Governor and Mrs. Pinchot at Gray Towers

Courtesy of the Library of Congress
HISTORICAL controversy has arisen over the direction and achievements of the feminist movement after women gained suffrage in 1920 at the culmination of a prolonged, titanic struggle. Most recent writers on the subject conclude either that little was accomplished by or for women, especially in the immediate post-suffrage period, or that women abandoned at the moment of triumph the group discipline and singleness of purpose that would have guaranteed eventual total emancipation and equality.

A noteworthy Pennsylvanian, by adoption, may provide insight to the activities of the feminist movement in the 1920s and 1930s and to the thoughts of a woman encouraged to seek liberation by the suffrage crusade. Because her public life occurred primarily in the period after suffrage, historians may discover an answer to the question of whether the post-suffrage period was the generally disillusioning experience for feminists as thus far concluded. That Pennsylvanian was Cornelia Bryce Pinchot.

Cornelia Bryce Pinchot’s well-documented life, from birth in 1881 through the suffrage campaign, the post-suffrage decades, and the governorships of her husband, 1923-1927 and 1931-1935, to death in 1960, reveals the evolving views of a woman about society and on her role as a woman. While observing a general chronological framework, this study will attempt to define the problems and to discover the solutions of this feminist during the post-suffrage era.

As with many prominent women, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot’s husband’s name and achievements were and are far better known. This certain injustice extended to the New York Times obituary which headlined her as “Widow of Former Governor (Pinchot),” identifying her even in death with her husband’s achievements rather than with her own. Nevertheless, Cornelia Pinchot saw her association with the energetic Progressive politician and conservationist, Gifford Pinchot, as an opportunity and a challenge. She told an audience eleven years after her wedding, “Pinchot happened to be lying...
around loose, so the women just made use of him.”2 She emphasized in the same 1925 anniversary year, “You must remember that I was a politician . . . before I ever met Mr. Pinchot. . . .”3 This process of self-identity in contrast to a strong male personality is part of the historical significance of Cornelia Bryce Pinchot in the post-suffrage period.

As she pointed out in 1925, Cornelia Bryce did have a political career before she became Mrs. Pinchot. In fact, since she was thirty-three and Gifford Pinchot was forty-nine when they married, both had extensive independent experiences upon which to draw.

Cornelia Bryce carried a substantial political heritage from her family. Her great-grandfather was industrialist Peter Cooper among whose accomplishments was the founding of Cooper Institute of New York City for needy students. Her grandfather, Edward Cooper, was an anti-Tammany mayor of New York City. Her father, Lloyd Bryce, was a Congressman and political associate of Theodore Roosevelt in the Long Island community of Roslyn, New York. Cornelia Bryce’s earliest memory in recognition of this heritage was handing out political literature in her father’s campaign at the age of six. Though she had a brother, Peter Cooper Bryce, the political activism and social concern of the family appeared to be transmitted to her.4

Family friend Theodore Roosevelt’s invitations into his Oyster Bay library during discussions inspired Cornelia Bryce to activism. She constantly referred to Teddy Roosevelt’s complimentary statement that she had the best political mind among all the women of his acquaintance. She corresponded with him, contributing critical comments on his speeches, and joined in her first national campaign supporting the Bull Moose party in 1912.5

Part of any commitment to the Roosevelt inner circle was to accept the physically energetic life. She was an outdoors woman; enjoying horseback riding, playing polo, and hunting. She told a meeting of Girl Scouts, “When I was your age, . . . I did all my stunts alone. Older folks were always against me as a ‘Tom Boy.’ My

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3 Statement, Kittanning, Pa., Jan. 8, 1925, ibid., box 449, L.C.
5 Memo to Stahlnecker, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 442, L.C. See also, Statement, Feb. 11, 1937, ibid., box 642, L.C; St. Louis Speech, March 11, 1924, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 451, L.C.
own idea was to beat the little boys at their own games, to prove I was a better sport . . . more enduring, and above all more reckless than any of them could be." This competitiveness carried on through her life, even to taking the controls of an airplane in the 1920s, something no "self-respecting female would do," she proudly telegraphed her husband.

