

THE WOMEN'S CAUSE: FEMINIST CAMPAIGNS 1918-1928

Ph.D Thesis

1993

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Abstract

This thesis shows that the first wave Women's Movement continued the struggle for the franchise during the Great War and throughout the 1920s until its success in 1928. It also details the campaigns for the social and economic emancipation of women in the period from 1918 to 1928. It provides a first step in recovering this history of political activity carried out through a network of women's organizations which expanded to embrace all aspects of women's lives.

Chapter 1 acts an introduction and clarifies some questions of treatment and perspective. Chapter 2 describes the Movement's membership and details the suffragists' activities throughout the War and their contribution to the success of the franchise in 1918.

In Chapter 3, the consequences for the women's organizations of re-ordering agendas and constitutions because of the vote, is followed in the next three chapters by a detailed examination of the post-War period of reconstruction. This includes the progress of women's political participation, the scale of the reforms it pursued and the economic problems of demobilisation and political opposition.

The documentation of the growth of political confidence and skill in the three General Elections from 1922 to 1924 in

Chapter 7, also serves to illustrate the diversity of approach enshrined in the non-party and party organizations. The reappraisal of feminist ideology is set within the context of the development of the equalitarian and welfare theories in Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 deals with the campaign which united the Movement in a concerted effort to win the vote for all women. The thesis concludes in Chapter 10, with a brief description of the Movement's response to its franchise success and its remit for future activity in.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

"Feminism's impulse is often, not surprisingly, to make a celebratory identification with a rush of Women onto the historical stage. But such 'emergences' have particular passages into life; they are the tips of an iceberg. The more engaging questions for feminism is then what lies beneath." (1)

The 'celebratory identification' of the pre-First World War Suffrage Movement, has operated detrimentally towards a satisfactory appreciation of the development and achievements of the post-War Women's Movement. This masking of the post-War period has, in turn, undermined an effective assessment of the Movement's continuation from its pre-War origins. This research traces the Movement's development from the end of the First World War in November 1918 to the winning of equal franchise in July 1928.

The organizational network through which women campaigned to address all existing inequalities which persisted after the success of the partial franchise in February 1918 are outlined; how they resisted the post-War backlash to confine them to a domestic role; and the ways in which they extended their participation in all spheres of society in order to work to achieve full political, economic and social emancipation are also dealt with. The questions it poses relate to the nature of those organizations; the issues and campaigns they dealt with; the women in the network; and the

way in which the Women's Movement related to the Government and Parliament while in pursuit of its goals. All this demonstrates how women in the Movement used their new political power in their transition from outsiders to participators in the legislative process.

Definitions are important, as both the concept of a Women's Movement, and the feminism which moulds and informs that Movement, are liable to wide interpretations. But the first point concerns the use of language within this research. "Language is a powerful determinant of reality" (2); there is, therefore, a danger for contemporary feminists when investigating the activities of their predecessors, of distorting historical events and ideas by overlaying them with contemporary feminist analysis. Whilst it is absolutely necessary in historical research to attempt to empathise with one's subject, it is essential to bear in mind the change in concepts which the passage of time has effected. Empathising cannot ever result in an exact duplication of experience between periods. This temptation to create parallels points up the linguistic problem which results from the assumption that shared terms carry the same meaning.

As language plays a part in creating the necessary empathy with the subject under investigation, the feminist vocabulary of the period has been used, as it appeared in the primary sources which have been consulted. So the terms used will express the values and ideas current during the period, not those of the modern

phase of the Movement. It is important that the reader bears this point in mind should they come across a term whose usage may carry very different connotations for women today, than it did seventy years ago. For example, the use of the term 'chairman' does not denote an oversight in using the latest form of 'chairwoman' or 'chairperson'; but is a faithful reproduction of the use of the word during the 1918-28 period.

Similarly, the concept of a Women's Movement duplicates that found in the literature of the women's organizations, as a catholic term which embraced a wide variety of activity. The Women's Movement was an inclusive term which dealt with the work of party and non-party groups engaged in changing the status of women's lives. It will be used throughout this research to include not only the work of these political groups, but also the activities of professional, industrial, welfare and religious women's organizations engaged in the movement for women's emancipation.

Whilst it is not the business of this work to analyse closely the nature of feminism as a philosophical concept, a precise definition is a necessary pre-requisite for understanding the perspective from which this research is presented. It has been assumed that the reader already has some understanding of the philosophical terrain that this complex concept inhabits. Definitions have, however, varied over time. The definition used

here follows Olive Banks' interpretation of the term, and her analysis of its origins. Banks interprets feminism as:

"Any groups that have tried to change the position of women, or the ideas about women." (3)

That is changes which have made a positive contribution to the development of women's lives, in line with emancipation and liberation. And in a later work:

"At its simplest level it represents a criticism of the position of women in relation to men and a desire to change that position." (4)

This research would also want to consider from Alberti's findings in her study of this period, that:

"The definition of feminist has been that their activities were informed by an understanding of the role and position of women in society which saw them as oppressed." (5)

The aspects of women's lives which such groups choose to change will depend on the women involved and their circumstances:

"How," asks Riley, "is it that they ever come to rank themselves together? What are the conditions for any joint consciousness of women, which is more than the mutual amity or commiseration of friends or relations?" (6)

How did women identify themselves as feminists and then take the next step to create the collective identity of a Movement?

Banks delineates three 'intellectual traditions' which gave rise to feminist activity: firstly, that of Evangelical

Christianity which led to philanthropic and social welfare concern emanating from the notion of the moral superiority of women. Secondly, the Liberal or Enlightenment school which resulted in the equalitarian mode of feminism; and thirdly, the Owenite or communitarian socialist mode (7). When ideological disputes within the Movement are discussed during the course of this work, it will be useful to reflect on these separate origins which informed the differing branches of feminism. For such separate interpretations can nevertheless all be accommodated within the framework of a Movement; that is what distinguishes a Movement from, for example, a sect.

But it is also these three traditions which can lead to such a disparity of perceptions as to the identification of feminism and the problem of self-designation as a feminist. What may be the most visible construction of, or current practice of 'feminism', may well lead women who actually follow feminist ideals, to deny such an affiliation. For example, in 1926, the trade union organizer, Gertrude Tuckwell, asked by a journalist whether she was a feminist, replied:

"No, I am not a Feminist in the sense of believing that all legislation for both sexes can at this moment be identical. I am, however, deeply interested in helping forward everything that makes for the improvement of women's industrial and social conditions." (8)

Tuckwell, within the context of the protective/restrictive legislation debate of that time (see Chapter 9), was denying that

she was an equalitarian feminist; but her work and political sympathies might be considered to have given her some affiliations with the communitarian socialist mode of feminism.

This research, therefore, takes the full breadth of Banks' definition, and does not exclude the work of women either because they would not have designated themselves as feminist, or because they did not subscribe to all the issues within the widest feminist agenda. For, as can be seen from the three traditions, it would be difficult to determine what a 'purist' line in feminist terms was. Even an attempt at establishing such a definition would seem inappropriate for the material in hand. Material which emanated from such a wide scope of organizations and which involved women whose experiences and backgrounds covered every sector of British society. The unifying force might most suitably be found in Kaplan's contention that:

"...consciousness among women that they constitute a community often appears when they share outrage." (9)

It is important to distinguish further between feminists and women pioneers, of which there were an abundance during this period. Women who were pioneers at this time, were not necessarily feminists, although many women were both. For example, Mrs Elliott-Lynn, the pioneer aviator, was a member of the NUSEC, the WES and the NUWT. However, there were women who were passionate to promote their particular expertise or occupation, but who would not identify themselves as feminists. But it was true to say, as 'The

Vote' often maintained, when they reported such activities, that women who had achieved prominence in any sphere previously confined to men, were by virtue of their success, assisting in the emancipation process. Such pioneers have not been included in this study unless they also contributed directly to the Movement's campaigns. The record of their achievements, albeit in the face of great opposition, belongs to a separate study.

An important aim of this work is to demonstrate the continuity of the Women's Movement on its passage through the Great War and into the 1920s by way of the expanding dimensions of the Women's Movement network and the organizations which it comprised. The chapter, 'Setting the Scene' outlines the origins of the Movement and its activities throughout the War. It sets the protagonists on the stage, in order to facilitate an appreciation of the continuity of personnel and organizations which sustained the passage of the Movement into the 1920s.

The ambitious scale of the Movement's goal after 1918 to use the newly attained 'key to citizenship' to redress all existing inequalities in women's lives, makes the task of giving an adequate account of the period equally demanding. In the light of the large number of issues and campaigns which the Movement tackled during those years, an attempt has been made to indicate the broad canvas of the organizations, issues and women involved and how such a network functioned. It is the plotting of a map which gives some landmarks against which to outline the salient features of an

important phase of development. In this way, it acts as a starting point from which specific topics requiring further research can first be seen in context, before being isolated for more detailed examination.

For the purposes of charting this network, the organisations can be seen to fall broadly within four main categories: political, both party and non-party; employment, whether industrial or professional; welfare; peace and internationalist. As it has already received considerable attention in other publications, the peace and internationalist section has only been included in sufficient detail to complete the portrayal of the network, and to indicate how integral these issues were to the feminism of the day. Yet it should be noted that women's organisations were far from being confined to their predominant subject of concern. As part of the larger support network, their concerns also embraced the unifying issues of the Movement, such as the franchise and the question of equal pay. However, it is important to take note of the limitations of the suffrage movement's internationalism, and this is the most appropriate stage at which to demonstrate how far its concerns were prescribed by the period.

The International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), which was a Federation of National Women's Suffrage Associations, held its inaugural conference in Berlin in 1904, its object was:

"To secure the enfranchisement of the women of all

nations, and to unite the friends of Woman's Suffrage throughout the world in organised co-operation and fraternal helpfulness." (10)

At the outbreak of the First World War, the IWSA mounted a massive campaign in an international attempt to stop the war, and its work became an integral part of the history of the women's peace movement.

By 1916, the IWSA with its American President, Carrie Chapman Catt (11), had 26 affiliated associations representing Western and Eastern Europe, the British Dominion countries of Australia, Canada and South Africa, together with the United States and China (12). In 1920 the IWSA Congress, held in Geneva, agreed to expand the aims of the IWSA in a new charter of women's rights. This was to be a continuing trend with issues such as equal pay and the right to work, the nationality of married women and the status of wives and mothers being added to the suffrage agenda. The aims had broadened so considerably by its tenth Congress in 1926, held in Paris, that the name was changed to the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, with a membership drawn from 42 countries (13).

