



# Democratic Reform and Activism

## MAIN IDEA

**POWER AND AUTHORITY**  
Spurred by the demands of the people, Great Britain and France underwent democratic reforms.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

During this period, Britain and France were transformed into the democracies they are today.

## TERMS & NAMES

- suffrage
- Chartist movement
- Queen Victoria
- Third Republic
- Dreyfus affair
- anti-Semitism
- Zionism

**SETTING THE STAGE** Urbanization and industrialization brought sweeping changes to Western nations. People looking for solutions to the problems created by these developments began to demand reforms. They wanted to improve conditions for workers and the poor. Many people also began to call for political reforms. They demanded that more people be given a greater voice in government. Many different groups, including the middle class, workers, and women, argued that the right to vote be extended to groups that were excluded.

## Britain Enacts Reforms

As Chapter 21 explained, Britain became a constitutional monarchy in the late 1600s. Under this system of government, the monarch serves as the head of state, but Parliament holds the real power. The British Parliament consists of a House of Lords and a House of Commons. Traditionally, members of the House of Lords either inherited their seats or were appointed. However, this changed in 1999, when legislation was passed that abolished the right of hereditary peers to inherit a seat in the House of Lords. Members of the House of Commons are elected by the British people.

In the early 1800s, the method of selecting the British government was not a true democracy. Only about five percent of the population had the right to elect the members of the House of Commons. Voting was limited to men who owned a substantial amount of land. Women could not vote at all. As a result, the upper classes ran the government.

**The Reform Bill of 1832** The first group to demand a greater voice in politics was the wealthy middle class—factory owners, bankers, and merchants. Beginning in 1830, protests took place around England in favor of a bill in Parliament that would extend **suffrage**, or the right to vote. The Revolution of 1830 in France frightened parliamentary leaders. They feared that revolutionary violence would spread to Britain. Thus, Parliament passed the Reform Bill of 1832. This law eased the property requirements so that well-to-do men in the middle class could vote. The Reform Bill also modernized the districts for electing members of Parliament and gave the thriving new industrial cities more representation.

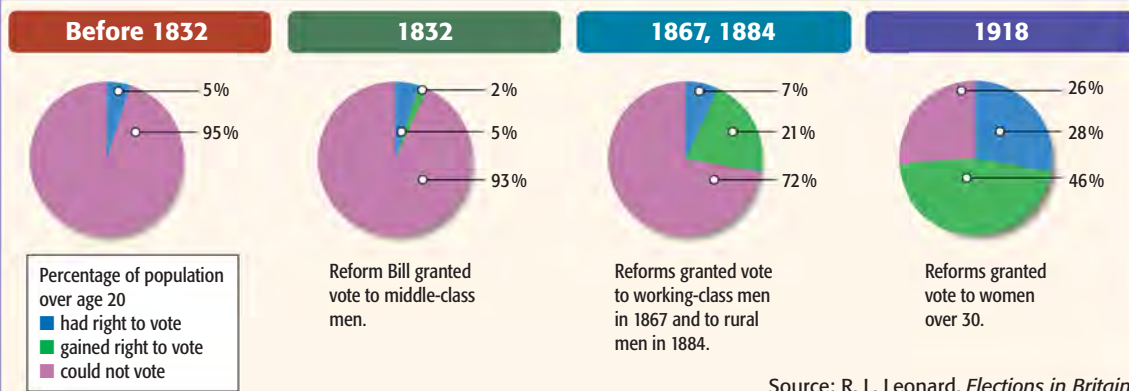
**Chartist Movement** Although the Reform Bill increased the number of British voters, only a small percentage of men were eligible to vote. A popular movement

## TAKING NOTES

**Evaluating Courses of Action** Use a chart to list and evaluate events in this section according to whether they expanded (+) or impeded (-) democracy.

Event	Evaluation

## Expansion of Suffrage in Britain



### SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Graphs

- Clarifying** What percentage of the adults in Britain could vote in 1832?
- Comparing** By how much did the percentage of voters increase after the reforms of 1867 and 1884?

arose among the workers and other groups who still could not vote to press for more rights. It was called the **Chartist movement** because the group first presented its demands to Parliament in a petition called The People's Charter of 1838.

The People's Charter called for suffrage for all men and annual Parliamentary elections. It also proposed to reform Parliament in other ways. In Britain at the time, eligible men voted openly. Since their vote was not secret, they could feel pressure to vote in a certain way. Members of Parliament had to own land and received no salary, so they needed to be wealthy. The Chartists wanted to make Parliament responsive to the lower classes. To do this, they demanded a secret ballot, an end to property requirements for serving in Parliament, and pay for members of Parliament.

Parliament rejected the Chartists' demands. However, their protests convinced many people that the workers had valid complaints. Over the years, workers continued to press for political reform, and Parliament responded. It gave the vote to working-class men in 1867 and to male rural workers in 1884. After 1884, most adult males in Britain had the right to vote. By the early 1900s, all the demands of the Chartists, except for annual elections, became law. **A**

**The Victorian Age** The figure who presided over all this historic change was **Queen Victoria**. Victoria came to the throne in 1837 at the age of 18. She was queen for nearly 64 years. During the Victorian Age, the British Empire reached the height of its wealth and power. Victoria was popular with her subjects, and she performed her duties capably. However, she was forced to accept a less powerful role for the monarchy.

The kings who preceded Victoria in the 1700s and 1800s had exercised great influence over Parliament. The spread of democracy in the 1800s shifted political power almost completely to Parliament, and especially to the elected House of Commons. Now the government was completely run by the prime minister and the cabinet.

