

The Lady Said "NO": Jeannette Rankin, First Woman In The U.S. Congress - On Feminism And Pacifism

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Jeannette Rankin, a Montana Republican, will be remembered as the first woman elected, in 1916, to the American Congress. Her election to the United States House of Representatives preceded by four years the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that said: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged or by any state on account of sex." She will be also remembered as the only member of Congress that voted against America's entrance into both World War I and World War II. In 1917, she was one of fifty-six in Congress that opposed entrance into the conflict whereas, in 1941 she was the only one that voted against America's participation in World War II.

In 1917, she explained her vote by stating that for seven years she adopted "peaceful thoughts and customs". She added that the reasons that most male representatives supported the War was that most males possessed "aggressive manners" in their traditional thoughts, in their history and in their hearts". Rankin, a Progressive, Feminist, Suffragist and Pacifist, at the time known as "Red Jenny" resisted massive pressures "to vote like a man". She, again, in 1941, voted against war. At age eighty – eight she led, in 1968, the Women's Protest March on Washington in opposition to the Vietnam War. She became known as a modern Lysistrata as she called on all American women to refrain from sexual relations with their partners till the end of hostilities in Vietnam. In a similar manner to Jane Adams, her friend and famous Progressive Movement leader, she believed in a "universal society of peace" and saw in educating the world to "peaceful thinking" as the most important role of women in politics.

Rankin was born in 1880, in the Rocky Mountains Western Montana frontier, when Montana was not yet a state but a territory. This area is well known for its breathtaking natural beauty. John Steinbeck, in *Travels with Charlie: In Search of America* described Montana's Rockies as "a great splash of grandeur". Steinbeck added that if was God and building mountains was on the agenda he would build them exactly in the way God created them in Montana. Rankin was the oldest of seven children in a family of successful ranchers and businessmen. She was raised on the informal values of the frontier West that was the opposite of the rigid Victorianism that characterized the value system of Eastern and Southern U.S. at that time. Added to that were the expectations of the members of the upper middle class for economic success and the realization of the "American Dream of success" through the translation of the new wealth into a high political and social status. As a young girl Rankin demonstrated independence, stubbornness, an ability for independent thought and a capacity for very hard work. She was cognizant of the need for collective efforts in order to succeed. The competition with her brothers and sisters in addition to her doubts about her inferior intellectual capacities turned her stubbornness and her bashfulness into the dominant traits of her personality.

In 1902, she was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Montana, Missoula. Her degree was in Biology. She thought of a teaching career but the death of her father, in 1904, changed the course of her life. For the next four years she worked on the ranch, and was responsible for raising her younger brothers and sisters. In 1908, at the age of twenty-eight, she moved to New York in order to study at the New York School of Philanthropy. After completing her course of studies there she returned West and worked, for a year, as a social worker but was disappointed because she failed to see immediate results for her endeavors. In 1908, she enrolled at the University of Washington in Seattle. Two years later, in 1910, she joined the successful campaign to grant women the right to vote in the state of Washington. This campaign was one of the most important turns in her life. There she met Minnie Reynolds, a New Jersey journalist and a well-known suffragette, that convinced Rankin that Pacifism was an integral part of the Women's battle for the right to vote.

Rankin began her political career in 1911, when she returned to Montana to lead the lobby to grant the right to vote to women. During that year she was lobbying for the women's right to vote in California, Ohio, New York, and Montana. During that year Rankin accumulated much experience in organizing campaigns and the art of speech making. In 1913/14 she served as the national secretary of the American Women for the Right to Vote. As part of her job he appeared in organized trips in fifteen states. In 1914, the decision of the Montana House of Representatives to grant women the right to vote was credited, in large measure, to her efforts. In 1916, Rankin faced an important decision whether to continue her work on the right to vote –she was offered a position as a

lobbyist in Washington D.C. in the battles for Progressive Movement, economic and political reform legislation or to return to Montana and try to secure the candidacy for becoming Montana's representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rankin chose to attempt to secure Montana's Republican Party nomination for the Congressional race. She was aided by Wellington Rankin, her brother, a successful lawyer and one of the richest persons in the state that was one the most influential figures in Montana's Republican Party. Rankin secured the nomination. Her platform was Progressive-Republican that called for a constitutional amendment that would give women the vote; social legislation designed for protection of children; support for the "dry laws", the prohibited the sale of alcohol [that prevailed between 1917-1933]; changes in the protective tariff laws and providing funds for "military preparedness that would bring peace to Europe." This campaign launched her national political career that lasted till her death in 1973.