However, despite the extent of Britain's Empire and the membership of the IAWSEC of countries such as Jamaica, Porto Rica, South Africa, Uruguay, and China, consideration of the position of women of colour, was limited. Most often when these countries were mentioned it was in relation to the rights of white women living

there, not the indigenous population. Although there was plenty of rhetoric in terms of "women worldwide", the:

"concept of human solidarity as superior to racial, or national solidarity....." (14)

usually only embraced white women.

A notable exception concerned the position of Indian women, perhaps stemming from the length of Britain's occupation in that country. For example, a conference in October 1919 in London, arranged jointly by the Britain & India Association, considered the position of Indian women and their enfranchisement, with a discussion opened by Mrs N.C. Sen and Mrs Sarojini Naidu (15). The conference was attended by both Indian men and women and had delegates from the IWSN, WIL, CWSS, THE AFL, THE NCW FWW and the WCG (16). But large-scale concern about their Indian sisters was expressed most notably following the publication of Katharine Mayo's book, "Mother India" in 1927.

Eleanor Rathbone, NUSEC's president, horrified at Mayo's accounts of child-marriage, Indian widowhood and unskilled midwifery practices, called a public meeting in November of that year to awaken the:

"sense of responsibility which rests on the women voters of this country with regard to the status and well-being of Indian women, so long as the British Parliament has control over the destinies of India." (17)

Although motivated by this 'responsibility', Rathbone was clear that she must be careful to:

"strip the problem bare of political and race prejudice.." (18)

The other most common concern of the Women's Movement which touched on the lives of women of colour was the question of slavery. A resolution being passed, for example, at the 1923 IWSA Congress in Rome supporting the League of Nations' Commission of Investigation:

"including the selling or giving of women and girls into marriage without their consent." (19)

The practice of child slavery (mui tsai) in Hong Kong was also something which the Movement had fought against for many years. The forced examination of 'native' prostitutes in tolerated brothels in many of Britain's colonies such as Malay and Kenya, was a recurrent theme, particularly in the WFL's reports (20) and was tackled as part of the double moral standard debate. Certainly the WFL's higher consciousness of women's rights in the rest of the world was indicated by regular news items in its paper, 'The Vote'.

The feminist who most notably made a connection with the the oppression of black people as a whole in South Africa, was Winifred Holtby (SPG). She travelled to South Africa in 1926 where:

"In her mind she began to substitute the noun "women" for the noun "natives," and found that these fiercely held, passionately declared sentiments of white South Africa coincided almost word for word with the old

arguments in England against women's enfranchisement..." (21) Determined on her return to Britain to publicise the political injustices of South Africa, during the ensuing years she collected money to send to black workers' organisations in South Africa, wrote dozens of articles in journals such as 'Time & Tide' and made her analysis of British Imperialism in her novel, "Mandoa, Mandoa!" (22). But despite her experience in and connections with the Women's Movement, she did not attempt to harness its support, despite having voiced her concern to Vera Brittain over the position of black women under South Africa's repressive laws (23).

Unlike the American Women's Movement where many pioneering feminists were black, it is difficult to establish participation by non-white women in the British Movement. Although the comparison is unbalanced to some extent in that the population of black people in Britain at that time was not comparable in size to that of America. Miss Lena Sorabji (24), who was a member of the NUSEC, and whose name appears several times in connection with the campaign for Indian women following Maya's book, is the only visible representative of what must be viewed from a late twentieth century perspective as a rather restricted interpretation of internationalism.

The organisations are examined largely in terms of their function. This might have been as co-ordinating agencies for the dissemination of action and/or policy; as originators of policy; in order to represent and fight for the rights of their membership; as

a way of securing the success of a single issue; or to promote a specific ideology through the support of a political party. Their development is also studied through changes in name, objects and personnel, as well as in relation to their growth or decline. In so far as the structure directly contributed to the success or otherwise of the issues they were promoting, some aspects of the composition of organisations is also dealt with. Most importantly, their affiliations; the methods employed; finance; and the size and formation of the membership. And lastly, the advent of conflicts, both internal and external also makes their contribution.

The issues and campaigns are examined through the organisations as a way of determining their scale of importance to the Movement. This can be assessed by the extent to which the issues were taken up and by noting the allocation of time and resources given to individual issues by the organisations. It is also possible to some extent, to chart the pattern of opposition to women's emancipation by calculating the length of time that an issue was on the agenda. The settlement of old issues and the development of new ones, as well as the recurrence of campaigns deemed to have been successfully settled sometimes denote opposition. The responsiveness of the Movement to new developments was also a sound indicator of their operational progress and ability to set new priorities as they arose.

Tracing the links between organisations and the network which existed can be established in a number of ways. There were

the official affiliations between organisations which were set up after the 1918 RP Act as a way of reaching more women. Other connections were forged through shared personnel who held multiple memberships of organisations, as well as being office holders in as many organisations as time would permit. Accounts of joint demonstrations, public meetings, deputations and marches all provided occasions on which large numbers of groups from a variety of interests came together, and where patterns of co-operation emerged. Lists of subscribers and those who gave donations, together with details of speakers and lecturers at monthly meetings show a duplication of membership and a common pool of speakers. A growing number of women's clubs, restaurants and other favoured locations made up a circuit of venues which came to be regularly used by feminist groups for meetings, press conferences and celebrations. And all such sources when cross-referenced and compared, demonstrate the interweaving nature and extent of the support mechanism which criss-crossed the Movement to promote the cause of women's emancipation.

There was also the cross-fertilisation of ideas through women who held numerous offices in organisations which represented different strands of feminism and different sectional interests. Such a variety of influences gave rise to professional organisations like the Women's Engineering Society (WES), started in 1921, to sustain employment for women in engineering, giving rise to the Electrical Association for Women (EAW) in 1924, whose aim was to:

"collect and distribute information on the use of electricity, more particularly as affecting the interests of women." (25)

This attempt to make sure that women became involved in the growth of a new industry from its popular inception, translated itself into a multiplicity of concerns. These went from enabling housewives to contribute to and get information on labour-saving electrical devices; to promoting the representation of women on public bodies, such as the new Electricity Boards; to taking advantage of possible new educational and employment opportunities for girls.

The range of concerns was demonstrated by the membership of the EAW's Council, with the National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT), the Women's Local Government Society (WLGS), and the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) being just some of the prominent groups who were affiliated to it. Caroline Haslett, ex-Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) member and secretary to the WES, who was also on the Executive Committee of the Six Point Group (SPG), was its founder. By 1927, the EAW's President was the first woman MP Lady Astor, and one of its Vice-Principals was the Labour MP and ex-National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) organizer, Ellen Wilkinson. It came as no surprise, therefore, to find the EAW taking part in many of the major franchise demonstrations of the late 1920s.

In reviewing this extended network, it is important to bear in mind the need to come to the subject as free as possible from contemporary preconceptions about the organisations concerned. Otherwise there might be a tendency to dismiss, misinterpret, or undervalue the work of some of the groups involved; either because of their imagined character or because of what such groups have subsequently come to represent. One such example might be the YWCA, which might hardly be considered today as having had a place in this network. However, it did make its contribution to the welfare of working women which was based on its belief that:

"The YWCA holds that women should be given every opportunity by State and employer to earn a livelihood." (26)

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) set up hostels for working girls to provide badly-needed accommodation and leisure facilities. Its Industrial Law Bureau investigated complaints regarding working conditions, assisted with compensation claims, provided information on industrial law and ran its own health insurance scheme. Ishbel Macdonald, who worked for the National Council of Women (NCW) and became a member of the London County Council (LCC) in 1928, and was the daughter of the Labour leader Ramsay Macdonald, ran the Youth Section which was involved in the franchise extension campaign of the 1920s. Other redoubtable women fighters such as Lady Astor; Mrs Wintringham, the second woman MP who was a Women's Freedom League (WFL) member and the trade unionist and Labour leader, Margaret Bondfield, were all, for

example, members of a 1924 fund-raising committee. Gertrude Tuckwell was a Vice-Chairman of the Law Bureau and the YWCA's President was Edith Picton-Turbervill.

Edith Picton-Turbervill was a good illustration of the diverse nature of women's participation in the Women's Movement network of the 1920s. She was a social worker and writer, a leading advocate of ordination for women and a suffrage worker. She first stood as a Labour Party candidate in the 1922 General Election, was a member of the NUSEC Executive, the League of the Church Militant's (LCM) Vice President in 1923 and in the previous year had been nominated as President of the Women's Sanitary Inspectors' and Health Visitors' Association (WSIHVA), who were franchise supporters, and was a member of the Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations' (CCWO) drafting committee. She was also a member of the WFL and the NCW. On the international front she worked for the International Woman Suffrage Association (IWSA), and like her close friend and colleague, Maude Royden (President of the LCM) she was one of the first women to preach in an Anglican Church in Geneva in 1920 at the IWSA's Congress.

Picton-Turbervill's record of work was a typical example of the fluid intermeshing of interest and involvement within the Movement from group to group. It demonstrates the determination after the War to use the power of the vote to review and improve all aspects of women's lives; no part of which was understood to exist in isolation. The women who have been included have been

dealt with in terms of their activities within specific organisations, their role in those groups, offices held, and participation in campaigns, rather than in biographical terms.

The interest lies in tracing the links between the organisations through the personnel, and the cross-fertilization of ideas, theories and ideologies. The frustration has been in not having sufficient space in which to include so many more of the women who made such a vital contribution to these years.

One consideration throughout the work was the need for an appreciation of the social, economic and political factors which provided the background against which this feminist activity took place. The difficulty is in selection; in estimating, for example, how much detail is necessary of the Government of the day, in order to understand fully the context within which these women were campaigning. It is hoped that sufficient information of this kind has been included to prevent any distortions or misinterpretations from taking place. There would certainly be room in a more concentrated study of, for instance, the General Elections, for greater research into the motivations and behind the scenes activity of politicians. This would bring an increased understanding into political activity and women's participation within it at that time.

In such a broad account as this, the tendency to focus in greater detail on the larger organisations, and by so doing, to

place the emphasis on activity within the capital, risks producing an unbalanced picture of events. An attempt has been made to draw attention to major events in other cities and regions throughout Great Britain, as well referring to the regional organisations of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Apart from Liddington & Norris' (1984) study, the neglect of regional developments in the Women's Movement in previous secondary sources has led to an undervaluing of the contribution made by women all over the country. This may also, in part, have led to an underacknowledgement of the extent of participation by women in the Movement. The briefest consultation of annual reports will testify to the continuation of a large regional network of women's organisations in this period, although the nature of concerns may have widened, their existence can be in no doubt. Further research into establishing the nature of this involvement would add greatly to recreating the flavour of the Movement with something approaching veracity.

