Women's Rights



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Women in the 1770s had few rights, especially if married: they could not vote, make a contract, sue or be sued in their own names. They were barred from higher education and their earnings or incomes belonged to their husbands who could beat them and declare them insane. Two centuries later, many rights had been secured: full enfranchisement in 1928, widening opportunities in education and employment and, in theory at least, equal pay and an end to sexual discrimination. This remarkable collection of documents offers readers access to a range of primary materials covering the major themes of women's experience: their position in law, marriage and the family, education, work, politics, sexuality and health. Each chapter contains a timeline and an introduction laying out the main issues. Featuring the work of familiar and lesser-known writers and activists, it also gives insight into the women who took part examining their motivation and the background from which they came. In this way it gives voice to the experience of the 'ordinary' woman and provides a vivid sense of what it meant to be a woman. The book is an invaluable record for all those interested in women's lives over the last two hundred years and will be essential reading for researchers, teachers and students.

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