yielded to the fervor of these women in spite of their protesta-
tions and educational efforts. The decades of political schism
over slavery and the Civil War, which converted the nation into
a divided armed camp, had undermined the women's movement,
drawing the attention and energy of the American people away
from the "woman's question". Now that the nation was prepar-
ing for its 100th birthday, having survived the division, legis-
lated against slavery and mandated universal manhood suf-
frage, the leadership seized the opportunity to reinstate the
claims to women's rights. It was symbolically appropriate to
redress the government for having passed the 15th Amendment
which excluded women from the vote, just as the framers of the
American nation had renounced the British government for its
obstruction of civil justice.

The women's movement made use of the founding experience
in other ways. On the occasion of its inception in 1848 in Seneca
Falls, New York, the women had adapted the text of the Decla-
ration of Independence to their grievances and demands and
circulated the woman's Declaration of Sentiments as a platform
and strategy for support and legislative relief. Several of the
more courageous members had refused to be taxed "without
representation" and suffered the loss of personal property as a
consequence. In the call to the 9th annual convention of the
National Woman Suffrage Association, the President reminded
the membership that the centennial discussion of republican
principles was important to women. She wrote:

Liberty to-day is, therefore, but the heritage of one-
half the people, and the centennial will be but the
celebration of the independence of one-half the nation.
The men alone of this country live in a republic, the
women enter the second hundred years of national life
as political slaves. 2

This sentiment was affirmed in a resolution passed at the con-
vention which took note of the fact that the women of 1876 have
greater reason for "discontent, rebellion and revolution" than
the patriots of 1776.

The feminists, having resolved to protest against the "celeb-
ration of independence", decided to organize a counter-
celebration in Philadelphia which would create greater solidar-
ity among the disenfranchised women and demonstrate the vi-
tality of the movement. Although the women encountered an
initial difficulty because as married women they could not con-
tract for the rental of headquarters in the historic city, this
reminder of the legal inequity between the sexes only enhanced

2 Ibid., p. 18.