



Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States (Politics and Culture in Modern America)

Kirsten Marie Delegard

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Why did the political authority of well-respected female reformers diminish after women won the vote? In *Battling Miss Bolsheviki* Kirsten Marie Delegard argues that they were undercut during the 1920s by women conservatives who spent the first decade of female suffrage linking these reformers to radical revolutions that were raging in other parts of the world. In the decades leading up to the Nineteenth Amendment, women activists had enjoyed great success as reformers, creating a political subculture with settlement houses and women's clubs as its cornerstones. Female volunteers piloted welfare programs as philanthropic ventures and used their organizations to pressure state, local, and national governments to assume responsibility for these programs.

These female activists perceived their efforts as selfless missions necessary for the protection of their homes, families, and children. In seeking to fulfill their "maternal" responsibilities, progressive women fundamentally altered the scope of the American state, recasting the welfare of mothers and children as an issue for public policy. At the same time, they carved out a new niche for women in the public sphere, allowing female activists to become respected authorities on questions of social welfare. Yet in the aftermath of the suffrage amendment, the influence of women reformers plummeted and the new social order once envisioned by progressives appeared only more remote.

Battling Miss Bolsheviki chronicles the ways women conservatives laid siege to this world of female reform, placing once-respected reformers beyond the pale of political respectability and forcing most women's clubs to jettison advocacy for social welfare measures. Overlooked by historians, these new activists turned the Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Legion Auxiliary into vehicles for conservative political activism. Inspired by their twin desires to fulfill their new duties as voting citizens and prevent North American Bolsheviks from duplicating the success their comrades had enjoyed in Russia, they created a new political subculture for women activists. In a compelling narrative, Delegard reveals how the antiradicalism movement reshaped the terrain of women's politics, analyzing its enduring legacy for all female activists for the rest of the twentieth century and beyond.

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