower level of participation of women
as candidates and as elected officials. This time of national stress, 1930-1933, women were willing to trust the traditional (and male) party leadership to represent their views. Later, as conditions continued to worsen, many sought new leaders, not within their own parties, but in the National Socialist Party. 17

The only significant exception to this decline in women's political participation was a move in 1929 by some women in Berlin to found a women's party in Germany patterned after a similar movement in Scandinavian nations. This Open-Door Movement, as it was called, emphasized equal protection for women and, especially, equal pay for equal work. The Open-Door Movement, however, rivaled established women's organizations and soon it was vigorously opposed by many women's groups, especially by the Social Democratic women. After two years the Open-Door Movement, which was the most serious attempt to create a women's party during the Weimar Republic, failed. 18

Indeed, discussions about women's rights in politics and society were dominated more by the forces of reaction than the forces of modernism in the early 1930's. On the last day of 1930 Pope Pius XI issued an Encyclical concerning Christian marriage (Casti Connubii) which emphasized the need to protect the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers and attacked the emancipation of women as a "false freedom." The Encyclical condemned abortion, birth
control, and divorce. In Germany the Pope's Encyclical opened new debates over the role of women in society. Communists heatedly protested any attempts to undo any progress in women's rights. Democrats and Social Democrats continued to work for divorce reform to aid unhappily married women, but reaction against increased rights and responsibilities coupled with the depressed economy blocked further reform attempts.19

As the National Socialists gained more popular support and more power, they sought wider acceptance for their own views that a woman's place was in the home, caring for a husband and children. At first they focused their efforts on the attempt to subordinate all women's organizations to the National Socialists' Women's Union (Frauenschaft). The Frauenschaft was founded in October 1931 and replaced several smaller NSDAP women's groups. As the National Socialists gained more political power in late 1932 and 1933, they moved to silence their opposition and they harassed meetings of other women's groups until they disbanded or merged with the NSDAP Frauenschaft.20

These developments brought many of the woman deputies into conflict with the NSDAP because they belonged to one or more women's organizations; several deputies also served as officers of women's unions. With an electoral system based on proportional representation, deputies had specific constituency in Weimar politics. Subsequently,
to many women, these organizations took the place of constituencies and when these organizations were dissolved, these limited constituencies disappeared.

In one attempt to halt the decline of women's rights and combat the rising political popularity of the National Socialists, the Communists launched a major drive in 1930 to attract woman voters. Communist deputies Clara Zetkin, Roberta Gropper, Helene Overlach, Olga Körner, and Johanna Himmler proposed a legislative package to grant more rights to women, including improved government health care programs. If these legislative proposals were adopted, however, this was not the result of pressure on the part of Communist woman deputies, but was rather due to the leadership of the Reichstag which hoped to win more support.

The debate over women's rights was pushed into the background during this era by long discussions about the economy and about trade and foreign policies. Some women served on committees dealing with the economy and the budget, but they spoke infrequently on crucial fiscal issues from 1928 through 1933. Social Democrat Toni Sender served on the Cartel Committee of the Finance Ministry, Centrist Helene Weber was an alternate member of the committee studying taxes, and Democrat Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders participated in several national and economic conferences in 1929 and 1930. In the Reichstag debates about relations with other nations, women did not
speak. Only male deputies spoke as representatives of their parties during debates about the Young Plan, which sought to revise Germany's repayment of reparations, and about the evacuation of the Rhineland by the Allies in 1930.21

Women did participate in the Reichstag debates about trade legislation and customs duties. As in the third Reichstag (1924-1928), Social Democrat Toni Sender spoke as frequently as many of her male colleagues on trade policies. Sender and other leftists favored policies to import more food in order to increase the food supply and lower food prices. On the other side of the Chamber, conservatives wanted to protect agricultural interests from the importation of great quantities of food which would lower agricultural prices within Germany. Increased quantities of food were imported in 1928, but balance of trade problems after 1929 worsened the problem of food shortages and jeopardized delicate relations with other nations. As in previous sessions, the women who spoke about trade policies emphasized the effects of these policies on the domestic population, especially the children.22

Women also participated in the debate over the spending proposals for new battleship cruisers in 1930 and 1931. Marie Juchacz (SPD) questioned spending great sums on armaments when social programs were seriously hurt by reduced budgets; however, her party colleagues supported funding the cruisers in the hope of strengthening the
Brüning government as a bulwark against National Socialism. With the exception of Juchacz, women followed the directives of their party leaders on this crucial issue.23

