

## Module 02: Should Women Vote? The Politics of Suffrage

### Evidence 2: Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "Women and Representative Government," *Nineteenth Century*, August 1883

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#### Introduction

While similar to Mill's "On the Enfranchisement of Women," Millicent Garrett Fawcett's article reproduced below deals in a more general way with the principles of democracy.

#### Questions to Consider

- How does Fawcett make a case for women's suffrage in opposition to the views of opponents?
- Who is she trying to persuade?
- What additional information might you need to understand the source?

#### Document

Representation is the motive power for the redress of legislative grievances. If not what is the use of representation? People would be as well off without it as with it. But all our history shows the practical value of representation. . . .The politicians field of vision is entirely filled by those who are represented; the unrepresented are forgotten. . . .Their ideal seemed rather to be manhood as opposed to universal suffrage; that is, all men not being either paupers or felons to be admitted to political power, no matter how ignorant, how poor, how degraded, in virtue of their manhood; while all women are to be excluded in virtue of their womanhood. . . .What is the policy, what is the sense, of compelling half the English people to hold their liberty on such terms as these? Give women the rights of free citizenship, the power to protect themselves, and then they will let their representatives know what they want and why they want it. They will find, no doubt — as other classes have found — that though the price of liberty is vigilance, the House of Commons will never turn a deaf ear to well-conceived measures of reform which are demanded by the constituencies. When the representatives of the present electorate undertake a further extension of the suffrage, we ask them to be true to their own principles, to

be just — even to women — without fear. . . .It is one of the most disastrous things that can happen to a nation to have a great wall of separation, as regards opinion and feeling, grow up between men and women. Every circumstance which widens the education of women — their political, as well as their literary education — renders impossible the building up of that wall of separation. . . .We have done so far and with such good results there could hardly be a better reason for going further.

Source:

Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "Women and Representative Government,"  
*Nineteenth Century* (August 1883).