From the nineteenth century origins of the Women's Movement, there were men who supported the women's claims and assisted them in gaining access to power through male institutions. The contribution of such men has to be acknowledged as part of the emancipation story. However, in this research, although male suffrage societies and individual male supporters are included where their participation contributes to the description of events, reference to such men is minimal. This is not because their co-operation is being deliberately minimized or denied, but because this study strictly concerns the Women's Movement and the feminist

network. It is not about the contribution of men to the Women's Movement, which could also form the substance of another research topic.

The essence of this research is an investigation into how people, both individuals and groups, exercise power and influence. The emphasis is on the positive, in that it attempts to examine in the period from 1918 to 1928 what women in the Women's Movement achieved or tried to achieve in political and economic terms. It looks at how they instituted their rights and how they sought to exercise those rights, as well as how they resisted the attempts to prevent them exercising their rights. Contrary to what has sometimes been portrayed as a less than exciting period, it seems most exciting in that it was a time when women were travelling from a period of influence to a period where they began to be engaged in the exercise of power.

The size and complexity of the Movement and the breadth of issues under review, makes the task of doing this subject justice rather daunting at times. Not least because the nature of the concepts involved, such as feminism and power, are ones that may be fraught with inevitable contradictions. There is always the danger of introducing too many generalities when writing about "women", which fail to take variation into account. Anne Phillips' analysis of such difficulties is helpful:

"The nature of women's oppression does not point to a neat and easy solution, and the choices faced

through the centuries have rarely been between 'right' and 'wrong' ideas." (27)

Discussion of such difficulties led one interviewee, Dr Ina Beasley, to ponder on the near impossibility of capturing anything resembling the truth on paper (28). Bearing such problems in mind is, at least, a bid at avoiding them; and Brian Harrison's assessment of such historiographical difficulties is an optimistic comfort:

"The task is impossible, but well worth attempting." (29)

Notes

1. RILEY, 1988, p.8.
2. SPENDER, 1981, p.138.
3. BANKS, 1981, p.3.
4. BANKS, 1985, p.vii.
5. ALBERTI, 1989, p.6.
6. RILEY, 1988, p.10.
7. BANKS, 1981, pp.7 & 8.
8. LOW, 1926.
9. KAPLAN, 1982, p.61.
10. MITTON, 1916, p.169.
11. 'The Vote' March 7 1924, p.74.
12. Ibid.
13. WHITTICK, 1979.
14. 'International Women's Suffrage News' October 1922, p.11.
15. Sarojini Naidu 1879-1949, a leader in the Indian Women's Movement and in Indian politics as the President of the Indian National Congress. See FORBES, 1982, p.529-530.
16. 'International Women's Suffrage News' October 1919, p.15.
17. NUSEC Annual Report 1927, p.17.
18. STOCKS, 1950, p.125.
19. 'International Women's Suffrage News' October 1922, p.11.
20. WFL Annual Reports, 1927, p.19; 1928, p.20.
21. BRITAIN, 1940, p.214.
22. BRITAIN, 1940, Chapters 13,14,15.
23. Apart from persuading Lady rhondda to contribute financially to her South africa fund.

24. NUSEC Annual report 1927, p.17.
'The Woman's Leader' December 16 1927. p.361.
25. EAW, 1924 Draft Rules, p.1. Lady Astor Collection,
1416/1/1/829.
26. GATES, 1924, p.544.
27. PHILLIPS, 1987, p.12
The remainder of her analysis asks some vital questions,
relevant to this historical period and our own:
"How, for example, do you formulate demands that will reflect
both women's needs as workers and women's needs as mothers
- how do you campaign on one front without thereby
subordinating the tasks on the other? How do you resolve
the tensions women have experienced between insisting on
their equality with men and insisting on their difference?"
28. Interview on 7th November 1989 with Dr Ina Beasley, born
1898.
29. HARRISON, 1978, p.15.

Chapter 2

Setting the Scene

"We are suffragists, and like Luther,
Here stand we - we can do no other." (1)

There has been a tendency in the majority of historical accounts, in the light of the comparison made with the concerted pre-war suffrage agitation, to claim that the Women's Movement ceased its political work at the outbreak of the First World War to enable its members to join the war effort. Although the Women's Movement undoubtedly concentrated its efforts on relief work and the needs of industry, the claim that the commitment to the enfranchisement of women and actual franchise work were both abandoned, not only belies the complexity of the events, but does an injustice to the Movement. It underestimates the Movement's ability to respond to new claims to protect women's rights in differing circumstances.

This chapter traces the continuous development of the Women's Movement through the First World War and the sustained struggle not only to fight for women's suffrage, but to defend women's rights in wartime. The resurgence of a mass suffrage campaign by many of the major suffrage organisations, together with the political campaign to successfully secure the inclusion of some

women in the 1918 Representation of the People Act, form the second part of the chapter.

When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4th 1914, both politicians and the military expressed the conviction that the War would be over by the end of that year. Churchill's enjoinder to the civilian population of "Business as usual" came to represent this expectation and it was against this background that the suffrage societies and women's groups were to decide on the course to take. The other influence was the general repulsion at the invasion of a small, neutral country like Belgium by the military aggression of the German Empire. This sense of outrage was coupled with a mounting distaste, since the 1870s, for the Prussian army's arrogance and a fear of German expansionism with the increase of its fleet. The growth of an almost hysterical patriotic fervour which hinged on this distaste and resulted in a rush to enlist, were two further factors which are important in assessing the developments in the Women's Movement during the War years and in the reconstruction which followed.

During the war, there were four marked phases of response from women's organisations. From August 1914 to the Spring of 1915, working women were badly affected by the unemployment which was caused by the immediate halt in non-essential production and the international disruption of trade, which particularly affected women's trades. These were eventualities which the Government had neglected to plan for and were slow to respond to. The second

phase, during the spring and summer of 1915, brought a massive enlistment of female labour into munitions work and heavy industry. During the remainder of 1915, and 1916, as the casualties increased and conscription was introduced, the substitution of male, by female, labour in all sections of industry, commerce and the service industries, marked out the third phase of the War's effect on the home front with its particular effect on women. At the beginning of 1916, Government initiatives to redraft the Franchise Register, introduced a fourth phase which relaunched the suffrage struggle proper and resulted in the limited enfranchisement of women over 30 with the Representation of the People Act, February 1918.

Marwick has commented in his work on women in the First World War that:

"Far more than extreme feminists would allow, the changes affecting women were very dependent on the changes affecting men." (2)

Indeed, the fate of men and women are inextricably linked; but not with women taking a passive role, as Marwick seems to imply.

At the outbreak of the War there were rational decisions and choices to be made at a time of shock and confusion. The pull and tug of mixed loyalties could not feasibly facilitate the maintenance of a purist ideological stance by individuals or organisations; especially at a time when there was so much work to be done by and for women. The differentiation between the path to

be followed as adherents of an ideology and a movement, and as individuals, highlighted one of the complications which clouded the issue for many in the Women's Movement. As Emmeline Pankhurst was later to record:

"Yet the woman suffrage movement (at least many sections of it) was split by the war. In our own and many countries the idea of the solidarity of women had taken a deep hold upon many of us; so deep that it could not be shaken even by the fact that the men of many nations were at war." (3)

The duty of supporting the nation, because individuals had relations or friends directly involved in the fighting, was, however, not an easy one to ignore or dispute.

A broad categorisation of the Movement reveals a three-way split: those groups who supported the war effort; those who "kept the suffrage flag flying"; and those who worked for peace. However, the simplicity of those divisions was compounded by the complexities imposed by external factors already noted, which marked out the different phases of the War. Such factors meant that groups who had testified to having suspended all political work immediately, plunged back into the struggle in 1916 when the suffrage issue rose to the surface once again. Those who determined to sustain their campaigning, nevertheless also involved themselves in war work; although they limited themselves to relief work with women and children, and giving assistance to refugees. Even pacifist women went abroad and joined the war effort, nursing British or allied soldiers. But whatever approach they adopted, and

whatever permutation of effort this induced, the continuity of the Women's Movement was never threatened, nor the suffrage struggle abandoned.

The fact that everyone expected the War to be at an end by Christmas 1914, might be considered to have influenced the NUWSS members (consulted by post), who agreed to the suspension of political activity in August. Certainly the efficiency and speed with which the NUWSS and other suffrage groups threw themselves into relief work indicated a desire to dispatch the whole business as swiftly as possible. Nonetheless, Mrs Fawcett spelt out the Unions's duty:

"Now is the time for resolute effort and self-sacrifice on the part of everyone of us to help our country." (4)

Many other suffrage societies could see where their 'duty' lay, and appropriated their resources to the war effort. Victorian and Edwardian women, especially middle-class ones, were raised on the concept of 'duty'. Naomi Mitchison's mother impressed upon her:

".....the feeling that there were duties beyond the family, some things were particularly women's, things which women could do better than men...looking after people." (5)

What requires emphasis, is that even those societies that had pledged all their support to the war effort, at no time relinquished the franchise philosophy which underpinned their organisations. The NUWSS's 1915 Annual Report made it clear that:

"...the Societies have in no sense departed from their

devotion to the cause for which they exist, or from their determination to obtain it." (6)

Patriotic duty may have been a prime mover, but these societies were astute enough to realise that it could be duty not only in the service of their country, but also in the service of their suffrage goal. Relief work, as it progressed through the weeks and months of the War, presented many opportunities to demonstrate what a major contribution women could make to society. The NUWSS's assessment of their first year of war work noted that:

"The work of the National Union this year includes little direct Suffrage propaganda, but suffragists have done work of first-rate importance to the interests of women and to the furtherance of the cause of their enfranchisement." (7)

These women appreciated their own worth and wanted a wider audience to recognise that:

"This readiness of women to take up public work is in no small degree due to the educational work of the organised bodies of women, especially in recent years of Women's Suffrage Societies." (8)

The NUWSS and others also acknowledged that life itself does not go into suspended animation during wartime; life may be disrupted, but it carries on, and nothing can remain unchanged:

"There is no process by which the life of the mind can be sterilized, nor do nations pass through a period of hibernation." (9)

Suffrage women wanted to ensure that they kept their organisations in good working order, so that at the end of the war they would be prepared to continue with the fight. Their continued activity also kept them in the forefront of the public's mind:

"It is organised opinion that counts. Those who are keeping our Societies together and our machinery well-oiled, are rendering inestimable service to the Cause." (10)

They were also serving the Cause, by serving women. One of their wider functions within the Movement had always been to support and encourage women by coming together in societies. They were not only continuing to do this by praising and publicising the work which women were doing, but also by implementing initiatives which were helping the war effort, that would subsequently be of use to women in the future. The training centres which the LSWS set up, for example, taught women new skills which could improve and expand their future employment prospects. Education and lecture programmes were designed to aid women to comprehend the War and related issues; such education was permanently enriching (11).