In the early 1930's the greatest obstacle to increase women's participation in the Reichstag was the rise of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and its belief that a woman's place in life was that of wife and mother. Thus they launched bitter attacks against women involved in politics. Their abuse of leftist woman deputies was particularly bitter, as their campaigns against Social Democrat Toni Sender and Communist Clara Zetkin showed. After 1930 the political rallies for these two women were frequently filled with scores of brownshirted NSDAP members who disrupted the proceedings with loud noises and attacks on members of the audience. By late 1931 Sender was able to speak at political rallies only if she had enough armed supporters present to prevent the NSDAP members from getting too close to the podium. Soon leftist deputies could enter the Reichstag Chamber safely only when accompanied by several other members. By late 1932, according to Sender and Lüders, a leftist woman deputy who walked alone into the Chamber risked attack by NSDAP members in brown shirts.24

In addition to the disruption of the political rallies of woman deputies, the National Socialists published libelous attacks against them in pamphlets and party
newspapers. In one pamphlet, the National Socialists called Toni Sender a prostitute and actually a wealthy woman who dressed poorly only when she attended public meetings. Sender sued the NSDAP for this public attack on her character, but she lost the case in an era of growing influence of National Socialism. In another case, the National Socialists in the government of Thuringia reprimanded Dr. Anna Siemsen, a lecturer at the University of Jena and a Social Democratic Reichstag deputy, for public statements and writings against the NSDAP. This action threatened traditional academic freedom and her colleagues supported her as she continued to speak out against the politics of reaction. These Nazi attacks on politicians were not limited to women, but the National Socialists seemed to be particularly vicious in their attacks on leftist woman politicians.25

At first conservative deputies were not so treated, because some of their political views about the economy and trade were similar to those of the National Socialists and they were viewed temporarily as needed allies. Many conservative woman deputies believed, as did the National Socialists, that a woman's most important functions were that of mother and homemaker. Women supporting the conservative parties hoped that support of some National Socialist proposals would serve to strengthen and preserve the German family. Although disturbing, the fact that women
could not serve as deputies in the National Socialist faction, was not unacceptable to them as long as women's concerns were well represented.26

When their electoral victory in 1930 made them the second strongest party in the Reichstag, the National Socialists' intimidation of leftist deputies increased. Social Democratic women opened their 1931 International Women's Day with the motto, "Against War and Nazi Terror, For Socialism and Peace." By 1932 Democratic women, led by Dr. Gertrud Bäumer, began a struggle to preserve and protect women's rights against the onslaught of reaction after fourteen years of women's suffrage. In the Democratic journal she edited, Die Frau, Bäumer urged women to participate in national elections and to use their vote in order to gain greater influence. She attacked the National Socialists directly and warned women not to vote for them since they would ultimately disenfranchise women. Bäumer's concern was shared by many older women who were veterans of those organizations which had fought so vigorously for women's suffrage. Despite this opposition to the NSDAP, one political observer estimated that one-half of the votes cast for the National Socialists in 1932 were cast by women.27

The most emotional speech made by a woman deputy against National Socialism was also one of the most moving speeches ever made by a woman on the floor of the
Reichstag. In 1932, after a much publicized political campaign, the National Socialists won 230 seats but failed to gain a majority in the Reichstag. During this election the Communists gained seats at the expense of the Social Democrats, who seemed unable to cope either with economic problems or the National Socialists. As was the custom, the oldest deputy was invited to open the session and at seventy-five years of age Communist Clara Zetkin was given this honor on August 30, 1932. Her speech received much attention because of the German political climate and because the National Socialists had tried to prevent Zetkin from speaking by making threats on her life. Zetkin, however, braved all dangers and, escorted by her son and several KPD colleagues, addressed the Reichstag that day: "The order of the hour is for a united front of all workers in order to repulse Fascism!" In a voice wavering with fatigue and emotion, she concluded, "I open the Reichstag in fulfillment of my duty as the oldest member and in the hope that in spite of my present invalidity, I will have the honor of opening the first congress of a soviet Germany as the oldest member." Then as she left the Chamber, Zetkin personally greeted all the officials who had served in the previous Reichstag, but defiantly marched by the President of that Reichstag, Hermann Göring (NSDAP), without a word.28
Clara Zetkin's speech represents the last major act on the part of a woman deputy in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic. For the next year, the record of women's participation in the Reichstag and its committees. At that, the fact that a woman delivered as extended a speech as Zetkin did at such a crucial time in the history of the Weimar Republic was due not to her position in the party leadership or her expertise on the subject, but to the fact that she happened to be the oldest deputy elected in 1932.