On April 1, 1917, Rankin arrived in Washington D.C. The press referred to her as "the lady from Montana". On the next morning she spoke in a meeting of an Association of American women that fought for a constitutional amendment that would prevent the exclusion of women from voting (The 19th amendment that passed in 1920). After the meeting, at noon, accompanied by Montana's other member of the House of Representatives, Rankin entered the hall of Congress. For the first time in United States history a woman representative entered the American parliament. The other representatives stood up and cheered. Thus commenced the first session of the sixty fifth congress that was convened, as an emergency session, by President Woodrow Wilson. This emergency session was called in order to vote on a declaration of war against Germany and to let the world know of America's entrance to World War I. The Congressional clerk called for silence and started the roll call. Each representative, when his name was called, had to rise and announce his vote. When he called Rankin's name, again the representatives cheered wildly. Rankin blushed, smiled, bowed first towards her Republican comrades and later towards the Democratic side of the aisle. This was a moment of ultimate joy for Rankin, but this moment did not last long, because she had to cast her vote on an extremely controversial issue – the subject of declaring war on Germany.

On June 28, 1914, the day Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, Rankin was busy in her struggle for securing the right to vote for women in her home state of Montana. Most Americans did not wish to participate in that war though they were not neutral even though President Wilson asked them to assume a neutral stance. A minority of Americans, mostly German-Americans, Austro-Hungarian and Irish-Americans supported the Central powers whereas, the majority supported England and France. It was impossible to remain "neutral in thought and in deed" as the President implored. The U.S. was an important source of weapons, food and finance for the Allied (especially England) nations. An embargo would have served the interests of Germany and its allies. Therefore, not imposing an embargo served the interests of England and its allies. This, not declaring war, was actually constituted support of England and its allies. In 1917, The German Kaiser and his military leaders decided to restart unconstrained U Boat warfare recognizing that this would cause the U.S to declare war. The German hope was to vanquish England by cutting her from its sources of supply and cause the English to surrender, thus ending the war before America's entrance.

A few days before she entered Congress Rankin was asked on her position as to the declaration of war. She avoided a response. Moreover, there was nothing in her public past record that might have pointed to her position on this question or on her stance on the general question of war. In 1914, she wrote in a letter to a fellow politician that it was impossible to comprehend that such a brutal and senseless war was taking place. Like numerous others in the Progressive Movement, in the early twentieth century, she was convinced that war was a reflection of economic interests and that wars could not solve anything. She believed that wars were a very special and important subject to women because their children were sacrificed at the altar of economic gains.

Onn April 2, 1917, President Wilson appeared before a joint session of Congress and demanded to declare war in order to "make the world safe for Democracy". Two days later, after a short though heated debate, the Senate voted 82-6 to in favor of a declaration of war and national attention switched to the House of Representatives. Wellington Rankin, Jeannette's brother, who, according to Jeanette, at the time, was incensed and close to losing his composure. He, at that time, served as her senior advisor and had no doubt how she would vote, continuously begged her "to vote like a man" because if she would not do so she would be disgraced, her political career would come to an abrupt end and would justify the claim that women oppose all wars because they are women- emotional and irrational. The pressure on her from her family and friends was massive and she endured a severe struggle. Afterward, she said that she knew that she would be called to vote for war, but that she considered it an economic issue and not a struggle for democracy and freedom. She considered all the idealistic slogans that were fed to the public as meaningless. She was certain that the propaganda that supported war was senseless and militaristic. Her friends explained to her that it would be a meaningless gesture and a needless sacrifice to vote against the declaration of war because her vote certainly would not be decisive. She promised to listen with an open mind to the arguments of her friends that supported the declaration of war.

On the morning of April 6, 1917, the deliberations ended and the voting commenced. When the clerk called "Montana" almost all eyes turned to her but she did not respond. The clerk continued to call the roll. She

was still in a quandary while on the pressure on her continued to mount. Representative Fiorello [Italian for little flower] La Guardia, who later became the much admired and beloved mayor of New York City, told that hundreds of lobbyists surrounded Congress and exerted great pressure on her. As the first woman in Congress "The Lady from Montana" was well aware of the pressure on her. As the first woman in Congress, just before the first vote of a woman in Congress, Rankin knew that millions in America would focus on her.