Cornelia Bryce did not, however, neglect what might be termed feminine charm. Tall and slender, with grace and poise acquired with social standing, she was one of the first society women to use cosmetics "to enhance a fragile beauty," noted an enchanted admirer. Accenting her fiery red hair, she wore shades of red clothing and drove a bright red automobile. She knitted, entertained as a gracious hostess, and, it was conceded, had excellent taste for interior decorating. While appearing to fit in these respects the conventional image of feminity, Cornelia refused to be known as a "soft-headed, muddle-minded sentimentalist. We've recovered from the sentimentality of the Victorian Age," she certified. She further decried any attempts to excuse women, even as mothers, from the same kind of accountability expected of men for their actions.

Raised in Newport society, Cornelia Bryce had a comfortable income from an allowance provided by her mother, Edith Cooper Bryce. Freed from the worry of obtaining necessities as most women must do, she was able to travel extensively and to support monetarily those causes or candidates of her choice.

Being financially secure, an active member of New York society, and a participant in Theodore Roosevelt's political circle inevitably led to acquaintance with the economically independent, politically energetic, devotedly single Roosevelt confidant, Gifford Pinchot. They were married in 1914.

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6 Speech to Girl Scouts, Philadelphia, Pa., May 10, 1924, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 449, LC. See also, Speech to N.L.W.V., Richmond, Va., April 18, 1925, ibid., box 449, LC.
7 Telegram from Cornelia Pinchot to Gifford Pinchot, June 2, 1925, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 26, LC. See also, Port Jervis speech, Jan. 1, 1927, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 449, LC.
8 LeRoy Greene, Shelter for His Excellency: The Story of Pennsylvania's Executive Mansion and the One Hundred Governors of the Commonwealth (Harrisburg, 1951), 210, 226.
10 May 12, 1931, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 495, LC.
11 Harrisburg, Pa., October 13, 1926, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 448, LC. See also, March 22, 1930, ibid., Box 1176, LC.
Gifford Pinchot spoke during the early Progressive period often for women's suffrage. He argued that women in politics would be undeniably beneficial, stating, "You [women] haven't been part and parcel of the Party for as long a time and aren't as set and determined in the old ways as men. You're more realistic, more receptive to facts, more receptive to new ideas." Mrs. Pinchot responded by declaring, "I have fought many times before I ever met Mr. Pinchot for the things he represents so that I was already committed as it was, and even if he'd not been my husband, I'd have been for him, in common with most of the other women of the state, I may say." On the issue of women in politics, Mrs. Pinchot also supported her husband's view of positive good. As she told an audience of college graduates, she believed that through the contact provided by political equality, men and women would become more realistic in their relations. Men would not have to resort in male-female relationships, to flattery, to condescension, which she despised, or to threats. Women, for their part, would not have to nag, to scold, or to stand in silent awe.

The time shortly after their marriage was a hectic one for the Pinchots. Their honeymoon consisted of Gifford Pinchot's first, though unsuccessful, campaign for elective office, the United States Senate seat from Pennsylvania. This state in 1914 thus became the Pinchots' political base for the rest of their lives.

Also, changes occurred in American society as the United States went to war in Europe. As part of her heritage, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot had a Quaker pacifist religious imprint, an experience similar to that of many of the leaders of the fight for women's rights. She disagreed with her Rough Rider-like husband on this issue, stating, "Two minds don't think as one, it would be dreary if true."

With eventual American involvement, the European war, however, provided expanding experiences for American women.
Mrs. Pinchot sought a full-time job in the federal War Department but was rejected because of the recent birth of her son. She contented herself reluctantly then with part-time volunteer work, especially for the Red Cross.  

Although professing pacifism, Cornelia Pinchot concluded that American involvement in the war had beneficial results. America had come to realize that it could not be isolated from the world, just as women could not be. The many activities of women like herself in the war effort made it certain that their right to vote could not be denied.

The suffrage battle was won finally in the immediate post-war period. As secretary in 1918 and 1919 of the Pennsylvania Woman's Suffrage Association, she gave money and worked on the telephone and telegraph to insure ratification by the Pennsylvania state legislature of the Nineteenth Amendment.

In the brief time since her marriage in 1914, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot had to adjust to various new roles: wife, mother, and voter-citizen. These she had to combine with her political heritage and premarital social status.

On the subject of her social position, she declared before a meeting of the American Federation of Labor, "My idea of a lady is one who is not afraid to meet any challenge as it comes, but one who will never be standing on the side of oppression or injustice, one who will be the first to show the way and lead the fight for righteousness." Thus, with position came a special responsibility, a sense of noblesse oblige.