### History Makers



#### Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

About two years after her coronation, Queen Victoria (1819–1901) fell in love with her cousin Albert (1819–1861), a German prince. She proposed to him and they were married in 1840. Together they had nine children. Prince Albert established a tone of politeness and correct behavior at court, and the royal couple presented a picture of loving family life that became a British ideal.

After Albert died in 1861, the queen wore black silk for the rest of her life in mourning. She once said of Albert, "Without him everything loses its interest."

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**A** Why do you think the Chartists demanded a secret ballot rather than public voting?

## Women Get the Vote

By 1890, several industrial countries had universal male suffrage (the right of all men to vote). No country, however, allowed women to vote. As more men gained suffrage, more women demanded the same.

**Organization and Resistance** During the 1800s, women in both Great Britain and the United States worked to gain the right to vote. British women organized reform societies and protested unfair laws and customs. As women became more vocal, however, resistance to their demands grew. Many people, both men and women, thought that woman suffrage was too radical a break with tradition. Some claimed that women lacked the ability to take part in politics.

**Militant Protests** After decades of peaceful efforts to win the right to vote, some women took more drastic steps. In Britain, Emmeline Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. The WSPU became the most militant organization for women's rights. Its goal was to draw attention to the cause of woman suffrage. When asked about why her group chose militant means to gain women's rights, Pankhurst replied:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

I want to say here and now that the only justification for violence, the only justification for damage to property, the only justification for risk to the comfort of other human beings is the fact that you have tried all other available means and have failed to secure justice.

EMMELINE PANKHURST, *Why We Are Militant*

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Motives

**B** Was the use of militant action effective in achieving the goal of woman suffrage? Explain.

Emmeline Pankhurst, her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, and other WSPU members were arrested and imprisoned many times. When they were jailed, the Pankhursts led hunger strikes to keep their cause in the public eye. British officials force-fed Sylvia and other activists to keep them alive.

Though the woman suffrage movement gained attention between 1880 and 1914, its successes were gradual. Women did not gain the right to vote in national elections in Great Britain and the United States until after World War I. **B**

## France and Democracy

While Great Britain moved toward greater democracy in the late 1800s, democracy finally took hold in France.

**The Third Republic** In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, France went through a series of crises. Between 1871 and 1914, France averaged a change of government almost yearly. A dozen political parties competed for power. Not until 1875 could the National Assembly agree on a new government. Eventually, the members voted to set up a republic. The **Third Republic** lasted over 60 years. However, France remained divided.

**The Dreyfus Affair** During the 1880s and 1890s, the Third Republic was threatened by monarchists, aristocrats, clergy, and army leaders. These groups wanted a monarchy or military rule. A controversy known as the **Dreyfus affair** became a battleground for these opposing forces. Widespread feelings of **anti-Semitism**, or prejudice against Jews, also played a role in this scandal.

## Global Impact

### The Women's Movement

By the 1880s, women were working internationally to win more rights. In 1888, women activists from the United States, Canada, and Europe met in Washington, D.C., for the International Council of Women. In 1893, delegates and observers from many countries attended a large congress of women in Chicago. They came from lands as far apart as New Zealand, Argentina, Iceland, Persia, and China.

The first countries to grant suffrage to women were New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1902). Only in two European countries—Finland (1906, then part of the Russian Empire) and Norway (1913)—did women gain voting rights before World War I. In the United States, the territory of Wyoming allowed women to vote in 1869. Several other Western states followed suit.



▲ This engraving from an 1898 French magazine shows Émile Zola being surrounded by an anti-Semitic mob.

In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, one of the few Jewish officers in the French army, was accused of selling military secrets to Germany. A court found him guilty, based on false evidence, and sentenced him to life in prison. In a few years, new evidence showed that Dreyfus had been framed by other army officers.

Public opinion was sharply divided over the scandal. Many army leaders, nationalists, leaders in the clergy, and anti-Jewish groups refused to let the case be reopened. They feared sudden action would cast doubt on the honor of the army. Dreyfus's defenders insisted that

justice was more important. In 1898, the writer Émile Zola published an open letter titled *J'accuse!* (I accuse) in a popular French newspaper. In the letter, Zola denounced the army for covering up a scandal. Zola was sentenced to a year in prison for his views, but his letter gave strength to Dreyfus's cause. Eventually, the French government declared his innocence.

**The Rise of Zionism** The Dreyfus case showed the strength of anti-Semitism in France and other parts of Western Europe. However, persecution of Jews was even more severe in Eastern Europe. Russian officials permitted pogroms (puh•GRAHMS), organized campaigns of violence against Jews. From the late 1880s on, thousands of Jews fled Eastern Europe. Many headed for the United States.

For many Jews, the long history of exile and persecution convinced them to work for a homeland in Palestine. In the 1890s, a movement known as **Zionism** developed to pursue this goal. Its leader was Theodor Herzl (HEHRT•suhl), a writer in Vienna. It took many years, however, before the state of Israel was established.

SECTION

1

ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- suffrage
- Chartist movement
- Queen Victoria
- Third Republic
- Dreyfus affair
- anti-Semitism
- Zionism

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which of these events most expanded democracy, and why?

Event	Evaluation

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. What were some effects of the Reform Bill of 1832?
4. What was the goal of the WSPU in Britain?
5. What was the Dreyfus affair?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **COMPARING** Why was the road to democracy more difficult for France than for England?
7. **SYNTHESIZING** Look again at the primary source on page 749. What is Pankhurst demanding?
8. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** What was the connection between anti-Semitism and Zionism?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **POWER AND AUTHORITY** Among the Chartists' demands was pay for members of Parliament. Write a **letter to the editor** that supports or criticizes a pay raise for your legislators.

**CONNECT TO TODAY** CREATING A POSTER

Find information on issues in today's world that involve a call for social justice. Then make a **poster** in which you illustrate what you regard as the most compelling example of a current social injustice.