Suffrage groups, like the NUWSS, had declared that they would suspend their political activity which aimed at gaining power for women, and join the national effort in supporting the Government. Ironically, they still found themselves in situations where, as seen later in this chapter, they fought for representation on the numerous wartime committees in a bid for influence and power for women.

Despite the enormous contribution they made towards relief work and the war effort, they did not abandon the fight to improve women's living conditions. In the process, they frequently found themselves in conflict with the Government, employers and trade unions:

"....your committee has necessarily been faced with many difficult problems with regard to training, wages and trade unionism....and they endeavoured throughout to be guided by the principle of seeking equality of opportunity, of training, and of payment as between men and women.... In pursuance of this determination they have continually refused to supply workers for unjustly paid work." (12)

This may appear to have been inconsistent behaviour for women pledged to support their country, but initially, as Mrs Fawcett wrote:

"The alleviation of distress among women caused by the dislocation of employment due to the war was our first object." (13)

There was intense co-operation between a host of women's groups during the War. and links were forged which were intended to extend the network. Greater expertise was needed and co-operation was the way to develop it. The Manchester & District Federation of the NUWSS described their activities where:

"The co-operation of other women's organisations and women interested in industrial questions was solicited and enquiries were set on foot as to local wartime conditions of women

in industry." (14)

Old allegiances were strengthened as suffrage societies and women's industrial groups worked together on many committees such as the NUWSS's Women's Interests Committee. A sub-committee of this, the Women's War Interests Committee, set up by the Manchester Federation, consisted of representatives from six women's organisations and nine mixed trade unions (15).

These women were courageous in their harrying of male trade unionists, employers and the Government at a time when they were likely to be labelled, unpatriotic. Especially as these three forces had jointly set aside their differences for the purpose of promoting mutual self-interest during the War under the Treasury Agreement. The Movement's handling of the circumstances to enhance their public standing and win concessions for women, by refusing to concede to the status quo, was an example of astute political opportunism. In the light of this political adroitness, Mrs Fawcett's words take on a new meaning:

"Let us show ourselves worthy of citizenship, whether our claim be recognised or not." (16)

Labour women were also 'fighting' on another front, for the cause of peace. The involvement of the Women's Movement in the development of a peace campaign and its attendant organisations, has already been well documented by Anne Wiltsher and, more recently, by Jill Liddington (17). However, it is important to note the link between feminism, suffrage and peace. Peace and

internationalism had long been basic tenets of the Movement; there was a recognition of the divisiveness of an ideology which sought to embody the power of the State in force, which could lead to militarism that the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) declared to be:

"the negation of the feminist Movement." (18)

Suffrage women were unsure of which combination of tactics would best serve the Cause. For many, the peace issue was of greatest importance, not to the exclusion of the suffrage cause, but in order to throw the suffrage question into sharper relief. A policy which cut across international sisterhood and endorsed the absoluteness of 'might', had to be resisted if the issue of women's equality were to stand any chance of success. It was essential to triumph over the revival of the argument from force.

Whilst socialist feminists, therefore, had a double motivation to resist the tide of war, Helena Swanwick, who had left the NUWSS executive in 1915 because of the Union's war-time policies, remembered that:

"It is worth noting throughout the War, the Labour women's organisations stood their ground as pacifists far better than the men's....the WCG and the WLL were very active, and the ILP women exhausted themselves in their difficult toil." (19)

The combination of effort on all fronts by the WLL was reported to its members in its Annual Report for 1917 when it spoke of its "pioneer work":

"....the vitality of our organisation has been maintained, and much has been accomplished, not only by our influence on opinion, but by actual successes in gaining reforms that we have had at heart, in helping to hold back successive waves of reaction and in keeping steadfast our hope for the early accomplishment of a people's peace." (20)

Labour women also sustained international links with women abroad during the War through the Women's International Council of Socialist and Labour Organisations (21).

The third group comprised those suffrage societies who judged that their major priority, despite the demands of the War, was to sustain propaganda work. Difficult to quantify, there was a hardcore of societies who were continuously active. This hardcore consisted largely of groups with militant tendencies, or a section of their membership who had a history of militant activity. Their one concession to the war, however, as with the Women's Freedom League (WFL), was to suspend their militancy.

The three largest organisations were the WFL, the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS) and the United Suffragists (US). Originally started by ex-Women's Social & Political Union (WSPU) members, the WFL worked under the Presidency of Charlotte Despard, a socialist, who was also active in the peace movement

throughout the War (Liddington 1989). Sylvia Pankhurst's ELFS predominantly championed the rights of working class women and the US drew its membership from many different suffrage groups. It had the ex-WSPU, Evelyn Sharp on its executive committee and aimed to function as an umbrella organisation to unite the Movement.

At a special meeting on August 10th 1914, the WFL:
 "re-affirmed the urgency of keeping the suffrage flag flying" and the need "to organise a Woman's Suffrage National Aid Corps whose chief object would be to render help to the women and children of the nation." (22)

Working closely with the WFL, the ELFS reflected the passionate socialism of its founder, Sylvia Pankhurst, which had caused her expulsion from the Pankhurst's WSPU in the early months of 1914. The ELFS's membership refused to compromise or sacrifice the needs of working women whose overburdened lives would inevitably become harder as a result of the War. 'The Woman's Dreadnought', August 15th, declared that:

"The Federation feels that its principal duty is to bring pressure to bear on the Government....to secure justice for the working women of the country." (23)

One of the most immediately effective ways of achieving this goal was framed in the fifth of the Federation's demands:

"That the Parliamentary franchise be immediately granted to women in order that they help in minimising, as far as possible, the horrors of war." (24)

Anticipating the nature of wartime problems, they also argued for the Governmental control of food supplies; the provision of work for men and women with equal rates of pay; and reserved places for working women on Government committees dealing with food, prices, employment and relief.

Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, former WSPU leaders and current members of the WFL, had given their newspaper, 'Votes for Women' to the US in August 1914. In its first edition under new ownership, the US made its stand clear:

" 'Business as usual', the national slogan for those of us who are not going to Belgium and are not wearing khaki, will hardly do for suffragists.... Is the work of eight long years to be scrapped on account of this war? Are women who are suffragists to relapse again into mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the heroic defenders of their country? Are suffrage organisations useless as such until the "Nations in Arms" cease killing one another from sheer exhaustion? Such are not the opinions of the US." (25)

Their policy was to "fly two flags", by continuing their work for women's suffrage and helping with relief work through the Women's Emergency Corps (WEC), a volunteer force begun by Lena Ashwell who belonged to the US and to the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL).

The AFL was one of five smaller groups involved in the continuing franchise struggle. It had discovered, in the early weeks of the War, that there was still a great deal of interest in

the franchise issue, as its regular Hyde Park meetings and its stall at White City were still well patronised. On the basis of this continued public sympathy, it seized the opportunity to keep such interest alive by carrying on with its propaganda work (26).

The Forward Cymric Suffrage Union (FCSU) with its network of branches in eight Welsh and six English counties, plus 28 branches in London, had placed the following notice in papers in England and Wales at the outbreak of war:

"The FCSU has decided to continue propaganda work as usual, as Welsh women are of the opinion that the present time is the most opportune for pointing out the need of the voice of women in the government of the nations." (27)

Under the Presidency of Edith Mansell Moulin, who had been a member of the WSPU and the Church League for Women's Suffrage (CLWS), the FCSU worked a good deal with the ELFS and also intended to combine relief work for the women and children of Wales with their franchise work.

Two Irish societies involved were the Belfast Women's Suffrage Society (BWSS) and the militant Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL). The BWSS was also concerned to combine its political and welfare work; and the IWFL's determination to continue the struggle arose from its outrage at the suffering that women would be caused in a conflict not of their making:

"As Suffragists (whatever our individual feelings) it is

our duty to preserve an attitude of neutrality with regard to the merits of war, to concentrate upon our demands for votes for women. That we may have a weapon to prevent future wars, and to do all we can to bring about a speedy and lasting peace." (28)

This was an interesting analysis, differentiating between the response of women as individuals and as adherents of a cause and highlighting the resulting conflict of interest.

The Northern Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage (NMFWS) based in Edinburgh, with branches in Scotland and the North of England, was under the leadership of its founder, Maud Arncliffe-Sennett, who lived in London. She had been an actress and, as such, was also a member of the AFL. Originally a member both of the WSPU and the NUWSS, latterly she had joined the WFL and was a close friend of Charlotte Despard. She had inherited her mother's factory and was particularly interested in promoting the cause of working women and had given some financial assistance to the ELFS. She urged the NMFWS to remember that:

"It is of the utmost importance that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn off our propaganda, no matter how momentous the crisis of to-day...remain steadfast in the cause that you have adopted, and weave in the emancipation of women in its relation to the war..." (29)

In addition to established groups who continued the franchise struggle, four new organisations emerged. The Women's

International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF), which originated at the Women's International Peace Conference in the Hague in April 1915; the Suffragettes of the Women's Social & Political Union (SWSPU), who held their initial meeting in October 1915; the Independent Women's Social & Political (IWSPU) who were formed in March 1916; and the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations (SJCWIO) which was started in February 1916.

The British executive of the WILPF, begun in September 1915 (30) was the result of the disillusion and discontent of a number of suffrage women at the failure of several peace initiatives. The links between pacifism and feminism were seen in their aims to:

"establish the principles of right rather than might, and co-operation rather than conflict, in national and international affairs, and for this purpose to work for the development of the ideals underlying modern democracy in the interests of constructive peace, and the emancipation of women and the protection of their interests..." (31)

True to its objectives, the WILPF supported the work of the hardcore of suffrage societies in their wartime campaigns.

The SWSPU and the IWSPU membership came from the Pankhurst's original WSPU. In August 1914 Mrs Pankhurst circularised the membership to the effect that the Union's activities were to be temporarily suspended (32). She enjoined her

followers to take advantage of the respite "to recuperate" after their struggles; she assured them that:

"the WSPU will at the first possible moment step forward into the political arena in order to compel the enactment of a measure giving votes to women on the same terms as men." (33)

However, after a speech made by Christabel Pankhurst in September 1914 explaining the Union's policy to support the War (34), Mrs Pankhurst, Christabel and a handful of 'loyal' WSPU women proceeded to work with Lloyd George in a fervour of jingoistic propagandizing.