The moribund democratic system was dealt its final blow by the appointment of National Socialist leader Adolf Hitler as Chancellor on January 30, 1933, and by the burning of the Reichstag a month later (February 27, 1933). Chancellor Hitler used the Reichstag fire to suppress political parties and to justify the harassment of all leftist leaders. As Social Democrat Toni Sender remembered later, "Every night I wondered that I was still alive." 29

On March 21, 1933, the Reichstag met in Potsdam at the Garnisonskirche, the historical church of the Prussian kings; two days later the deputies passed the Enabling Act allowing the government to be ruled by governmental decree. In keeping with Nazi policies, women's organizations were voluntarily disbanded or declared illegal, women were dismissed from their positions as government officials, and women's political rallies were considered "subversive" and were prohibited by the National Socialists. On June 30,
1933, a law discharged all married woman civil servants who could be adequately supported in their homes. As the last remnants of the one-time democracy were crumbling, the opportunities for women to serve in politics and government, too, came to an end.

The last session of the eighth Reichstag (1933) was held on May 17, 1933. With this meeting the participation of women in the legislative process ended. Women were barred from running for the Reichstag during the Nazi era.
Footnotes


2. The four women who served from May 1928 through November 1933 were: Thusnelda Lang-Brumann (BVP), Annagrete Lehmann (DNVP), Christine Teusch (Z), and Helene Weber (Z). Session IV met from June 13, 1928 to July 18, 1930; Session V was in session from October 13, 1930 to May 12, 1932; Session VI, from August 30, 1932 to September 12, 1932; Session VII met only from December 6, 1932 to December 9, 1932; and Session VIII met from March 21, 1933 to May 17, 1933.

3. Although the number of woman deputies increased, the percentage of woman deputies remained the same between 1928 and 1930 because the size of the Reichstag was increased from 490 to 577 seats. In 1932 the Reichstag was increased to 608 seats.


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21Lüders, Fürchte, pp. 120-23.

22Verhandlungen, v. 423, pp. 725-28; v. 424, pp. 1087, 1308-10; v. 425, pp. 3049-52; v. 428, pp. 4892-97, 5922-23; v. 444, pp. 102-3; v. 445, pp. 1145-48; Sender, German Rebel, p. 278.


25Sender, German Rebel, pp. 295-97; Kurt Grossmann, "Der Fall Anna Siemsen," Die Frau im Staat, v. 12, no. 8 (1930), pp. 7-8.

26Kirpatrick, Nazi Germany, pp. 60-64; Gabriele Bremme, Die politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland: Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Frauen bei Wahlen und ihre Teilnahme in Partei und Parlament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), pp. 35-37, 75.


28Verhandlungen, v. 454, pp. 1-3; Luise Dornemann, Clara Zetkin, Ein Lebensbild (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, G.m.b.H., 1957), pp. 426-28. To guarantee that in the next session the oldest member would be a National
Socialist, the NSDAP included a ninety-year old retired general, Karl Litzmann, on their electoral list.

29 After the Reichstag fire the National Socialists printed Sender's picture on page one of their polemical *Judenspiegel* in Dresden and warned that she was a danger to Germany. *Sender, German Rebel*, p. 306.

30 The vote in favor of the Enabling Act was 441 to 94; only the Social Democrats voted against the Act. (KPD members were disqualified from voting on this issue); Kirpatrick, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 62-64, 102-3; *Sender, German Rebel*, p. 318; *Die Frau*, v. 40, no. 9 (June 1933), passim.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE POLITICAL WOMAN,
THE FIRST AND SECOND GENERATIONS

From the perspective of the mid-1970's, the significant impression on a student of women in the Weimar Republic is the similarity of many of the issues and challenges faced by women then and now. The leaders of the German women's suffrage organizations were bright with optimism in 1919. They believed that when German women were given the right to vote and to serve in public office, this would lead rapidly to political, social, and economic equality for women. The woman deputies who were elected in 1919 to the National Constituent Assembly and in 1920 to the Reichstag were expected to help bring about the legislative changes which would guarantee the equality of men and women. Instead, in little more than a decade, women's legislators, far from implementing all-encompassing equal rights provisions, were hard at work stressing the need to preserve the limited (and still unequal) rights which women had won during the first ten years of the Weimar Republic. After the Second World War the male and female members of the West German Bundestag spent many hours
discussing the need to pass laws delineating the rights of woman citizens in the new Federal Republic of Germany. There was no doubt that women would have equal voting rights, but there was disagreement about how to implement other civil and social rights. As in the Weimar era, a small group of woman legislators worked with limited success in the decades after World War II to guarantee that women received equal pay for equal work and to help women protect their roles both as mothers and as equal citizens under the law.

