



Housewives and citizens: Domesticity and the women's movement in England, 1928-64 (Gender in History MUP)

Caitriona Beaumont

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This book explores the contribution that five conservative, voluntary and popular women's organisations made to women's lives and to the campaign for women's rights throughout the period 1928-64. The five groups included in this study are: the Mothers' Union, the Catholic Women's League, the National Council of Women, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. The book challenges existing histories of the women's movement that suggest the movement went into decline during the inter-war period only to be revived by the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s. It is argued that the term 'women's movement' must be revised to allow a broader understanding of female agency encompassing feminist, political, religious and conservative women's groups who campaigned to improve the status of women throughout the twentieth century.

This book provides an analysis of the way in which these five voluntary women's organisations adopted the concept of democratic citizenship, with its rights and duties, to validate their demands for reform. Their involvement in a number of campaigns relating to social, welfare and economic rights is explored and assessed. The book provides a radical re-assessment of this period of women's history and in doing so makes a significant contribution to on-going debates about the shape and the impact of the women's movement in twentieth-century Britain. The book is essential reading for those interested in modern British history, voluntary action and the history of the women's movement.

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