A year later, WSPU members began to voice their displeasure at the Pankhurst's activities. Although many women had already left the WSPU, both members and ex-members from all over the country attended a meeting in Westminster on October 22nd 1915, supported by a sizeable volume of letters and telegrams sent to the meeting to decry the leadership's policy of:

"voicing a male philosophy and receiving the applause of men." (35)

Chaired by Mrs Rose Lamartine Yates, the meeting resolved to condemn the present work of the WSPU 'officials' and their abandonment of suffrage work. Whilst reaffirming its own belief in the Women's Movement, the meeting also called for the production of audited accounts, as no annual report had been produced for several years.

A second meeting on November 25th, chaired by Elinor Penn Gaskell, accused Mrs Pankhurst of participating in political activities which were outside the Union's remit and of using WSPU assets and staff in the process. The membership were upset that the Union's resources had not been utilised to assist in safeguarding the wartime interests of women and children. They had regarded Mrs Pankhurst's original advice in 1914 to take a rest as unpatriotic, and many of them had joined other organisations or gone into some kind of national service. The meeting also demanded an explanation as to why Christabel was spending so much time in Paris, and called for her resignation (36).

Clearly exhibiting the autocracy of which they made no secret, Christabel responded to this challenge by telling a reporter:

"I cannot take the matter very seriously....My mother and I are at the head of this movement and we intend to remain there."

Similarly, Mrs Pankhurst was apparently, "treating the (new) movement with the contempt it deserves" (37). Sylvia, now totally estranged from both her mother and sister, had no comment to make; others were less reticent. Mrs Despard and Nina Boyle of the WFL viewed it as the inevitable result of undemocratic rule, and Dora Montefiore, also an ex-WSPU member was more scathing in her belief that the Pankhursts' private ambitions for power and status had at last been revealed (38). What was left of the WSPU membership then formed two new groups, the IWSPU and the SWSPU, and the Pankhursts

were left with what Helena Swanwick saw as "a very small body of extremists." (39)

The last new organisation of the War years, was the SJCIVO which was formed at a meeting called by the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) on February 11th 1916, with a constitution adopted just over a month later on March 14th. The call for closer co-operation among the women's groups representing female industrial workers came from the Women's Labour League (WLL). Initially, therefore, the SJC comprised the WLL, the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG), the Railway Women's Guild (RWG), the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) and the WTUL. Its three aims were to draw up a register of women willing to become members of local or central Government committees; to devise a policy for Labour women on these committees to assist them in their work; and to initiate joint propaganda campaigns on subjects of concern to industrial women (40).

At the outbreak of the War, 'The Labour Woman' contained many articles by Labour activists condemning the inevitable horrors of war and emphasising the need for international socialism in the face of this capitalist conflict. But rhetoric soon had to yield to pragmatism as first, unemployment, and then, exploitation at work, engulfed women industrial workers.

The SJC's objectives enabled them to dovetail their work with the active suffrage societies' campaigns whenever their

interests coincided. Working links and joint memberships facilitated an exchange of ideas and resources which strengthened combined ventures. One only has to look at the list of women who were on the British Organising Committee for the Women's Peace Conference at the Hague in April 1915, to trace the collaborative network (41).

All the societies mentioned in this chapter, were pledged to remaining active in the defence of women's rights on a wide front. Indeed, the WFL had specified that they had adopted the role of 'watchdog' for women's affairs during this period of special need (42).

The three most prominent campaigns of the War concerned the equal moral standard, equal pay, and the adoption of a franchise bill to include women on the same terms as men. Any idea that all political agitation for women's rights went into abeyance for the duration of the War has to be re-examined in the light of the following events.

The Equal Moral Standard.

Women's organisations did not have long to wait before their campaigning skills were needed. A triple attack was launched by the Government against the perennial target of women's morality. This consisted of subjecting women's behaviour to observation by the police; restricting the times during which women could visit

public houses; and reviving the spirit of the Contagious Diseases Acts. As ever, the women who suffered most were working-class, although the regulations which were imposed did not preclude women of other classes also being affected.

Wives and dependents of soldiers were entitled to separation allowances for themselves and their children. Initially, there was a lengthy verification process involved to ensure that allowances were not paid until the claimant's status was confirmed. However, in October 1914, a War Office order was issued through the Home Office which resulted in the Secretary of State instructing the police authorities:

"The Army Council desire to have the assistance of the Police in the measures which are being taken to provide for the withholding of Separation Allowances payable to wives or dependents of soldiers in the event of serious misconduct on the part of the recipient." (43)

"Serious misconduct" could consist of immorality, criminal charges, gross neglect of children, or habitual drinking. The local police were to liaise with the relief agencies to give them the results of their surveillance of army wives. Where 'unworthiness' was detected, the woman was warned, and if the offence persisted, her allowance was withdrawn.

The second method of controlling women's behaviour came in November 1914 when the Army Council issued an order stating that women were not to be served in public houses after 6 p.m. There

were also "unofficial" agreements, such as that in the London Metropolitan District where women were also to be refused drinks before 11.30 a.m. (44) Such restrictions were particularly stringent in districts where there was a large military presence.

The third step impugning women's behaviour, concerned the virtual reintroduction of the Contagious Diseases Act, and was authorised under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) which:

"nullified all existing constitutional safeguards for civil liberty. Anyone who contravened the regulations established under these Acts could be tried by court martial as though he had been a soldier on active service." (45)

The Army Council, under the aegis of DORA, issued orders for a curfew whereby women "of a certain class" found on the streets in districts frequented by military personnel between the hours of 7 p.m. and 8 a.m., were to be arrested.

Active suffrage societies and other groups in the Movement were outraged at these measures and the implications for women's freedom. The cover of 'Votes for Women' for November 13th 1914 carried an illustration of a soldier's wife with her children, challenging an officer who had entered her home:

"I, too, am serving my country. I, too, have the right to my pay. If women had votes, you would not dare to come prying here." (46)



The WFL had heard in the Autumn of 1914 that the Plymouth Watch Committee had suggested to its Town Council that the CD Acts should be revived. The WFL began an immediate opposition campaign, joined by the US, the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union (BDWSU), the ELFS and other local suffrage groups which defeated the Plymouth attempt. The order was actually in operation in Cardiff, and three women had been arrested and sentenced to over sixty days imprisonment. The women's groups secured yet another success in Cardiff by the rapid mass mobilisation of its local network to secure the women's release and quash the curfew (47).

To assist them in protecting women from increased wartime risks, the WFL instituted a Women Police Volunteer Corp at the end of August 1914, with Nina Boyle as its Chief. Uniformed women were on duty in parks, gardens and commons during the summer, and there were women officers at every Metropolitan Police Court to oversee women's interests in what could often be a hostile environment to women (48).

On January 24th 1915 a demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square organized by the WFL, the US, the ELFS and the NMFWS. Among the speakers were Mrs Despard, Nina Boyle, Evelyn Sharp, Barbara Ayrton Gould, previously a militant, and now a member of the US and the LP, Sylvia Pankhurst and Mrs Cavendish Bentinck of the US. The large crowd passed a resolution which:

"indignantly repudiates the slanderous aspersions cast by irresponsible and ill-informed persons on women of all

classes, wives and dependents of men in H. M. Army... protests against all the legislation by which soldiers' wives are insulted, restrictions are enforced against women only, and vice is regulated in a way that protects men only. That this meeting demands the enfranchisement of women without further delay." (49)

A deputation was sent from the meeting to the War Office; and in the weeks that followed, the US held similar meetings in Manchester, Edinburgh and Chesham. The ELFS also put forward their demands that women should be treated by the civil law on equal terms with men, and should only be punished for offences which could also be applied to men.

However, in February 1917, the Home Secretary introduced a Criminal Law Amendment Bill which contained clauses which authorised the detention of 'common prostitutes' for medical examination. As the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH) postulated:

"A demand for proper definitions must inevitably raise the whole question of why promiscuity is a crime in a woman and not in a man." (50)

There were mass protests and lobbying, with the suffrage societies arranging packed public meetings. At the end of February 1917, the NUWSS passed a resolution at its Annual Conference condemning compulsory examination and the inequity of the legislation. At a protest meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster on March 12th 1917, twelve societies combined to oust the Bill. But the meeting

heard Maude Royden declare an unexpectedly rapid triumph for the Movement, as she announced the Government's abandonment of its plans for such compulsory examinations.

But the Movement was not content to haggle over further amendments and demanded the complete withdrawal of the Bill; and the WFL did manage to secure some kind of promise from the Home Secretary that the Bill would be delayed until he had met a women's deputation. Although that promise was still in place in February 1918, the fight continued, fuelled by declarations of 'punishments for infected women'; the opening of 'tolerated brothels' in France for the use of British soldiers, where conditions of total degradation for the women involved were reported; and the issuing of prophylactic kits to soldiers. Arncliffe-Sennett noted the irony and hypocrisy from Parliament, considering that:

"This shameful crime was...perpetrated on the race of women Parliament had just "freed". " (51)

The campaign gathered momentum and its continuation was essential, for in the early months of 1918 there was still no expectation that the War would end that year. An AMSH protest meeting in June at the House of Commons was attended by representatives of 56 organizations with an estimated membership of up to two million; and in the wake of this demonstration, fifty protest meetings were held all over the country. Despite the popular support mobilised by the Movement there was no victory in

sight, and this was to be a campaign that continued into the post-War period.

Protecting Women's Employment Rights

The increased poverty and hardship for the working-class in the event of a war which had been predicted by the peace women, was not long in making itself felt. The immediate patriotic surge of enlistments meant the loss of the sole breadwinner for many families, or a considerable cut in the family income, and the disruption in industry severely affected traditional sections of women's employment. Added to this, the cost of living rose steadily and high prices for basic commodities compounded the problem.

Mary Macarthur (WTUL), Margaret Llewelyn Davies (WCG), Charlotte Despard (WLL and WFL) and many other suffrage and Labour women, were anxious to warn middle and upper class women that to rush into offering their services in a voluntary capacity would be at the expense of paid employment for their poorer sisters (52). The suffrage papers carried columns of examples of women who were suffering such destitution:

"Mrs Saunders, baby boot-maker: no work for three weeks; five children. Boy (twenty) porter; lost place through war; too narrow in chest for Army. Girl (eighteen), French polisher out of work. There are three younger children." (53)

As well as voicing the plight of such families and taking the Government to task about the deficiencies in the system, many

societies, such as the WFL and the NUWSS, set up small workshops to provide employment opportunities and training. The NUWSS provided work for 2,000 women in 40 workshops, whilst the ELFS started a toy-making factory. Hand-in-hand with this provision the WFL and ELFS set up cheap restaurants, and the ELFS also provided baby clinics and milk centres. The web of activity tried to cover every woman's need; and behind it all, fuelling the work, was the belief that women would not be in this position, if they had political power.