Cornelia Pinchot did obligate herself to reform. Before marriage she worked actively to end child labor, and took a stand against low pay and poor working conditions for women workers, future wars, and to acquire female enfranchisement. After 1919 she could pursue reform armed with the vote.

The lady reformer also took seriously her role as wife. She told her audiences that the difference between a house and a home was,  

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19 Ida Husted Harper, ed., The History of Woman Suffrage: After Years Came the Victory (New York, 1969), v. 560, 730. See also, October 10, 1918, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 5, L.C.

20 Chautauqua, N.Y., July 30, 1923, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 456, L.C. See also, Goucher College Speech, Baltimore, Md., April 6, 1923, ibid., box 456, L.C.

21 Harper, History of Woman Suffrage, v. 516; VI, 6; In a True Democracy Every Citizen Has a Vote, 500, 552, 563. See also, Statement, Dec. 24, 1918, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 5, L.C.; March 19, 1919, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 763, L.C.

22 Speech to A.F.L., Pen Argyl, Sept. 1, 1924, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 454, L.C.
"Love, vivid and vital. Not only Romantic love . . . but the real, steady, everyday kind of love, unchangeable and dependable love between husband and wife. Love of laughter and fun, love of work, love of life. But the love of responsibility is most important." The key to successfully developing such a relationship was communication, and Mrs. Pinchot told her radio listeners, "We [Mr. Pinchot and I] always talk at meals. I cannot imagine people who care for each other and have interests in common not doing it, about books, funny things, people, politics." Another serious responsibility which she welcomed was that of motherhood. The Pinchots' son and only child was born in 1915. Cornelia Pinchot was most attentive to his education and subsequently to the educational development of all children. The mother, she argued, set the pace when it came to the children's intellectual development. Often, she pointed out, the mother failed to grow with the children who then would seek amusement outside the home. Too much of the mother's time was spent in creating a sense of order and an artificial standard of cleanliness in the home, she believed, instead of contributing to the family's mental stimulation. For her own part, Cornelia Pinchot started an experimental school at Grey Towers, the Pinchot family estate in Milford, Pennsylvania. The teaching method utilized was to listen to the child and to stimulate youthful curiosity by encouraging the asking of questions. Children could not be trained always at home, this busy mother conceded, and more of their time was being spent away from mother's supervision. Cornelia Pinchot discovered that there were no women on the local school board. Thus she stated, "We took hold and got women on it." She herself became a member of the board and never missed a meeting despite her full schedule. Her demand that women play a vital role in developing educational policy coincided with her hope that, "the Early Victorian theory that females should not be educated," under which she grew up, was gone forever. The public schools, she believed, opened their doors for the purpose of stimulating equally the intellectual capacity of both male and female. Her views about the role of the wife and mother differed from

23 Speech, Grace M.E. Church, Nov. 8, 1926, ibid., box 449, LC.
24 W.C.A. U. speech, Jan. 7, 1931, ibid., box 473, LC.
25 Speech, McKeesport, Pa., Nov. 26, 1924, ibid., box 449, LC.
26 March 24, 1931, ibid., box 473, LC. See also, Dec. 7, 1925, ibid., box 449, LC; Jan. 7, 1928, ibid., box 461, LC.
those who wanted the woman to stay at home and to devote herself to housework. In a Mother’s Day speech she declared, “I haven’t much sympathy with talk about mothers staying at home where they belong... Too often in the past the housewife has been a slave to the home, usually a willing slave, it is true, but none the less, a slave, chained to her kitchen, her washtubs, her sewing machine, her many household tasks, her own health and welfare forgotten in the interest of the rest of the family.”

Not only did she advocate less emphasis on housework, but she believed in birth control which received this response. “The editor of the American Catholic Weekly informs me today that he isn’t interested in anything Mrs. Pinchot is interested in because her ideas on birth control are a real menace to the church and to the community.”

The benefits to mankind from acceptance of her views, Mrs. Pinchot believed, would lead to their certain adoption. Women would no longer be parasites, living in slavish dependence on the man of the family. She could stand erect, self-sustaining and with self-respect in the sight of God and man. She would make a better mother, more stimulating in her relations with both husband and children in a complex world. She believed that, “No man in the world knows everything. But together men and women could.” Finally, she asked, “How does anyone know what women can do if they don’t let them try.”

