

Chapter 19: Technological Advances and Economics in the Global Age: 19-1e Women's Lives

Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition

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19-1e Women's Lives

Women's lives changed more rapidly in the 1920s than ever before. Although the end of the war saw the end of wartime job opportunities, some women remained in the workforce. The young and wealthy enjoyed more personal freedoms than their mothers had before the war; they drove cars, played sports, traveled alone, and smoked in public. For others, the upheavals of war brought more suffering than liberation. Millions of women had lost their male kin in the war or in the great influenza epidemic. After the war many single women led lives of loneliness and destitution.

In Europe and North America advocates of women's rights had been demanding the vote for women since the 1890s. New Zealand was the only nation to grant women the vote before the twentieth century. Women in Norway were the first to obtain it in Europe, in 1915. Russian women followed in 1917, and Canadians and Germans in 1918. Britain gave women over age thirty the vote in 1918 and later extended it to younger women. The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted suffrage to American women in 1920. Women in Turkey began voting in 1934. Everywhere, their influence on politics was less radical than feminists had hoped and conservatives had feared. Even when it did not transform politics and government, however, the right to vote was a potent symbol.

Women were active in many other areas besides the suffrage movement. On both sides of the Atlantic women participated in social reform movements to prevent mistreatment of women and children and of industrial workers. In the United States such reforms were championed by Progressives like Jane Addams (1860–1935), who founded a settlement house in a poor neighborhood and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. In Europe reformers were generally aligned with Socialist or Labour Parties.

Among the most controversial, and eventually most effective, of the reformers were those who advocated contraception, such as the American Margaret Sanger (1883–1966). Her campaign brought her into conflict with many authorities, who equated birth control with pornography. Finally, in 1923 she founded a birth control clinic in New York. In France, the government prohibited contraception and abortion in 1920 in an effort to increase the

AP® Exam Tip

Evaluate the changes in gender roles and both the changes and continuities from previous time periods.

AP® Exam Tip

Evaluate how more effective forms of birth control impacted gender roles.

birthrate and make up for the loss of so many young men in the war.

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