The Central Committee on Women's Employment, the first all-woman Government Committee dealt with schemes which provided work for women and girls. The nature of its composition forced its wealthier members to face up to some wartime realities, as reported by the WLL's Mrs Simm:

"our women's work is truly encouraging. Members of the WLL have quietly rejoiced with each other on seeing the names of Mary Macarthur, Margaret Bondfield, and Marion Phillips, associated with titled ladies of the land. A strange company truly!....How soon the sewing ladies had to change their tune, and began to say, "of course, we must not do work that would otherwise be paid for." "(54)

The protection of women workers' pay and conditions had been of concern to the ELFS since war began. The equal pay debate had been on the Movement's agenda since the latter part of the nineteenth century and no appeal to patriotism would induce them to yield this principle, especially when the principle of dilution meant that all

conditions of employment for women workers needed to be high on the priority list.

In March 1915, the Board of Trade appealed to all women who were 'willing and able' to enter the employment market to register at the local Employment Exchanges. This 'ill-considered' action, as the NFWW considered it, caused considerable unease among the concerned organizations, that volunteers would rush into employment with no thought of their employment rights. This would not just harm the regular workforce, but store up problems for the post-War period. As a result of this concern, Mr Runciman, President of the Board of Trade received a deputation on April 13th from women's organizations, whose fears he hoped to allay by telling them of the Government's intentions to award equal pay to women for piece work. The women, however, protested that this measure alone was insufficient to protect women from 'sweating' and the guarantee would only ever apply to a minority of skilled women (55).

In an attempt to prevent problems resulting from the Board of Trade's appeal, the Workers' War Emergency Committee held a National Conference on War Service for Women on April 16th 1915. Chaired by Arthur Henderson and with male representatives from all the socialist parties and the trade union movement, there were four women on the Executive Committee: Mary Macarthur (WTUL), Margaret Bondfield (WCG), Marion Phillips (WLL) and Susan Lawrence of the London County Council (LCC). There were women delegates from 16

suffrage societies, including the NUWSS, the LSWS, the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society (CWSS) and the US; from the women's trade unions of the WTUL, the NFWW and the Association of Women Clerks & Secretaries (AWKS) and from 8 other groups, such as the WCG, the WIC and the FWG. The first resolution moved that:

"This Conference, representing the Women's Trade Union, Labour, Socialist, Co-operative, Suffrage, and kindred organizations, declares that where a woman is doing the same kind of work as a man she should receive the same rate of pay, and that the principle of equal pay for equal work should be rigidly maintained." (56)

The third resolution dealt with votes for women in line with the long-established practice of linking economic and political freedoms.

This was only the first in a long line of meetings during 1915 to protect women workers, and in the wake of the July Munitions Act, which introduced increased control over munition workers, there were a number of equal pay demonstrations. The Government's National Register to be taken of all women between the ages of 15 and 65, prompted another large protest meeting on August 15th, 1915, known as Registration Sunday. The compulsory nature of the Register was felt to present a fresh danger for voteless women and they were urged to write a message of protest on their completed forms. The demonstration was also used to "demand a man's wage for women who do a man's work." It was supported by the ILP, Trades Councils, and Labour MPs, with the ELFS, the US, the

Suffragette Crusaders (SC), the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL), the FCSU, the NWC and the WFL all represented. The US dismissed the Government's hypocrisy:

"Let us have done with this high-browed talk about the honour done to women by this National Register! If the Government wishes to recognise women - which it doesn't- let it give them the vote." (57)

Such continuing protests were vital, for despite the WCG and the ELFS's demands for a £1 a week minimum for unskilled work, women were still being taken into munitions work at only 10s to 15s a week. The Manchester & District Women's War Interests Committee's research had shown that this was the average wage for shell-making. (58) On skilled work, such as oxy-acetylene welding (for which the NUWSS had started a Women's Welding School), women were only receiving 18s to £1, when the men's rate was over double that at £2.2s a week. Employers were still ignoring the Government's directive on equal pay for piece work, which Lloyd George in his 'War Memoirs' fantasised as having been:

"sedulously enforced by the Ministry throughout the duration of the War..." (59)

Press reports of "the millionaire working girls" who were "having the time of their lives" (60) added insult to injury when women were suffering from sweated wage levels which were often as low as 9s per week. An additional barrier to achieving wage equality was that under the Munitions' Act, workers had to have their employers'

permission before they could look for work elsewhere, which made movement to higher paid work virtually impossible.

The Annual Trade Union Congress in Bristol in September 1915 provided a focus for suffrage societies and women's industrial groups to push for supportive resolutions on the equal pay issue. The same month saw the War Emergency Committee publishing "An Appeal to Women Workers" in 'The Labour Woman' to persuade salaried and wage-earning women to join their appropriate union and work for equal pay and equal working conditions. This appeal was signed by an impressive list of women, representative of the Labour, Union and Co-operative world, with many women who were also, jointly, members of suffrage societies (61). By January 1916, this same Committee reported that women in armaments' work were being paid, on average, only 15s for a 53 hour week; whereas the male rate was three times as much at 45s a week for the same number of hours.

Increasingly, the debate was widened to anticipate the post-war position of women, and to emphasise the fundamental nature of the equal pay issue as being a pivotal one in the fight for women's industrial and political equality. Even the NUVSS and the LSWS, despite the self-imposed 'political ban', had been taking part in demonstrations to improve women's rights; and in November 1916, the LSWS passed a resolution to uphold the principle of equal pay, and an insistence on the need for training for industrial and professional women (62). This tendency to place equal pay in the wider context of political equality, saw the equal pay issue become

absorbed into the latest stage of the campaign for women's franchise.

The Representation of the People Act.

Many accounts of the achievement of a limited franchise for women over thirty in February 1918, tend to present it as the unreserved accolade of a grateful Government and country in recognition of women's wartime contribution. On closer examination, the penultimate chapter of this fifty-year struggle was not quite as straight-forward as has been suggested; but rather as Millicent Fawcett observed:

"Our future course at the time was not all quite such plain sailing as it may appear now to those who only look back upon it." (63)

Despite the seemingly unpropitious times, there were a number of societies who continued with their suffrage work when war was declared. The WFL, carried on with their North Wales suffrage campaign begun at the beginning of August 1914, sustained their annual caravan propaganda tour and kept up all their suffrage activities in London, Scotland, Wales and the Provinces. The US launched an immediate appeal for contributions to fund their paper, 'Votes for Women', the ELFS held twice weekly suffrage meetings in Hackney and Barking and the AFL continued with their Hyde Park meetings (64). Such activity was obviously nowhere near its previous scale, but the salient point was that there was a kernel

of resistance and struggle on which to build when the time came for concerted effort.

January 24th 1915 saw these groups mount a joint suffrage demonstration to demand votes for women in the forthcoming Parliamentary session. Later that year, in June, a rally was held to put pressure on the newly formed Coalition Government of the previous month to:

"show the government how vital the movement is and the popularity they could gain by applying their war principles to their peace problems." (65)

Suffrage resolutions continued to be passed at conferences throughout 1915 by, among others, the WFL, the WLL and the LSWS.

But November 1915 brought a protest which heralded a new phase in the suffrage struggle. Lloyd George in his 'War Memoirs' outlined the outstanding parliamentary discontent with the electoral system and how the advent of the War had further complicated them:

"Plural voting was in terms of political partisanship the most controversial of the issues involved in electoral reform. Women's Suffrage, no less controversial, cut across the lines of party division. As to the need for reform of registration and franchise qualifications, and for a redistribution measure, there was a fairly widespread agreement." (66)

The existing Parliament was due for dissolution in January 1916. But it was not advisable during wartime, when the need for unity was paramount, for an election campaign to highlight the inequities of the present electoral system.

In an attempt to avoid such problems, the Elections and Registration Act of July 1915 delayed the municipal elections of that year. It also waived the compilation of a new Electoral Register, and stated the Coalition's opinion that elections should wait until the War ended. However, should political circumstances force an Election, no current Electoral Register would be available for use; and because of their enforced absence from their permanent place of residence, members of the Forces and munition workers would be disenfranchised by virtue of the residential qualification.

Such problems meant that rumours were rife, therefore, during Parliament's 1915 Autumn session, that although some kind of franchise reform in the near future was inevitable, it would probably be restricted to a manhood suffrage measure. But feminists had already been put on the alert earlier in the year, when in June, replying to a question in the House asking if it were likely that Britain would soon follow Denmark's example and give British women the vote, the Prime Minister, Asquith, had replied that this was:

"a highly controversial question which could not be dealt with at the present time." (67)

November 30th 1915 saw the Qui Vive Corps, a body which existed to unite suffrage workers for particular events, stage a march from Edinburgh to London to protest against the exclusion of women from future franchise bills. Later in December 1915 the suffrage societies galvanized themselves to pursue the women's claim. A letter was sent to Asquith on behalf of eleven societies insisting that women be included in any new Registration Bill. 'The Women's Dreadnought' of December 4th announced that a joint delegation of societies would be held in December to discuss mounting a suffrage campaign in the New Year which would include a public conference and a meeting at the Albert Hall.

The NUWSS, true to its pledge to re-enter the fray when the time came, wrote to Asquith reminding him that in January 1913, he had promised that any future Government Bill for franchise extension would be amended to include women and that this promise had never been redeemed. The letter ended by assuring Asquith that the NUWSS:

"has not abandoned its principles nor the right to take action should the necessity arise. Alterations of the franchise involving the continual exclusion of women would be the case for such action." (68)

It was this need for action which prompted Mrs Lamartine Yates to urge the formation of the IWSPU, whilst Mrs Tanner of the WFL called on all suffragists to "act in vigorous protest" against the repeated exclusion of women from new legislation (69).

The battle continued in the New Year of 1916, with Mrs Salter at the WLL Conference on January 25th moving a resolution for women to be included with men on a three month residential qualification. Mrs Arncliffe-Sennett assured the press that:

"there is not a single suffrage society from the NUWSS... to the smallest organization in the land that has not remained and is not keenly alive now to the great issue of Women's Emancipation, as on the day when Britain joined issue with Germany ..." (70)

The pressure had to be maintained, and during the Labour Party Conference in Bristol at the end of January, a week-long suffrage campaign culminated in a meeting calling for the inclusion of women in any franchise extension, with Mrs Despard, Catherine Marshall of the NUWSS, and Sylvia Pankhurst as the speakers. Even Robert Smillie, the Miners' Federation President gave his "heart and soul" support, which was in stark contrast to the 1912 LP Conference where he had cast his vote and that of his 600,000 members against the women's suffrage resolution (71).