Despite all these reasoned explanations, the most important factor was not the good that it would do for society, but her conception of what a man’s life outside the home was like. She told a gathering of Girl Scouts in Philadelphia,

For thousands of years, the world has belonged to the man. They’ve had all the fun, all the excitement, all the real romance. In primitive days of war and hunting, women were excluded. They had to sit at home and cook. The men went off to high adventures. To the men have come the real romances, the development of natural resources, professional

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27 Reading speech, April 14, 1931, ibid., box 495, LC; See also, May 5, 1931, ibid., box 495, LC.
28 1918, ibid., box 5, LC. See also, Sept. 25, 1930, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 1195, LC.
29 Speech, McKeesport, Pa., Nov. 20, 1924, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 449, LC. See also, Speech, Harrisburg, Pa., Dec. 8, 1926, ibid., box 448, LC.
30 Speech, N.Y. League of Business and Professional Women, Sept. 24, 1923, ibid., box 450, LC.
life, government, while women did the day by day deadly drudgery that had to be done if the world were to be kept together. We still have the old job but we'll do it better, more easily, more effectively, with more energy for the pursuits that have made life dazzling to men.31

It is doubtful whether life was or is as dazzling or so full of high adventures for men as Cornelia Pinchot imagined. Nor was the home life of every woman as drab, as oppressive, or as unfulfilling as she pictured it. The essential point was that Cornelia Pinchot wanted women to have the opportunity and the knowledge so that they could make reasonable comparisons. She recognized with considerable foresight that housework and child-raising were becoming less demanding, a situation Cornelia Bryce Pinchot had experienced through wealth and the availability of servants. Thus alternative employment, in the physical and mental sense, needed to be found for women's time and energy.

In the immediate post-suffrage period Mrs. Pinchot reflected also seriously on the responsibilities of the vote. Further, she concerned herself about the role that women should play in politics. As an individual, Cornelia Pinchot considered her right to vote so important that the choice of party registration was not automatic. After the difficulties encountered in achieving the franchise, she was not about to bargain away thoughtlessly the power of choice. On July 26, 1919, the Allentown, Pennsylvania, Chronicle and News carried the story that, "Cornelia Pinchot Chooses the Republican Party."32

The choice had not been easy. Because of her concern for working women and children, if organized labor supported the Democratic party as the best alternative, then she was tempted to join with them.33 However, Roosevelt's Progressive Republican Square Deal, proposing equal opportunity for all, was what in the end, as she told a group of university women, made common sense.34 Cornelia declared, "I'm a Republican but I'm not one of those who are always for the party right or wrong."35 By her example, women were not to trade away their hard-won vote thoughtlessly for any political organization.

31 Philadelphia speech, May 10, 1924, ibid., box 449, I.C.
32 July 26, 1919, ibid., box 642, I.C.
33 Dec. 28, 1919, ibid., box 449, I.C.
34 Speech to American Association of University Women, Harrisburg, Pa., Dec. 8, 1926, ibid., box 448, I.C.
35 Sept. 19, 1924, ibid., box 450, I.C.
Once a Republican, the future governor's wife did concern herself with the party organization. She was the first woman to represent her county on the Republican state committee and became treasurer of the Pennsylvania Republican Women's Committee, the female adjunct to the male dominated state Republican committee. This was not sufficient recognition for Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, so she helped to form a parallel organization, the State Council of Republican Women, independent from the state committee, to give an undiluted voice in party affairs to the newly enfranchised.

Further, Mrs. Pinchot joined 12,000 other women in a 1920 pilgrimage to Marion, Ohio, to hear Republican presidential candidate Warren Harding. Satisfied that he had agreed to their program for social justice for women and children, she told other women, "I wish everyone here could have marched in that parade as we all did in the rain, over the rough cobbles of the little streets of Marion, working girls, business women, uplifters, wives of Senators, women lawyers and women doctors, the wife of your own Governor, Socialists, Democrats, Republicans. For the first time a big national group of women voters came together to pledge their allegiance to a principle, to offer their service as women and as citizens to the great cause of humanity." Such was her feeling of the promise which that first opportunity to participate fully in a national election had for women.

Cornelia Pinchot, along with many others who had been part of the struggle for suffrage, transferred from the suffrage association to the League of Women Voters. Founded at the end of the suffrage campaign to encourage the political activism of women after they attained the vote, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot hoped that the league would enable women to utilize the ballot alertly and analytically.