Like women in several other Western nations, German women received the vote after World War I largely as a tribute to their wartime service to the nation. Many leaders in the German Frauenbewegung and the Socialist women's organizations, who had worked for decades to gain greater rights for women, worked in 1918 to prepare women for the new role in society that they expected to play. The established political parties scrambled during the campaign for the National Constituent Assembly to win the votes of these newly enfranchised voters, about whose political preferences little was known. Male political leaders were concerned that women would either unite in a women's bloc or would be unduly influenced by their church officials.¹

As it turned out, the women who served as legislators did not follow the directives of their churches, nor did
they unite to form a woman's bloc. Instead they were loyal to the parties to which they belonged and sought to influence, rather than confront, the leaders of those parties. The Social Democrats, the Independent Social Democrats, and the Communists pressed for equal rights for women and included a higher number of woman candidates on their electoral lists than the liberal and conservative parties in order to underscore their concern for women's rights. On the other hand, the conservative parties emphasized the need to protect women and to preserve the importance of the family.

Whether they belonged to a party of the left or the right, women did not penetrate the inner circles of power either in their respective parties or in the Reichstag as a whole. Brought up in an age when women were subordinate to men in society and in politics, few of these women had any specialized education and even fewer had any national reputation. Most of the women who served as deputies were teachers, authors, or housewives. None were diplomats, economists, lawyers, or business leaders, the areas from which political leaders traditionally came. As a result female deputies were most knowledgeable about social welfare, health care, and education. In these three areas women served admirably during the Weimar Republic and faithfully presented the views of their parties on many pressing domestic issues. In an era of continuing
economic difficulties, industrial modernization, international tensions, and the rise of Fascism, however, domestic issues and the participation of women were frequently subordinated to more pressing needs. That women accepted this subordinate role was in part due to their backgrounds, and in part to the serious nature of the crises plaguing Germany in the 1920's and the early 1930's.

Although not as dynamic as women suffragists had hoped in 1918, the Weimar Era did bring improvements to women. A greater number of women entered German universities, and, in consequence, more women entered professional positions, though at lower pay than men. The leaders of the Frauenbewegung had worked for greater educational opportunities for women because they felt that such experience would be essential for an expanded role in politics and society. The effects of women's improved educational opportunities were not yet very noticeable during the brief history of the Weimar Republic, but the groundwork was laid for a second generation of more highly trained woman legislators in the post-World War II era.

Although many more women served in the German Reichstag than in any other national legislature during the interwar era, the role woman deputies played in Germany was not unlike that played by female legislators in Great Britain or the United States. Women in all three nations were treated somewhat like a minority group that had to be
pacified by several small reforms in exchange for their lasting support. Generally, the pacification was successful and without greater numbers of women elected or without women having the financial resources to press their claims, the pattern remained the same. Even these small numbers of women might have wielded more power had they been supported by a more vocal group of women at the grass roots. However, no such group existed in any of these three nations. Many women who had worked for suffrage rejoiced when women won the right to vote and they eagerly participated in the first elections. Enthusiasm waned, however, and women's participation in elections declined in all three nations during the 1920's. Women who had not supported women's suffrage or those who had opposed it naturally never saw any great value in the role women played in national legislatures. Contrary to popular beliefs, the economic position of women declined during the first decade after World War I; thus the opportunity to leave homes and families and to pursue a career was not an attractive prospect to the majority of German women. As Henry Cord Meyer concluded after studying Germany in 1933:

Women were given legal equality by the German Republic, yet essentially remained the unnoticed Hausfrauen they had been before. No doubt some of them were infatuated with der schöne Adolf, but his general appeal to them was more fundamental. While their actual status was hardly altered, he gave them
dramatic recognition in the context of race, the nation, and service to the community.3

The stories of the women who had served in the National Assembly and the Reichstag some time between 1919 and 1933 and were still alive extended beyond the end of the Weimar Republic. Generally, conservative woman deputies retreated to quiet and sometimes frustrating lives, often in rural areas, during the Third Reich. On the other hand, life for leftist woman deputies was far from quiet. The National Socialists' campaign of terror against the leftists, including female leftists, accelerated after May 1933. Four Communist woman deputies fled to the Soviet Union in fear of their lives in 1933, and between 1933 and 1935 seven Social Democratic women legislators fled to Switzerland, Sweden, Great Britain, or the United States. As for their colleagues who remained in Germany or in nations that were conquered by German troops during World War II, the lives of these latter were largely spent in hiding or on the run. Between 1933 and 1945 fifteen of these women were arrested and imprisoned either in state prisons or in concentration camps. Three of them died in the camps in 1944 and 1945.