The US in their February Council meeting examined their operation and objectives in the light of the new Government action. Some were in favour of adult suffrage, but many believed that this would simply result in manhood suffrage. Mrs Pethick Lawrence's opinion was that:

"equality was not really secured by giving women the vote on equal terms with men, because the household qualification ruled out so many wives of working men." (72)

The adult suffrage debate was still a prominent one in Labour circles, and in March 1916, the ELFS changed its name and constitution to secure 'human suffrage' as the Workers' Suffrage Federation (WSF). The Federation's change to embrace adult suffrage increased its appeal in the Labour camp, and a letter sent by the WSF to Asquith and every Member of Parliament in July 1916, was signed, among others, by Margaret Bondfield, Isabella Ford, Susan Lawrence, Marion Phillips and Maude Royden. The WSF was also circularising a petition to factories where dilution was in operation and already 80 organisations had passed the resolution which began:

"We, the undersigned workers, realising that if a woman can cast a shell she can cast a vote...." (73)

In May 1916 a Deputation supported by eighteen suffrage societies and several trade unions, requested the Prime Minister and other Coalition leaders to receive them to discuss women's franchise. But on August 14th two Bills were introduced, one to prolong the life of Parliament for another eight months, and the second, the Special Register Bill, to initiate a new Register for May 1917. The first was passed, but concerning the second:

"It was felt that something rather more far-reaching than the actual provisions of the Bill was wanted to ensure that all the men who were risking their lives in defence of their country should be entitled to vote for the Parliament that would not only determine the terms of the peace but the conditions under which the Britain for whom these men

had fought should henceforth be governed." (74)

This Bill, however, contained no reference to the inclusion of women's franchise and the discontent felt about the Bill's inadequacy resulted in a Conference whose brief was to discuss the many aspects of electoral and franchise reform. The WFL had expected that representatives from the suffrage societies would be invited to sit on this Committee, but it was made up of 32 men, under the chairmanship of the Speaker and sat for the first time on October 12th 1916. The suffrage societies had to content themselves with forming a Consultative Committee of Women's Suffrage Societies of fifteen societies, which kept in contact with the Committee.

By the 26th January 1917 the Speaker's Committee had managed to agree, unanimously, on 34 out of 37 controversial matters. But despite the praise accorded to the "heroines" of the nation for their war effort, they could not agree on the women's franchise. They had agreed, by a majority, that some kind of suffrage should be awarded to women, and they recommended the following formula:

"Any woman on the Local Government Register who has attained a specified age, and the wife of any man who is on the Register if she has attained that age, shall be entitled to register and vote as a parliamentary elector.

Various ages were discussed of which 30 and 35 received most favour." (75)

This was certainly a mixed blessing, for it effectively cut out the majority of working-class women, and all those under the age limit.

Although there had been a debate amongst the Movement about resisting an age differential, there were those, such as the SWSPU, who were prepared to accept whatever was awarded, in order to get the sex barrier removed. As Mrs Fawcett put it:

"...we preferred an imperfect Bill which could pass to the most perfect measure in the world which could not." (76)

'The Woman's Dreadnought' published the responses of many societies who, whilst welcoming the report on the one hand, were still most critical of the restrictions. The Speaker's Report had recommended that at the very least, the principle of women's suffrage should be accepted. The WFL, in a letter to the Government, published by the WSF, did not hesitate to correct the Committee's historical amnesia:

"The 'approval' of the Speaker's Conference by a majority vote on the principle of Woman Suffrage is at least a generation behind the times. The House of Commons 'approved' this principle in 1870 by a majority of 33 and six times since that date it has passed the second reading of a Bill for Woman Suffrage. Before the War more than 180 Councils in this country 'approved' the principle by a majority vote." (77)

After fifty years of struggle and disappointment, the Movement knew that it was not safe to relax now, and they attempted to get the terms of the franchise extended. On February 10th 1917, there was a meeting in Kingsway Hall with Margaret Ashton, chairman

of the Manchester Suffrage Society, a LP member and a founder member of the WILPF, trade union leader Mary Macarthur, Mrs Barton of the WCG, and Mrs Fawcett as principal speakers. They were anxious to get the Speaker's Committee's terms extended or very few working-class women would be entitled to vote. The NUWSS staged a massive Women Workers' Demonstration on February 20th 1917, which was supported by the societies of the Consultative Committee, representatives from seventy occupations, as well as other women's organizations. Mrs Fawcett, Ray Strachey of the LSWS, and Mrs Creighton of the NCW made it clear that the terms of the Speaker's Report did not deliver the full equality for which they had fought. But, they did consider that as six million women would be enfranchised, it was a measure worth putting into effect immediately (78). Although a compromise, it nevertheless established the right of women to vote.

After a major electoral reform, such as this, which gave the vote to the majority of men, Parliament was unlikely to enter into such legislative reform again for many years. To accept partial enfranchisement gave them some access to political power; to refuse would not only leave them with no vote, but might set back their entire cause for an unknown length of time, especially as the Anti-Suffrage organizations had re-emerged and there were at least one hundred die-hard Tories who were irrevocably opposed to women's enfranchisement.

Nevertheless, demonstrations to extend the recommended franchise provision went on all over the country, and on March 29th a Women's Suffrage Deputation, introduced by Mrs Fawcett, was received by the new Prime Minister, Lloyd George. It consisted of nearly 90 women representing the whole range of opinion of the Women's Movement. Mrs Fawcett again made it clear that although the recommendations did not go far enough, they were, in the final analysis, willing to accept them (79). At a mass meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster on April 21st, Mrs Despard, Eva Gore-Booth, Evelyn Sharp, Helena Swanwick and others urged that the House of Commons pass the widest possible measure of women's suffrage without delay (80). The SJCIVO had passed a resolution in June 1916 demanding a vote for all adult men and women; now on receipt of the Speaker's Report, they asked the LP to call a National Conference to consider electoral reform, which the LP did on March 20th 1917. In line with LP policy of demanding full adult suffrage, the Conference also supported the possibility of compromise for the women's franchise in line with the Speaker's Report (81).

On May 15th 1917, the Representation of the People Bill was introduced and passed without a division. Both Asquith and Lloyd George underwent conversions to the women's side; although Lloyd George professed in his 'War Memoirs' that he reminded the House that he had always supported votes for women. Having passed its Second Reading with a majority, on June 19th Clause 1V of the Bill concerning women's suffrage was discussed in Committee and

after two attempted amendments which sought to omit the measure, it was carried. It was thought by some of the press, that the House of Lords would not dare to reverse the House of Commons decision, especially that of an all-party vote. But there was still a formidable body of Anti-Suffragists in the Lords, and two last-minute attempts to hijack the Bill sent it seesawing between the two chambers, until by the beginning of February 1918 the press were speculating that the Bill was dead. But at 7.30pm on February 6th a compromise solution was achieved, and at 8pm the Act was signed by the Royal Commission (82). The Act was only to give women over thirty the vote, subject to a property qualification and a number of other restrictions which will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 9.

In June 1917, when the Bill passed the Committee Stage, 'The Nation' commented that women would never have won the vote at that point:

"without years of arduous and determined work." (83)

One wonders how much longer women might have had to wait for enfranchisement without the suffrage societies' incessant wartime campaigning and their swift utilization of the procedural opportunity presented to them by the Electoral Register. The lavish, but essentially, empty praise of the women's war effort seems not to have played as large a part in the suffrage victory as politicians claimed, especially when it turned so rapidly to blame when demobilisation began. (This has been well-documented by Braybon (1981), and is described further in the following chapter).

There appear to have been three factors involved during the wartime campaign: first, was the women's over-riding commitment to women's suffrage, which after so many years, it would have been impossible to betray; even a temporary respite would have felt like betrayal. (The US's message at the head of this chapter is a succinct statement of this position.) Secondly, they realized how much damage to the Cause an indefinite period of inactivity might sustain. It was essential to keep the message in the public's mind, even if only peripherally. The emphasis which all the Societies placed on keeping their papers and literature distributed, indicated their appreciation of this (84). Lastly, these organizations appreciated how much societies who could defend and work for women's rights would be needed during the War, because of the severity with which women and children would suffer.

Minority groups develop survival strategies and learn to capitalize on opportunities presented to them. It seems that this was exactly what the Movement did when 'Votes for Women' reminded its readers that:

"It behoves Suffragists to be watchful." (85)

They also had an eye to the future and knew that they needed to have their organizations in place to deal with the problems of reconstruction, as well as tackling the outstanding pre-War issues.

The scale and variety of valuable work achieved by the Women's Movement during the War can be appreciated by reading their annual reports; but nothing was more important to assisting their future goals than the attainment of the partial franchise:

"To the many factors which have brought about the Victory in which we all rejoice it is impossible to apportion degrees of credit, but the WFL will always be proud that it did its duty in the Great War." (86)

Notes

1. United Suffragists (US) in 'Votes For Women' July 1915, quoted by ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT Vol. 26 6 Feb.1914-Dec.1915.
2. MARWICK, 1977, p.51.
3. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, 1938, p.307.
4. LSWS pamphlet, Women's Service, August-September 1914, p.1.
5. Interview with Naomi Mitchison 27th January 1989.
6. NUWSS Annual Report, 1915, p.10.
7. Ibid.
8. Combined LSWS, FCLWS, CLWS, WFS Leaflet, 1914, Suffragists and the War.
9. NUWSS pamphlet, undated, Women's Service and Women's Vote, p.3.
10. NUWSS, Fifth Annual Report of the Oxon, Berks & Bucks Federation, 1915-16, p.5.
11. LSWS Annual Report 1916, pp15-16.
12. LSWS Annual Report 1916, pp13-14.
13. FAWCETT, 1920, p.89.
14. NUWSS, Fifth Annual Report of the Manchester & District Federation, 1915, p.12.
15. Ibid.
16. LSWS, Women's Service, August-September 1914, p.1.
17. WILTSHER, 1985 & LIDDINGTON, 1989.
18. 'Jus Suffragii', April 1 1915, p.274.
19. SWANWICK, 1935, p.284.
20. WLL, 1917, Executive Report, p.1.
21. 'Jus Suffragii', November 1 1914, p.190.
22. GERARD, undated WFL pamphlet, p.4.

