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HECATE prints material relating to women, particularly contributions which employ feminist, Marxist, anti-racist or other radical approaches. We also print creative work and graphics.

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Editorial

During the 1890s, women in Queensland finally decided they were not stopping until they got suffrage. By 1893, New Zealand women were enfranchised, and in 1894 South Australia became the first to give women the vote in State elections. Many took to heart Louisa Lawson's advice to those who met to form the Dawn Club in Sydney in 1889 that women's 'only method to procure release, redress, or change, is to ceaselessly agitate', and did just that for ten years from the militant public meetings in 1894 to the achievement of suffrage for (white) women in State elections in 1905, when Queensland became the next-to-last State (Victoria held out longest) to implement it.

Since Queensland's 1859 separation from New South Wales, parliamentarians were elected on the 'plural' vote. How many votes a man had depended upon how much property he owned; a wealthy squatter could have up to a dozen votes. Among those entirely excluded from voting — along with women — were those of 'unsound mind' and, at that stage, men in the police force and the army. A controversial and divisive issue for the women's suffrage movement was whether women wanted the vote on the same conditions as men, or whether they were seeking, as did the Labor Party, abolition of the property vote.

Early attempts to organise in Brisbane, through the Women's Suffrage League, had foundered by 1891 on this issue. The early 1890s was a period of high levels of class hostility, in the wake of the brutally suppressed Shearers' Strike; this was not a time in which cross-class alliances around particular issues were easily sustained. Those on the socialist side were not generally disposed to take up the issue of women's interests in general. Mrs Channing Neill, writing in the Boomerang, believed that women were 'standing aside' to await one man, one vote, 'confident that with the broader franchise women's just claims would be met'. The Boomerang ridiculed the WSL as made up of liberal women. The Labor Party insisted women's vote should wait for general (white) suffrage.

The struggle for the vote was only one aspect of the political activism around the first wave of feminism. The advancement of women was being organised for on many different fronts. Some feminists fought for legislative reform such as the raising of the age of consent (it was twelve in 1891), and for the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts (that quarantined women infected with venereal diseases in locked hospitals). There were campaigns for