21-9 Helen M. Todd, *Getting Out the Vote* (1911)

The movement for woman suffrage began in the mid-nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, several western states had granted women the right to vote, but no success was achieved on the national level. Woman's suffrage groups maintained efforts to pass a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote.

On a June day last year, six or eight insurgent women met in the library of the Chicago Women's Club and decided to add the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. . . .

It would be untrue to leave the impression that we found this fraternal feeling toward woman suffrage ready made. It was only achieved in many instances by effort and experience.

The men were sometimes obviously thankful their women folks were incapable of going gallivanting through the country making speeches. Often, as our automobile, covered with banners, stopped in front of the blacksmith shop or on the street corner where we were scheduled to speak, we realized that the temper of the audience was not one of unmixed approval; but they were interested, and above all they were there. The rest was for us to do. Every type of man was represented in these down-State audiences, and every kind of vehicle. The stores were left in charge of whoever was unfortunate enough to have to stay, generally the errand boy, and the rest of the village turned out to "hear the women talk."

We opened our plea for women by showing our audience that the mother and wife could not long protect herself and her children unless she had a vote. That the milk the city mother gave her baby; the school her children were educated in; the purity of the water they drank; the prices she paid for meat and clothes; the very wages her husband received; the sanitary and moral condition of the streets her children passed through were all matters of politics. When once we had clearly established the fact that women wanted to vote to protect their homes we had won a large part of our audience. . . .

When we reached Warren the place was decorated with flags and yellow banners. The big street meeting had already gathered. "Let me take up all the time," Mrs. McCulloch said, "because we have only a thirty minutes' stop here." "With all your banners and welcome," she said, getting energetically upon the seat of the automobile, "the man that you have sent to represent you in the Legislature has knifed our Suffrage bill every time it came up. I am just going to tell you your Representative's history and ask you to keep him at home," and she did.

Mixed with the arraignment of Representative Gray was the pathos and wit of the story of the struggles of the women of Illinois in the Legislature to protect its children. When she had finally finished the story of Mr. Gray's part in this struggle you could feel the audience with her. They came crowding about the machine. "All right, we will get somebody else; we never knew about all this. We cannot do much for you ladies because he has got another year to serve," was suggested. This seemed final, and just as the automobile was beginning to move, a crowd of men and women pushing forward a central figure that was half laughing and half resisting bore down upon us and called for the chauffeur to stop. "Here he is!" they shouted. "We went to his house and got him. You just ask him whether he is going to stand for that Suffrage bill this fall and we'll stand back and see what he says. This is Representative Gray." Mrs. McCulloch who had become acquainted with him in the Legislature looked coldly at him. The Rev. Kate Hughes, who had also had the pleasure of meeting him in the same place, sniffed, I might almost say snorted, audibly and looked

absently over his head. Dr. Blount greeted him with friendly interest as one would a sinner in whom there were possibilities of repentance. And I, being nearest on the outside, hastily assumed my most ingratiating and feminine air and held out my hand. "Well, Mr. Gray," I said, "will you promise us to stand for our Woman's Suffrage bill this time?" "It looks as if I would have to," he said, disengaging himself with difficulty from the press of the crowd in order to take off his hat. "I have always thought women were about the best things there were in the world, but I never thought you were so in earnest about this voting. If you have really set your hearts on it why there is nothing for me to do but give in. I can't fight against a woman's campaign. I'm for you," he shouted as we drove off amid the laughter and cheers of the crowd.

On the Fourth of July we spoke in the city square. Truths, familiar to city men through a prevalence of speakers, are sometimes new to a down-State audience. We told them that in a country that boasted of its representative government half the population of women were not represented at all, that they were classed with the criminal and insane even though they had given their sons to make a Fourth of July possible. When we had finished, an old man pushed his way to the automobile and gave us some money. He had an old, weather-beaten face and instead of week-day overalls wore a stiff suit of "store" clothes in honor of the Fourth; his trousers guiltless of any crease looked like two sections of stovepipe. So serious and almost forbidding was the expression that we waited for him to speak before making any overtures of friendship. Accustomed as we were to the more mobile city face, we often could not tell from the faces of our audience what they were feeling. This old man might have been going to say, "I hate what you are saying; I wish you would go away," but he handed us a two-dollar bill and leaning over the machine squeezed each of our hands with a grip that brought tears to our eyes. "I would just give anything in the hull world if my wife had been well enough to come along, but she's been poorly all this winter and couldn't stand the long drive. I'm giving you this two dollars for her. The idea," he continued, gazing angrily at us, "of a woman like my wife bein' put along with imbeciles and criminals. Why, she came out with me from New York in the pioneer days when Illinois was nothing but woods and bears and swamps and we drove the hull way in a mover's wagon and took our three children too." . . .

Power and confidence are as valuable assets to a woman as a man; and as one of our party remarked, it is not only the people we have reached on this trip that matters, but we have learned how to do it.

After all, with women, isn't it largely a question of learning how?

There is a comradeship which only comes from working together for a common cause. Although most men know the pleasure of this, comparatively few women have experienced it, and although we were as tired as any pioneer women who had crossed the country in a mover's wagon after this last meeting and our week's campaign, yet our party was loath to break up.

It had been inspiring to depend upon the honesty, personal kindness, the spirit of fair play and neighborliness, the quick response to anyone in sorrow or need, which were characteristics of our country audiences. And we lingered talking to each other and to members of the crowd who were seeing us home until it was very late when I entered the farm-house where I was to spend my last night down-State.

Late as it was, the old bed-ridden mother was awake and called softly for me to come in and tell her about the meetin'. "I knew it would be a fine meetin'," she said. "I had my bed turned 'round to the window. I seen the wagons coming in from out of town since morning. I knew you'd be leaving for Chicago early, and I just thought I would wait up for

you so's I could hear all about it and tell Lucy. You see," she explained, "Daughter Lucy and the hired girl couldn't both go and leave me alone, since I have had my stroke. Lucy, she was born and brought up to woman's rights, bein' my daughter; but our hired girl's new in our family and she's real ignorant about it. So Lucy she felt it was her duty to send our girl to get converted, and stay to home herself. I'm a believer," she said, "and Maggie ain't. But Lucy she felt terrible put out about it though she didn't let on to me of course, and I made up my mind I'd ask you to just say over what you said so's I could tell it to her. I had hoped," she added, "that I'd last to see the day when women would vote in Illinois, but if Susan B. Anthony can die without seein' it, I guess I can. It's a comfort to see you young women back keepin' up the same fight that we started back East when we was young and spry. It makes us feel as if we hadn't educated you for nothing, for we did educate you. 'What, educate shes!' the men said when we wanted the girls to go to school. 'What's the use spendin' money on educatin' shes?' Well I guess we've showed them what the use was. I've seen that done anyhow." . . .

No words can better express the soul of the woman's movement, lying back of the practical cry of "Votes for Women," better than this sentence which had captured the attention of both Mother Jones and the hired girl, "Bread for all, and Roses too." Not at once; but woman is the mothering element in the world and her vote will go toward helping forward the time when life's Bread, which is home, shelter and security, and the Roses of life, music, education, nature and books, shall be the heritage of every child that is born in the country, in the government of which she has a voice.

There will be no prisons, no scaffolds, no children in factories, no girls driven on the street to earn their bread, in the day when there shall be "Bread for all, and Roses too."

To help to make such a civilization possible is the meaning of "Votes for Women." It was the power of this idea which sent the women of Illinois "down-State" on their automobile campaign.

1. What arguments did the supporters of woman suffrage use to promote a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote?

2. What tactics did the supporters of the amendment use and how successful were they? Why were they successful?