Above all, what bothered her was the knowledge that her vote would especially influence the campaign for the granting of the right to vote to women. Rankin did not wish to injure that campaign that had utmost importance for her. In Montana and throughout the United States she invested her energies and hopes in the women's movement. She knew that each and every action by her would be used as a weapon by the movement's adversaries. There were other important issues that she had to consider. Her entire political future was at stake. The fact that she was a woman did not help her future in politics; her financial situation was poor; she was dependent on her family for finances. More important, her vote would greatly influence her relations with her supporters in the Women's movement in the U.S. Carry Chapman Catt, one of the most important leaders of the movement, two days after the vote, summarized Rankin's predicament by saying that everything that Rankin did or would do would alienate someone and that after every time she voted the Women's movement would lose a million votes. Her brother Wellington and many of her friends explained to her that a vote against the declaration of war would be considered as unpatriotic and would spell disaster for the Women's cause. Rankin decided to delay her vote as much as she could. Her trauma intensified when Representative Claude Kitchen, Speaker of the House, announced that there was no need for physical or moral courage in order to declare war in which others would have to fight. From the gallery every voter was closely observed and the tension was immense. Joseph (Uncle Joe) Cannon, one of the leaders in the House approached Rankin and told her: "little woman, you cannot permit yourself not to vote. In Congress you are representing all of America's women. I am not going to tell you how to vote, but you must vote for or against as your conscience dictates."

The clerk began to call the names of those representatives that did not vote in the first round of voting. When he called Rankin's name she did not respond immediately. She rose and whispered "I like to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war." After that she added, "I vote, no ". Congress became very still, few cheered. Others began to shout "vote, vote!". The Speaker of the House and the clerks were baffled. In the 140-year history of Congress no one violated the Congressional rule that prohibited making comments during a vote. The senior clerk asked Rankin if she voted "no". Rankin assented by moving her head and then collapsed into her chair and covered her face with her hands. The voting continued and the final result was 373 yeas and 56 nays. Some news stories claimed that Rankin cried but numerous years later Rankin denied it. When La Guardia was asked to corroborate her denial, his reply was "I could not see as my eyes were filled with tears."

The response to her vote was immense. She received hundreds of letters, most of them critical. Most of the leaders of the movement for the voting rights for women thought that her vote was "a regretful mistake". Others viewed her vote as a demonstration of would happen to the nation when "half the voters would be emasculated". The New York Times, in an article entitled "Patriotism...but" wrote that the beginning of the career of Miss Rankin as a national legislator was not successful – her first act was a fiasco and verified the fears about her reasoning and about her views. An editor of an important newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky wrote that the only woman in Congress would hamper the campaign for voting rights for women. Other newspapers wrote that Rankin was not a positive addition for the most important legislative body in the nation. Other newspapers attacked her vote but avoided attacking her. The De Moines Register viewed her vote as an important milestone because she acted contrary to the majority's views and added that her courage her and her resolve would strengthen the status of women in politics. The Washington Post emphasized that Jeannette Rankin proved that a woman, under intense pressure, has the ability to reach courageous, unpopular decisions.

As far as her tears were concerned, Rabbi Stephen Wise, one of the leaders of American Jewry, declared that he had a much greater respect for a woman who shed tears before she voted on the subject of war than for a man, that under similar circumstances, went to a pub and gulped three shots of whiskey. The writer Rachel Lindsay told Jane Addams "I hate war and I do not hate anyone in Europe. If I was in Congress I would have voted with her and I would have changed my vote only if Rankin changed hers". In France, Romaine Rolland described Rankin's tears as " more ornate than all the speeches". Le Temps of Paris congratulated Montanans for sending to Congress "a young, tender, woman that believes in God and in the supreme value of love" and added "Young woman, France understands you, smiles and consoles you". The reaction in Montana was different. Will Campbell, the ultraconservative editor of the Helena Independent wrote "... the one thing that which is going to defeat her [in the upcoming elections] is that sobbing sentence: I want to stand by my country, but cannot vote for war". All the somber warnings of her friends, that warned her before the vote, materialized. Because of the war all the social reforms that she championed were postponed and the women's movement suffered heavy losses. Rankin was not endorsed by her party and failed in her 1918 attempt to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