The vote was not all that suffrage meant to the red-headed activist. She could now participate in politics of the kind she had seen practiced by Theodore Roosevelt and her husband. One of her favorite stories involved two men, "One man says, 'see what happens if the women get the vote.' 'No Sam,' says the other man, 'the
vote's alright. Just don't let them get into politics.'

Cornelia Pinchot explained patiently that since it was through the political process that decisions were being made daily that affected women, they must become involved. By participating in that process, one could gain control over her own destiny. Beyond that, she wrote, "I love my life. The political life is good, the excitement, the ups and downs, friends and enemies, best because one is fighting and working for and interested in aims outside one's self." She concluded, "Politics is the best of all indoor sports."

Mrs. Pinchot did not like to use the term "women in politics" because that phrase made a separatist distinction that she hoped would be eliminated. However, political power could be useful to improve or to protect women's position. During the 1920s Cornelia Pinchot called on the state legislature to make a careful study of the legal status of women in Pennsylvania, in particular with the intent to equalize grounds for divorce, for property ownership, and for legal relationships of mother and father to their children. She advocated equal pay for equal work in government and industry. As a Pennsylvania governor's wife after 1922, she fought with success against repeal of the state's direct primary law which she felt would deny women their rightful say in the selection of the party's candidates. Also, an attempt was made in the state legislature to separate the right to vote from the legal standing necessary to serve on juries. This was intended to keep women from fulfilling that part of their civic responsibility. The governor's wife stood against those tactics which would confine women to the narrowest influence over the legal conditions of their existence.

Although she strenuously advocated full participation in the political arena, the experience necessary to that full participation was not mystically conferred with the vote. The excited anticipation was there, but it would take time to discover just exactly what one

40 Stahlnecker Memo, July 30, 1923, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 448, LC.
41 Jan. 7, 1932, ibid., box 473, LC.
42 Speech, Chicago, Nov. 20, 1924, ibid., box 448, LC.
43 New York Sun, Jan. 3, 1932, ibid., box 495, LC.
44 Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 27, 1923, ibid., box 450, LC. See also, Nov. 13, 1923, ibid., box 450, LC.
45 Kittanning, Pa., Jan. 8, 1925, ibid., box 449, LC. See also, 1926, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 1135, LC.
46 Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 449, LC; See also, July 30, 1923, ibid., box 448, LC.
47 "Mrs. Gifford Pinchot, Housewife and Politician," Saturday Evening Post, August 26, 1922, 9, 35, 36. See also, Speech, Sunbury, Pa., Sept. 29, 1925, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 450, LC.
could or could not accomplish with the vote or with increasing political power.

The 1920s became, then, a period for many feminists, like Cornelia Pinchot, to learn, and to gain self-confidence after so many years of exclusion. Despite her post-ratification enthusiasm and hope for the future, she concluded, "Until women are willing to face facts clearly—tiresome, undramatic commonplace facts—to study the record until they are ready to use their brains . . . then and not until then are they likely to become either honest or useful voters." 48

One of the most important developments for Cornelia Pinchot in the Roaring Twenties was that she became a more confident public speaker. Before suffrage her ability to think had been recognized in private, but she had remained publicly silent. At a meeting of the Pennsylvania Society of Washington, D.C., in 1924 she told an all male audience, "Women are not formal talkers. They are the strong silent types. We wind you up. We listen and sympathize and smile and admire." 49 This situation, true in Gifford's 1914 United States senatorial campaign, had begun to change before this sly, patronizing declaration. In 1920 she gave her first major public address in Reading, Pennsylvania, supporting the candidacy of Warren Harding.

In her husband's 1922 campaign for governor, Mrs. Pinchot remained, however, in a supportive role, smiling and shaking hands. But by the end of the 1920s she had become so experienced that in the 1930s she became more and more persuasively powerful. That experience came from speaking to groups everywhere in the state and in the nation, in most cases because she was Mrs. Pinchot. In 1929 she said rather tiredly of this busy schedule, "Every woman's club with a 2¢ stamp has asked me to speak." 50 She also became exasperated at times because, as she told a radio audience, "I assume I'm expected to talk about women." 51 These experiences were contrary to her increasing desire to be listened to as an individual about the problems that concerned all human society.

