

## “Jane Addams on Suffrage” Letter to the Editor in *The New York Times*, March 20, 1909

### Jane Addams on Suffrage

To the Editor of *The New York Times*:

Senator Root, in a speech made fourteen years ago, which has lately been reprinted, objects to equal suffrage on the ground that women cannot fight. Jane Addams writes, in "The Modern City and the Municipal Franchise for Women":

Modern cities fear no enemies from without. Unsanitary housing, poisonous sewage, contaminated water, infant mortality, the spread of contagion, adulterated food, impure milk, smoke-laden air, ill-ventilated factories, dangerous occupations, juvenile crime, unwholesome crowding, prostitution, and drunkenness are the enemies which modern cities must face and overcome, would they survive. Logically, their electorate should be made up of those who can bear a valiant part in this arduous contest, those who in the past have at least attempted to care for children, to clean houses, to prepare foods, to isolate the family from moral dangers; those who have traditionally taken care of that side of life which inevitably becomes the subject of municipal consideration and control as soon as the population is congested. To test the elector's fitness to deal with this situation by his ability to bear arms is absurd. These problems must be solved, if they are solved at all, not from the military point of view, not even from the industrial point of view, but from a third, which is rapidly developing in all the great cities of the world - the human-welfare point of view.

A city is in many respects a great business corporation, but in other respects it is enlarged housekeeping. May we not say that city housekeeping has failed partly because women, the traditional housekeepers, have not been consulted as to its manifold activities?

Mr. Root expresses the fear that women might become ungentle and harsh if they took part in public affairs. Although Miss Addams has been engaged for many years in the arduous strife which she describes, we all know that she has become neither harsh nor ungentle.

Julia Ward Howe  
Boston, Mass., March 20, 1909.