It is not easy to discover the roots of Rankin's pacifism. Contrary to the image of the tough, self - assured politician there are the relatively few documents that she left. Those documents revealed a bashful woman, torn

by her anxieties about her intellectual inferiority. Since most of her concerns were tied to the present and to the future she did not bother preserving documents. Most of her diaries and letters were not preserved. To date, a comprehensive, definitive biography of Rankin was not written. In the 1960s numerous books and articles were written about her when she became a symbol of the opposition to the Vietnam war. Most of the materials were written by journalists that did not base their articles on any documents. Most of the historical interpretations were based on interviews that occurred in the 1960s about events that occurred a half century earlier without any ability to corroborate her statements with written documents. Many of the "facts" presented in these studies were legends invented by her admirers and relatives. Her sister claimed, for example, that her pacifism stemmed from the fact that their father used to criticize the U.S. Army policies and behavior towards Native Americans in Montana. There is no evidence that the father- a successful pioneer rancher that knew how to exploit nature had such a tender and loving soul. On the contrary, evidence exists that he fought in campaigns against the Native American tribes.

It is difficult to ascertain the roots of her feminism and pacifism but it is not difficult to identify the roots her dedication to the reforms of the Progressive movement. Most of her ideas and plans for action were formed in 1908/9 during her studies in the New York School for Philanthropy. The courses that she attended, the teachers that taught her and the books that she read were described in a letter that she wrote to her sister. The economic ideology of Simon Patten made a great impression on her. His book *A New Basis for Civilization* emphasized that poverty and hopelessness were not necessarily inevitable and unavoidable and could be prevented through effective governmental action and by political reforms. Rankin adopted Patten's approach and joined the "social justice" subdivision of the Progressive movement. In its simplest and most basic form – a belief in direct assistance by the government to needy individuals – this contrary to most Progressives that belonged to the 'Scientific' wing of the movement. This wing advocated political reforms and focused on restructuring the political and economic structure of American society. The minority in the movement, that Rankin supported concentrated on voluntary action of direct assistance to the needy by providing direct help to individuals. They strove to pass welfare and relief legislation for the downtrodden in society. Because of her involvement in the women's right to vote efforts and because her political approach she was defined, in 1916, when she ran to Congress, as a "Humanitarian Feminist"- an uncompromising feminist and a supporter of basic democratic rights that gave expression to the needs and wishes of all elements of society.

In article that she published, in 1916, Rankin wrote that the rough and hostile environment of the frontier West had an important influence on men and on women in their continuous struggle for survival. Men and women were more inclined to believe in equality and shared the burdens of life equally because, on a daily basis, that had to face the tough challenge of survival. Most students of American history reject this interpretation, numerous Americans tended to believe it for a long period of time. Frederick Jackson Turner, the famous frontier historian argued, in his famous essay "On the Significance of the Frontier in American History" that "American democracy emerged from the Forest". The frontier was to Americans "the valley of democracy" that forced equality and there created democratic institutions. An example, often used to support this claim was the fact that the first state that granted the vote to women was the far western state of Wyoming. An examination of this claim revealed that Wyoming's population was equally divided between ranchers and miners. Ranchers and farmers settled with their families, miners arrived without families. Thus, granting the right to vote to women broke the political deadlock in favor of the agricultural sector. The farmers would arrive at the polls accompanied by their wives and then the husband would announce his and his wife's vote. Those ranchers and farmers did not believe that their wives were capable to vote without their help.... Rankin's belief in the democratic myth of the frontier was a central motivating factor in her struggle for equality.

During her studies and her activity in the Progressive reform movement Rankin met Minnie Reynolds a leading suffragist and pacifist. Reynolds explained to her the tie between feminism and pacifism. Reynolds introduced her to the writings of the English sociologist Benjamin Kidd. His ideas on pacifism had a great influence on her throughout her life. Throughout her entire career she repeatedly employed ideas she had learned from his books. His book *Social Evolution* was an attempt to popularize reform Darwinism of a new and different vintage. Kidd opposed classical Social Darwinism, especially the attempt to impose Darwinian thought on human behavior. Kidd agreed with Darwin when applied to the natural sciences but rejected the attempt to apply Darwinism to human society. One of Kidd's major arguments was that individuals could not be solely responsible for their successes and failures. The sort of reforms that Kidd had suggested in the understanding of Darwinism fit the needs of the Progressives, that were dedicated to social justice but also believed in the impact of the environment on the shaping of the life of each individual.