In speeches to many organizations Cornelia Bryce Pinchot did not hesitate to be frank. She told a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution that she always hated genealogists. 52 The Women's Club of Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania, was told that the club

48 Speech, Reading, Pa., Nov. 3, 1920, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 495, LC.
49 Speech, Washington, D.C., Jan. 31, 1924, ibid., box 490, LC.
50 1929 Drafts, ibid., box 453, LC.
51 May 3, 1931, ibid., box 495, LC.
52 Speech to D.A.R., October 13, 1926, ibid., box 448, LC.
movement was created to fill empty lives. The American Legion of York, Pennsylvania, was told that she was not in sympathy with their stand against organized labor. Thus she always did remain true to her convictions and valued her independence no matter to whom she spoke. Occasionally, however, she did compromise her rigid standards for plain speaking. For example, when addressing the Bradford County, Pennsylvania, Civic League, she mentioned a local female historical figure, an Indian queen named Esther who, it was well-known, presided over the bloody execution of many colonial settlers in Luzerne County. Mrs. Pinchot spoke of her as, "a woman of unusual force with a gift for leadership."

Throughout this first decade after the vote, as she learned to make herself an effective public speaker, Cornelia Pinchot was willing also to gain political experience by supporting her husband’s candidacies, successfully for governor in 1922 and unsuccessfully for the United States Senate nomination in 1926. Further, she adopted her husband’s causes as her own. She did not embrace his views, however, unless she could be convinced of their benefit to all people, including women. She supported her husband’s drive for budgetary efficiency and businesslike management in state government because, she said, women would understand the concept of budget management since they did so much of the nation’s spending. The fight for clean elections and against the influence of gang politicians such as William Vare of Philadelphia was worthwhile, she concluded, because its success would mean that women’s votes would not be stolen through being counted out by crooked politicians.

Her husband’s attack on the electric power monopolies of the nation was seconded by Mrs. Pinchot because they constituted a source of political influence outside of the control of the people. These powerful corporate giants could ignore, like the gang politicians, the desires of the newly enfranchised women or could thwart their programs by resisting control for the public good. Finally, she declared, “A man’s point of view about conservation might well be

53 Speech, Pen Argyl, Pa., Sept. 1, 1924, ibid., box 454, LC.
54 Speech to American Legion, York, Pa., Dec. 10, 1923, ibid., box 455, LC.
55 Speech, Bradford, Co., Oct. 22, 1925, ibid., box 448, LC.
56 Speech, Reading, Pa., Nov. 3, 1920, ibid., box 495, LC.
57 Speech, West Chester, Pa., Dec. 17, 1925, ibid., box 448, LC. See also, Speech, Feb. 13, 1926, ibid., box 449, LC.
58 Speech, Pa. League of Women Voters, March 27, 1925, ibid., box 449, LC; See also, Speech, State Federation of Woman’s Clubs, Luzerne Co., Oct. 17, 1925, ibid., box 422, LC.
taken as the acid test to determine his attitude towards public questions of all sorts."\(^{59}\)

The issue that stirred her greatest response and for which she came to support Mr. Pinchot most actively in the 1920s was prohibition. Cornelia Pinchot admitted that she was a late-comer to the crusade against liquor. Conversion took place when, she wrote, "I found out that the wet lobby was against everything in which I was interested, laws against child labor, women suffrage. . . . As a Progressive I always found the wets on the other side. I don't mean to imply that every reactionary is a wet. But I do think the reactionary movement as a whole is 95% wet."\(^{60}\) Cornelia Pinchot was convinced also that there were parallels between the difficulty of the struggle for prohibition and of the one for suffrage. She was certain that women had a special interest in the success of the anti-liquor forces because women were by nature sober. She also reflected the feelings expressed so often by groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union, that, "This harmless drink is but the opening act in a long drama of degradation, the slimy trail which reaches through all strata of our social life."\(^{61}\)

Obedient to her convictions, the governor's wife toured the nation speaking for law enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment, even calling for female enforcement agents. She also scrupulously observed dryness in her various homes from Harrisburg, to Milford, to Washington, D.C.

In 1926 the prohibition question led to a controversy in which Cornelia Pinchot played a significant role indicative of the independence she was to achieve in the 1930s. She was supporting her husband both physically and financially in his campaign for the Republican nomination for the United States Senate. His opponents were the incumbent, respected Philadelphia lawyer, George Wharton Pepper, and the wet head of the Philadelphia organization, William S. Vare. C.B.P., as she often signed her letters, wrote to various leaders of women's organizations and prohibitionists throughout the state and elicited replies stating that Mr. Pinchot was

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\(^{60}\) Speech, Albany, N.Y., N.Y. Women's Commission on Law Enforcement, Feb. 17, 1925, *ibid.*, box 472, LC.