After the end of World War II and the division of Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany (West) and the German Democratic Republic (East), new governments and legislatures were established. Most of the woman deputies
of the Weimar Republic who were still alive were over sixty years old and had retired from public life. Of those who did return to public life, only two served in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany. Dr. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (formerly of the Democratic Party) served in the Bundestag from 1953 to 1961 and Helene Weber (of the prewar Center Party) served from 1948 to 1962. Both Lüders and Weber were known for their work in social welfare and education and they served on corresponding committees. On the local level, Christine Teusch (Z) served as the Culture Minister of Nordrhein-Westfalen in the 1950's and Luise Schroeder (SPD) served as the Deputy Mayor of West Berlin in the late 1940's and later as a state legislator. In East Germany, Roberta Gropper (KPD) and Olga Körner (KPD), who had served as deputies in the Reichstag in the early 1930's, were members of the governing board of East Berlin and members of state councils in the post-World War II era.

In the West German Bundestag the percentage of woman deputies in each session varied from 7.07 per cent in 1949 (29 out of 410 deputies), to 8.8 per cent in 1963 (44 out of 499), down to 5.8 per cent in 1972 (30 out of 516). Again as in the Weimar Republic, the percentage of women in the national legislature declined within a decade after the government was constituted. The majority of women who have served on committees in the post-war era served on
the Justice Committee and the Social Policies Committee. M. E. Lüders was the one woman member of the committee concerned with the reunification of Germany.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, as in other Western nations, a women's movement grew up in the politics of the 1960's and with a resurgent demand for women's rights came again the promise of an expanded role for women in politics and society. The most notable woman in the postwar German Bundestag is a woman who was only fourteen at the end of the Weimar Republic. In 1972 Annemarie Renger, of the Social Democratic Party, was elected President of the Bundestag by a vote of 438 out of 516. In her acceptance speech on December 13, 1972 Renger noted the significance of the election of a woman to this position and the importance of the role of women in the German legislature.4

In other Western nations the participation of women in national legislatures declined after initial spurts at the end of World War II, then rose again in the 1960's. In Great Britain twenty-four women served in the Parliament of 1945, only seventeen women served in 1951, and then in 1964 twenty-eight women were elected to Parliament. In addition to serving in the Parliament, several women had served in British cabinets since World War II. The most prominent were Ellen Wilkinson (1891-1947) who served as Minister of Education from 1945 to 1947 and Barbara Castle (b. 1911)
who served as Minister of Overseas Development (1964-65) and as Minister of Transportation (1965-68). Labourite Jennie Lee (b. 1904) and Conservative Edith Summerskill (b. 1901) also held portfolios in the British cabinet in the postwar era. In the early 1970's much attention has been focused on Conservative Margaret Thatcher (b. 1925) and Laborite Shirley Williams (b. 1930), one of whom could become the first woman prime minister of England.

In the United States ten women were elected to the House of Representatives in 1944 and Margaret Chase Smith (b. 1897) served in the United States Senate from 1948 through 1973. In the early 1970's attention was focused on the role of women in American society during the struggle over the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (1972). In the 1974 elections for Congress, no women were elected to the Senate but eighteen women (or 4 per cent of 435 seats) were elected to the House of Representatives.

In the Scandinavian nations, Italy, the Netherlands, and France the percentage of woman deputies has ranged from 1 to 5 per cent of the national legislatures in the postwar era. In all these nations as in the United States, Great Britain, and in the two German states, the percentage of woman representatives has remained much less than their numbers in the population.

As concern over the role of women in modern society has grown in the 1960's and 1970's, so has the interest in
the experiences of women in earlier eras. As for the woman deputies of the Weimar Republic, their record was one of active participation and limited accomplishment, but not one of sweeping reforms or leadership. Most importantly their fourteen years of political participation were plagued by all the difficulties resulting from the lack of experience in parliamentary work, the lack of a significant power base, and numerical inferiority. The deputies themselves were disappointed with their own achievements in 1933, but their participation did lay the groundwork for the second generation of women who entered national politics after the conclusion of the Second World War.
Footnotes

1 Werner Thönnessen, Frauenemanzipation, Politik und Literatur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zur Frauenbewegung, 1863-1933 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), p. 179.

2 The thesis of Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, is also an important one in the explanation of this failure of German women to support either the female deputies or the programs supported by some of the deputies to expand the rights of women in German society. Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1941).


4 Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages (Bonn: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei, 1972/73), v. 81, p. 1. In addition to Renger, one Vice President of the Bundestag was a woman deputy in the Free Democratic Party and the present Minister of Youth, Family Affairs, and Health is Social Democrat Katharina Focke.
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