Another of Kidd's books, *The Science of Power*, also left a great impression on Rankin. In this book Kidd highlighted the difference between force and power. Kidd argued that the male possessed force whereas the female possessed power or as Rankin defined it: force was something that one uses in the present whereas power one could employ in the future. The most powerful power resides in the feelings of an idea and an ideal. Kidd's main argument was that the "feelings of an ideal" was possessed by women and therefore, in the civilizations of

the future, women would be in the center of power. According to Kidd the dimension of the future is more important and more powerful than the dimension of the present. Rankin altered Kidd's argument in that she recognized the fact that men and women had to work together in order to promote the ideas of peace and liberty. She rejected the idea that it would be much easier for women to understand and to adopt the subject of investing in the efforts to create a better future. A subject that central and important if "peace habits" were would replace wars as a method to settle international conflicts. Her conclusion was simple; it was impossible to separate women from the subject of peace. In her speech in the Washington Conference on Disarmament (1920/21) she clearly defined her position – The problem of peace was a women's problem. Disarmament could not be achieved without the support of women. If women would not accept responsibility for this problem, there would not be a chance for disarmament to be achieved. Rankin called for a coalition of men and women in the struggle for peace emphasizing that the responsibility of women in this battle was major and that their role in that struggle was much more difficult than in their campaign for the vote. Because their support of pacifism they stood to encounter much antagonism. She reached this conclusion as a result of the hatred and accusation she had encountered after her vote against America's entrance into World War I. She and other opponent of war accused of treason.

Kidd convinced Rankin that women had something very special to contribute to modern civilization – the belief in the extreme power of an ideal. As an example of this great power Rankin referred to motherhood: The life that a mother rendered to her children was supplemented by her daily toil and also by her dedication and concern for the children's future. "Death is the antithesis of life, it halts the possibility of growth and the realization of hopes. Rankin devoted much of the rest of her life to her vision of the peace ideal. She saw a full parallel between motherhood and Pacifism: "when we kill, the dead cannot become our friend, when we kill we kill the ideal and our future". Her unequivocal conclusion was that the duty and role of mothers and of potential mothers was to demand the cessation of killing and to fight for a just distribution of the natural abundance for the benefit of all in society. Rankin viewed the role of the Progressive movement to advance "peace habits" in society so that all would recognize the futility of war as a diplomatic tool.

Rankin assigned to women one of the most important functions in society – to educate the world – to educate the world to "peace thinking". Men were unable to assume that role because of their natural fear that they would be accused of cowardice if they resisted wars. Because of women's great influence over the education of the young generation, they possessed the ability to not only change public opinion on the subject of war but also to correct all the social perversions related to the issue. The most important message, as far as she was concerned, was that women had to eradicate war as a way to solve crises. Throughout her life she supported various ways that women had to use in order to achieve this goal- starting with organizing women's movements for peace and finally economic boycotts as a mean of pressure in order to secure peace. Her belief in the futility of war was the central subject of her speeches. In a speech that she had delivered in 1963, she explained her votes against entering both World Wars. She explained that these votes were against war as a method. It was against war, not against the topics and values that the public was told as the reason for the confrontations. If you oppose war, you oppose all wars. A conflict cannot be resolved by the killing of the of young people of another country. War is a method of action and you could support this method or reject it. Rankin explained that she opposed it because of its obtuseness, ineffectiveness and the killings and destruction inherent in it.

These statements in 1916 and in 1963 demonstrated the depth of her commitment to Pacifism. Commitment to Pacifism was common among Progressives in the pre-World War I era. What was unusual in her long career was the emphasis she assigned to the instinctive role of women in this battle. There was no great difference in her consciousness between her struggle for women's vote and equality and her opposition to wars. It would be correct to state that her struggle for women's right to vote caused her to enter politics. In 1914, she did not foresee America's entrance to World War I. In Wilson's 1916, presidential election campaign, it was emphasized that "he kept us out of war". Her election campaign slogan was "Let the people know". In her first Congressional election campaign, at the advice of her brother, she refrained from publically questioning Wilson's credibility on this subject. Rankin admired Jane Addams, the great Progressive reform leader and thought that Addams should be the first woman president. Addams was the leader of the pacifist wing of the Suffragist movement. Rankin continuously repeated that the women's right to vote was inherently tied to the efforts to rid the world of wars.