\(^{61}\) Speech, National League of Women Voters, Buffalo, N.Y., April 28, 1924, *ibid.*, box 448, LC. See also, Speech, Anti-Saloon League, Louisville, Ky., March 31, 1925, *ibid.*, box 449 LC.
the driest alternative in the race. Although Pinchot lost, Senator Pepper heatedly complained that Mrs. Pinchot's tactic had lost him the majority of the dry vote, the split of which cost him the nomination to the very wet Vare.62

The central part played by Mrs. Pinchot in this critical political campaign was to herald, as the 1920s drew to a close, an even more active individual political life. With confidence developed in speaking, with extended experience as a franchised woman in politics, Cornelia Pinchot could begin to think in terms of her own career. This opportunity came in 1928. She sought the Republican nomination for the United States Congress from the Fifteenth District of northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Pinchots had close ties with that area. Cornelia Bryce Pinchot was a member of a district school board, and the extensive grounds of Grey Towers had often been the scene of mass picnics for the local citizenry who had been fed and exposed to some politicking. In 1919, for one such gathering, the Pinchots ordered a real airplane and a tank as decorations to welcome soldiers home from the First World War.63 Thus, a congenial local atmosphere prevailed for her first candidacy.

The major obstacle to electoral success was Louis T. McFadden, who had started out as a bank clerk, and after fourteen years in Congress had become chairman of the House Committee on Banking. In this largely rural district the small town, hard-working, established McFadden was formidable opposition.

Mrs. Pinchot based her platform on the issues developed during the 1920s with her husband. She was bone dry. She would represent the farmers who were not, it was argued, being served by a banking chairman with contacts in New York financial circles. She pledged her support to the fight against the electric power monopoly which was gouging the housewife and the farmer and to the fight against corrupt election practices. Finally, she insisted that although as a feminist, she had achieved many things as firsts for women in her area, she wanted to be judged only on the issues, not on her sex.64 The vote was respectable for Mrs. Pinchot, but she lost. The incumbency and the strong image of McFadden were victorious.65

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62 1926, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Box 1125, LC.
63 Sept. 11, 1919, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 449, LC.
64 “Mrs. Pinchot, Candidate,” Women’s Journal, 28. See also New York Times, Feb. 27, 1928, 3; March 19, 1928, 3; 1928, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 141, LC.
65 May 30, 1928, ibid., box 461, LC.
As a fitting conclusion to her efforts to rise to the challenge of full and equal participation in politics, the former Cornelia Bryce told the national convention of the American Association of the University Women in Washington, D.C., in 1928 that, "My complex has always been that I might have shined as a pioneer woman; the hardships, the objective experiences might have been easier to cope with than life as we know it today." She often referred to the simplicity of the pre-suffrage world of women, with the all-consuming struggle for survival of the pioneer woman whose tireless effort if successful was immediately rewarded with her family's survival, or with the all-consuming and also rewarding struggle for the vote. The matter in the 1920s and 1930s for this feminist was not, however, basic survival or the vote, but less concrete ideas such as opportunity, equality, justice, and the quality of life.

During the 1930s Cornelia Pinchot would participate in three more of her husband's campaigns, one successful and one unsuccessful race for governor, and one more unsuccessful race for the United States Senate. Also there would be three more candidacies of her own, twice more unsuccessfully for congressional nomination and once briefly for governor.

Cornelia Pinchot not only pursued an active political career in the 1930s but also became more outspoken, even to the point of achieving substantial independence from the policy positions of her husband. In particular, she became a most effective advocate of labor unionism and of protection for women and children workers both in the state of Pennsylvania and in the nation.

Her political activism and public independence led to the conclusion by Harold Ickes, Progressive and New Dealer, that by 1934 Cornelia Bryce was the most ambitious of the Pinchots. National Recovery Act administrator, Hugh Johnson, after tangling with Mrs. Pinchot over the policies of his office, asked the question in 1934, "Who is Governor of Pennsylvania?" In 1940 Mrs. Pinchot proved her ultimate independence by campaigning for Franklin Roosevelt against Wendell Willkie. Therefore, she exercised that power of choice that she had counseled women to retain after they had achieved the vote in 1920.