It would be extremely difficult to research the roots of Rankin's feminism. Again the lack of primary documents would hinder the search for a reliable base that would enable analysis as to the reasons why she devoted her life to women's rights and to Pacifism. One of her admirers argued that despite the fact that she was an attractive and intelligent woman she never married because she was married to her causes. Her five sisters all married but Jeannette, the oldest sister never did. Her opponents, in her first elections campaign maliciously claimed that she entered politics because she was unable to find a husband. A psychologist explained that as the oldest daughter and as her father's favorite she adopted masculine traits of behavior and that after the death of her father she became the authoritative persona in the family. Rankin refused to adjust to a reality in which a woman was considered an inferior and weak being. Evidence exists of numerous suitors that sought her company. When

she visited her brother who studied at the Harvard Law School many of his friends sought her company. Throughout her life she paid much attention to her appearance and her attire. Her personal diary that vanished in the 1950s was seen only by one historian and therefore, on the subject of her personal relationships there are numerous assumptions but no reliable documentation.

In the era between both World Wars, Rankin was busy with extensive activities in various pacifist movements. She moved to Georgia, there she engaged in numerous activities to aid African-American women that were in need of economic and emotional assistance. Following the World War I years and throughout the 1920s an apologetic chord was present in her explanations of her anti-war vote. In the mid-1930s this apologetic tone vanished from her speeches and from her statements as she resumed her extensive activities and leadership in the peace movement and her explanations became much more militant.

In the 1930s, Rankin viewed the background to World War II in the same manner that latter American revisionist historians, later, described it in their books. Those historians considered America's entry into World War I as the result of a conspiracy of leading rich American business magnates whose goal was to protect their investments in England and in Western Europe. Rankin despised the military-political complex in the United States and in England, the captains of industry on both sides of the ocean and the "dictator" Franklin D. Roosevelt. Later, when Roosevelt ran for a third and a fourth terms in office, Rankin viewed him as a dire threat for the very existence of American democracy. In 1939, she decided to return to Montana and run again to Congress. Montanans, again, elected her to Congress. There the pacifist, social reformer found herself an ally of the most conservative element that she abhorred. Most of those who opposed Roosevelt and his "internationalism" were representatives of the most conservative element among the industrial and business tycoons that opposed Roosevelt's "New Deal" social and economic reforms. Rankin thought that Roosevelt policies were a conspiracy to get America into the war. Moreover, she thought that the "New Deal" programs were too little and did not go far enough. In 1939, she returned to Congress as a Republican-pacifist. Those who supported her were conservative "isolationists", women, Labor and those who resisted FDR's attempt to be re-elected to a third term.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. This transformed public opinion in Montana and in the nation. Burton K. Wheeler, Montana's senator and leader of the conservatives in the Senate, a day later in a speech in the Senate he declared that he resisted involvement but after Japan's "treacherous" attack he supported an "all-out war". Wellington Rankin implored his sister not to vote again against war. He agreed that she was elected by opponents of war but the situation changed after her election. He argued that after Pearl Harbor Montanans supported war "110 percent". Till the Japanese attack she naively and whole heartedly was convinced that the opponents of war would succeed in preventing the U.S. from participating in the war. Rankin was wrong again: after Pearl Harbor, she was certain that, in similar fashion to World War I, a prolonged and exhaustive debate on the subject of the declaration of war would take place. But there was no debate. One day after the Japanese attack, Congress voted to declare war. In the vote, Rankin was the only one that voted "No". Thus she became the only member of Congress that voted against America's entrance into both

World Wars. Immediately after her vote, she heard from her brother the last thing that she wished to hear: "Montana is 110 percent against you". After the vote she said: "Now I have nothing left except my integrity". In an open letter to Montanans that she wrote a day after the vote, she summarized that she voted according to her beliefs and according to her promises in her elections campaign.

Until her death, Rankin believed that all events related to Pearl Harbor were part of a Roosevelt conspiracy that was designed to force Congress to support a declaration of war. America's women disappointed her, in 1944, by their massive support of the re-election of FDR to a fourth presidential term. After the end of World War II, Rankin began to travel throughout the Third World and continued to do it for two decades, in order to attempt to learn different approaches and ways for achieving peace there. Between 1945 and 1971 she made seven trips to India. She also made several trips to Africa, South America and the Middle East in search for ways to promote peaceful solutions to conflicts there. She continued her work in Georgia helping African-American women and also kept in touch with her friends and relatives in Montana.

The Vietnam War was the setting of her final protest campaigns. She became the national icon of the peace movement. In 1967, she organized the Jeannette Rankin Brigade (that consisted of 3000-5000 members) and on January 15, 1968, she led the Women's Protest March on Washington. In the late 1960s and early 1970s she crisscrossed the United States, in her car, dozens of times and delivered speeches in hundreds of protest rallies in her campaign to end America's involvement in the Vietnam War. When she headed the Jeannette Rankin Brigade in the Women's Protest March on Washington she was eighty-eight years old. The Washington D.C. Police stopped the March when it neared Capitol Hill. Rankin immediately filed a suit against the U.S. Government for violating her right of free speech. The Government based its action on an 1882 law that prohibited political demonstrations in Washington D.C. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rankin, declared the law unconstitutional and defended the right for nonviolent demonstrations in the national capital.

Feminists and pacifists, hippies and Rock music combos, students and opponents of war all got together around the elderly fighting lady from Montana. Outwardly, the veteran combatant was happy and contemplated

to run for Congress again in order to vote against another war. But, before her death, in heart-to-heart talks with several friends she expressed disappointment for her failure to achieve a warless world: "it is hard to push and push and not get anywhere". In 1972, she told a historian that "the peace movement talks only to itself". In her will, Rankin did not leave anything to pacifist institutions, organizations or groups.

Jeannette Rankin's long career came to an end when she died in 1972. Rankin's pacifism was far from being passive or static but lacked sophistication and she understood that very late in her life. She could easily enlist supporters for her cause. She easily captured center stage, but to bring about change- that was a very different tale. Therefore, she was much more successful as a symbol than a practical person that could achieve attainable alternatives. She defined well the significance of her endeavors: "I always felt that there was great significance to the fact that the first woman that was asked what she thought about the subject of war said No". She added that she believed that her first vote was the most important vote and the most important act done by a woman in that field. She felt that only women could stop wars. At that time, she felt that the first woman that was asked had to assume an unequivocal stance. That was the first time that a woman had the chance to say no to war. She had to state it despite all the pressures that she had to endure that demanded that she vote for war. Rankin emphasized that she never thought, even for one second, that war could solve any problem.

Jeannette Rankin was part of a generation of women who believed, like Jane Addams, in "a universal society of peace". Already, in the beginning of the twentieth century, they viewed the world as one large community. Rankin was part of large group of American Pacifist women. In hindsight it is clear that their humanitarian goals were not achievable but still they remained a source of inspiration, hope, and even for longing to an era in which a dedicated active small group was determined that universal peace could be attained. The "Lady from Montana" that knew to say "no" was a fusion of pragmatism when it related to social welfare assistance and to idealism on the subject of peace.

During her entire life Rankin combatted injustice and inequality. She once said that she could not comprehend the farmer who milked the cow but did not save some milk for the calf. Similarly, she was unable to understand the mother that gave life to her children knowing that they might die in a war. She could not understand how Americans were able to celebrate war with songs, cannons and flags - an institution that was characterized by death, destruction and pain. That was the reason that she directed her protest towards America's women and attempted to convince them to employ their political power to be a counter-weight to those who supported wars and thus bring a greater measure of justice to the national life. Rankin believed that her real goals were far beyond social and political reforms. She was convinced that women used their rights to vote unintelligently and ineffectively. Her ultimate goal was to establish new conditions in which women could create a new situation without wars. Such a reality would be the true liberation of both sexes.

Social-political protest that was the central theme of her long political career. In the beginning of the twentieth century she joined the Progressive Reform Movement that was established to combat Social Darwinism, the established political-social order and against the usurpation of the weak in American society. Within the framework of Progressive Movement, she began to fight for political equality for the oppressed majority – women. She became one of the most important leaders of the Suffragists Movement.in their battle to add an amendment to the American Constitution that that would enable women to vote. During that campaign she became a pacifist and pacifism became a major motive of her life. Moreover, establishing, in the 1920s, residence in Georgia, in the heart of the deep South and her activities with African-American women, half a century before that subject reached the national agenda, re-emphasized the essence of her dramatic journey that devoted all her life to combat social and political injustice.

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