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66 Speech, A.A.U.W., Jan. 7, 1928, ibid., box 461, LC.
68 Hugh Johnson to C.B.P., March 12, 1934, Gifford Pinchot Papers, box 2097, LC. See also, March 8, 1934, C.B.P. to Hugh Johnson, ibid., box 2298, LC.
69 Speech, C.B.S. Radio, October 20, 1940, Cornelia Bryce Pinchot Papers, box 232, LC.
Cornelia Bryce Pinchot was a social feminist. Although she supported those measures which would bring legal, salary, and employment equality for women in relation to men, more important to her were acts of social justice such as child labor laws and protection for women workers. Feeling a birthright responsibility to all human society, she advocated these reforms before the suffrage victory and with increasing militancy in the 1920s and 1930s.

The achievement of suffrage was worth the effort for Cornelia Pinchot, but she did not believe that it constituted the fulfillment of utopian dreams. She knew that when women were given opportunity they would contribute significantly to the amelioration of the world's problems and would become the equal of individual men in all fields of endeavor. Mrs. Pinchot recognized, however, that the post-suffrage period would bring not only personal fulfillment but also increased responsibility. She cautioned women that their post-suffrage world would be more complex. Therefore, they would have to learn the hard, practical facts of their wider world and to study the workings of government and of other social institutions in order to find solutions to those newly accepted responsibilities.

She was defeated several times but kept faith in the system. Her husband was defeated also more often than he was victorious. The programs they both supported were rejected repeatedly by state and national legislatures and by the courts. But both continued to fight for what they conceived as right. Many of Cornelia Pinchot's opportunities did come as a result of her association with Gifford Pinchot. But, as she said, it was not wrong to use him to advance her own programs, and he apparently was most willing to be so used.

She had to face dilemmas as a result of her often conflicting roles. She wanted to be the first woman elected to Congress from Pennsylvania but did not want to be voted for because of her sex, only because of how she stood on the political issues. She came to support certain programs such as prohibition because of their value to society, but she confirmed her conversion to the dry crusade because wets opposed suffrage and welfare measures for women workers. She advocated peace, while accepting benefits from the war effort.

70 William L. O'Neill, in Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America (Chicago, 1919), first established this terminology. He is one of the most prominent historians to conclude that the post-suffrage period was disillusioning and unproductive for the feminist and that the feminists lost their group discipline and singleness of purpose after attaining the vote. O'Neill suggests that Socialism may have been the best alternative for feminists in the post-suffrage decades.
Cornelia Bryce Pinchot possessed certain advantages that most other women to whom she spoke and to whom she offered counsel did not or could not have. She was wealthy and therefore economically liberated from dependence on another human being. Her wealth also freed her from household chores and constant child-rearing cares. She could even afford to travel or to take up residence in the Colony Club of New York City when the pressures of her various roles became too great. Since she married later in life, Cornelia Pinchot had developed a sense of independence and individual personality, before marriage would necessitate certain personal accommodations. Gifford Pinchot was also a unique and strong personality in his own right and was never intimidated in his masculinity or prerogatives by an aggressive and determined wife. His policy positions complemented her own on so many issues that effective, progressive teamwork was possible.

She held certain questionable views about the nature of women, such as her concepts of superior female sobriety, feminine pacifism, budgetary capacity, or political morality. She did, however, demonstrate in her own life that women possessed the intelligence, the capacity to learn, to mature, and to become politically effective if they were willing to try. She offered very practical and useful blueprints for action with which all women could identify. She also proved to doubting men that women could be responsible citizens and aggressive reformers without sacrificing home, family, or those qualities termed femininity.

The progress of feminism for Cornelia Pinchot was thus in the post-suffrage period. In the 1920s she found her voice as a public speaker and in response to those two men in her favorite story, she got involved in politics through the efforts of her husband. In the 1930s when the climate for reform was more congenial, she charted an independent course and became an effective advocate of union organization, of anti-sweatshop legislation and of better working conditions for women and children. The post-suffrage period of the 1920s and 1930s was not a period of loss or defeat for her. She had the courage of her convictions that the American democratic system would gradually and inevitably yield recognition to the justice of the cause of women's and human rights. Cornelia Bryce Pinchot's approach to her feminism assured, most importantly, that when the struggle for women's rights was completed, women would not have, in the process, bargained away their freedom of choice to act as individuals. They would not have gained their independence only to lose
it again as part of any greater organization or sacrificed their self-identity to any specific theoretical economic or philosophical system.