23. 'Women's Dreadnought', August 15th 1914.
24. Ibid.
25. 'Votes for Women', August 21 1914, p.705.
26. 'Votes For Women', September 11 1914.
27. 'Women's Dreadnought', August 29 1914.
28. 'Jus Suffragii', April 1 1915, p.274.
29. 'Votes For Women', August 28th 1914, p.714.
30. WILTHER, 1985, p.131.
31. MARSHALL, 1916, p.379.
32. PANKHURST, August 12 1914, letter from WSPU headquarters to membership.
33. Ibid.
34. PANKHURST, September 8 1914, The Var.
35. 'Jus Suffragii', November 1 1915, p.24.
36. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, Feb.1914-Dec.1915, Vol.26.
37. 'Weekly Dispatch', November 28th 1915.
38. Ibid.
39. SWANWICK, 1935, p.284.
40. SJCIWO, undated, History of the SJCIWO, p.1.
41. WILTHER, 1985, p.82-83. Some of the more prominent Committee members: Margaret Bondfield, Esther Roper, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Catherine Marshall, Crystal Macmillan, Mary Macarthur, Sylvia Pankhurst, Charlotte Despard, Ethel Snowden, Eva Gore-Booth.
42. 'Jus Suffragii' April 1 1915, p.274.
43. 'The Women's Dreadnought', November 21 1914.

44. 'Votes for Women' February 26 1915, p.183.

Before the FWV there were no restrictions on opening hours for public houses.

45. PANKHURST, 1987, p.36.

46. 'Votes for Women', November 13 1914, front page.

47. 'The Vote' January 29 1915.

'Jus Suffragii' April 1 1915, p.274.

ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, Feb. 6 1914-Dec.1915, Vol.26.

48. It is interesting to note that according to reports in suffrage papers, sexual attacks on women and children were not unusual and male offenders were treated with the same light sentences which are so often seen today.

49. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, Feb.6 1914-Dec.1915, Vol.26.

50. 'Votes for Women', June 1917, p.267.

51. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 1918-36, Vol.28.

52. 'Votes for Women', August 21 1914, p.703.

WLL Annual Report, 1914, p.21.

'Labour Woman', September 1914, p.243.

53. 'Votes for Women', September 18 1914, p.735.

54. 'Labour Woman', October 1914, p.250.

55. The women and organizations involved were: Sylvia Pankhurst (ELFS), Mrs Barbara Drake (ELFS and FWG), Lady Aberconway of the Women's Emergency Corps (WEC) and the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF), Margaret Llewelyn Davies (WCG), Mary Macarthur for the War Workers' Emergency Committee (WWEC), Nina Boyle (WFL), Mrs Tanner (WFL), Mrs Ayrton Gould (US). Mary Macarthur pointed out to Runciman that an invitation to both Conservative and Liberal women

had been issues, but that the Labour Party women had received no such invitation.

56. War Emergency: Workers' National Committee, Report of the National Conference on War Service for Women, April 16 1915.
57. 'Votes for Women', August 13 1915, p.376.
58. Manchester, Salford & District Women's War Interests Committee, undated report, Women in the Labour Market During the War, p.19.
59. LLOYD GEORGE, , 1938, p.175.
60. 'Votes for Women', September 3 1915, p.401 and October 22 1915, p.27.
61. 'The Labour Woman', September 1915, p.321. Some of the women who were signatories were: Ethel Bentham (WLL), M.Llewelyn Davies (WCG), Charlotte Despard (WFL), Isabella O. Ford, Katherine Bruce Glasier (WLL), B.L.Hutchins, Catherine Marshall, Ethel Snowden, Helena Swanwick (International Women's Congress), Gertrude Tuckwell (WTUL), Julia Varley (Workers' Union), Dr Jane Walker, Beatrice Webb.
62. LSWS Annual Report 1916, p.24.
63. FAWCETT, 1920, p.134.
64. 'Jus Suffragii' April 1 1915, p.274.
 'Votes for Women', August 21 1914, p.705.
 'The Woman's Dreadnought', August 22 1914.
 'Votes for Women', September 11 1914.
65. 'Votes for Women', June 4 1915, p.293.
66. LLOYD GEORGE, 1938, p.1164.
67. HANSARD, Vol.LXXII June 3-July 2 1915, col.363.
68. 'Jus Suffragii', January 1 1916, p.50.

69. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 6 February 1914-December 1915, Vol.26.
70. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 1916, Vol.27.
71. 'Votes for Women' January 7 1916, front page.
ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 1916, Vol.27.
RENDEL, 1977, p.69.
72. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 1916, Vol.27.
73. 'Jus Suffragii', July 1 1916, p.147.
74. LLOYD GEORGE, 1938, p.1166.
75. 'Jus Suffragii', March 1 1917, p.85.
76. FAWCETT, 1920, p.146.
77. 'Women's Dreadnought', February 10, 1917.
78. NUWSS, information folder containing Women Workers' Demonstration Programme and propaganda leaflets, February 20th 1917.
79. NUWSS, 'Women's Suffrage Deputation', March 29th 1917.
ARNCLIFFE_SENNETT, 1917, Vol.27.
80. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, 1917, Vol.27.
81. SJCIWO Annual Report for the year ending February 28th 1917,
p.3.
WLL Annual Report, 1917, p.7.
82. 'Votes for Women', February 1918, front page.
83. NUWSS, June 26th 1917, Weekly Notes: The Passing of the Women's Suffrage Clause, p.3.
84. WFL Report, October 1915-April 1919, p.14.
85. 'Votes for Women', December 31 1915, p.109.
86. WFL Report, October 1915-April 1919, p.6.

Chapter 3

Setting the Agenda

"...there is no closed door we do not intend to force open; and there is no fruit in the garden of knowledge it is not our determination to eat."⁽¹⁾

The period from Autumn 1917 until the Armistice in November 1918, saw the preparation of a new foundation for the work of the Women's Movement in the 1920s. Gaining the vote in February 1918 did not mark the end of a fifty-year struggle, rather it signified the opening of a new chapter. Armed with 'the power of the vote', the suffrage societies found themselves with the ultimate tool to achieve the social, political and economic equality of women. Of immediate concern, therefore, was the setting of a new agenda to take them into the post-war period.

Their immediate aims were to ensure the rapid extension of the franchise to include all women over 21; to institute a policy of political education for women citizens to utilize their new power; to prepare for the exigencies of post-War reconstruction; and to keep tackling issues such as equal pay and the equal moral standard which had gained a higher profile because of the War.

The Review Process.

In Spring 1918, as some of the women's societies held their annual conferences, their aims, methods, organizational

structures and even names, were scrutinized in the light of the new franchise legislation. But, for many, such as the LSWS, this process was already well under way:

"The wide extension and development of the whole work of the Society which should follow the passing of the Representation of the People Bill are matters which have been under serious consideration during the last six months." (2)

An inevitable component of this review process was the re-examination of the relationship between the sexes, to accommodate the women's new political position and to determine their future direction to secure full emancipation. With their entry into the political arena, the Women's Movement had to examine its strategy in preparation for participation in institutions which had been designed for and were dominated by men. At the end of February 1918, the NUVSS held its Annual Council Meeting and:

"In determining the future of the Union it had to choose between two conceptions - women as women have a set of special interests, distinct from those of men, which the Union should work to further; or that women's interests and men's interests coincide when once men and women are on an equal footing in all spheres of life, and that consequently a feminist body such as the NUVSS must logically confine its work to the securing of equality of opportunity for women with men." (3)

The decision was taken to adopt the latter interpretation, known as the equalitarianism; apart from its prime aim of franchise extension, the NUWSS now expanded its objectives to:

"all other such reforms, economic, legislative, and social, as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women." (4)

This shift towards integration also led the WFL, for example, to extend its membership to men on "equal terms with women" (5).

The remnants of the Pankhursts' WSPU responded to the climate for change in rather a different way and launched the Women's Party (WP) in November 1917. Although Sylvia Pankhurst reassured the rest of the Movement that:

"too much importance should not be attached to the Women's Party, which was using the name "Women's" in a way which none of us could accept." (6)

With the imminent approach of the suffrage success, the WP's paper, 'Britannia', announced its intention:

"to point the way to the right use of the vote...
The Women's Party will use the vote to make Britain strong for defence against the outside foe, and to strengthen Britain from within...." (7)

However, the Women's Party consisted of only a handful of the Pankhurst's most faithful followers, and by 1918, they had even lost the favour and influence they had initially enjoyed with Lloyd George.

Women in the Labour movement were also undergoing changes which addressed the organizational divisions between women and men. The WLL reported in their 1917 Executive Committee Report that, like the LSWS:

"As soon as it became clear that women would obtain the Parliamentary Franchise in the new Reform Bill, the Executive of the Women's Labour League decided that they must take special action with regard to the organisation of women." (8)

Consequently a Sub-Committee was formed which came up with a report prepared by the WLL's Organizing Hon. Secretary, Dr Marion Phillips, which they presented to the LP outlining their idea for:

"the division of the country into suitable districts and the appointment of responsible women organisers in each who would make a special effort to increase the numbers in present branches and to form new ones." (9)

A Joint Organising Committee of four women from the WLL and four LP members was then set up to implement developments in women's organisation, and their first suggestion was that four women organisers should be appointed, two each for the WLL and the LP (10).

Meanwhile, as part of his plans during 1917 and 1918 of:

"moulding the Labour Party for government." (11)

Arthur Henderson had instructed Beatrice and Sidney Webb to draw up a new constitution for the LP. As part of that new Constitution, a system of individual membership was instituted with each local LP

divided into a men's section and a women's section. The WLL was therefore to be dissolved and women would be subsumed within these women's sections. At the WLL Annual Conference in January 1918, Henderson outlined the role he envisaged for women within the party and of the :

"mutual advantage that should come to both men and women from working side by side in a great national organisation. He welcomed the help that women would be able to give, not only with their votes, and with work at election times, but in helping to form the policy of the Party and in the way of political education." (12)

This new proposition presented socialist feminists with a dilemma which emphasised the division between class and 'sex' loyalty, and which was to dictate the development of Labour women's participation in the Women's Movement throughout the 1920s. Many of them were sceptical as to the promise of "mutual advantage", although Mrs Lowe, the Conference Chairman in 1918 gave the subject an optimistic treatment:

"I have no doubt that our burial, if such it is to be, is preliminary only to a speedy resurrection with much increased power and opportunity. The need for revised and more extensive organisation under new circumstances is obvious to us all, but that we shall need to meet together in conference from time to time, to discuss special women's problems and under circumstances that will give special opportunities for the self-expression of women, is certain

for some time to come." (13)

However, that was just what they would not be able to do, as according to the new Constitution:

"the right to hold a National Annual Conference would be impossible without giving a similar right to men's sections, and thereby instituting a sectionalism of a national kind throughout the Party." (14)

During the discussions on the women's sections at what was to be their last WLL Conference, Marion Phillips attempted to calm the disquiet of some members concerning the new Constitution. Mrs Corrie, from Coventry, feared that it would leave LP women in an auxiliary position not unlike the Primrose Dames of the Conservative Party, and that her branch wanted to keep its independence:

"to be at liberty to go with the progressives, not to find itself tied to what might be the retrograde party." (15)

They did not want to ask permission for every action that they wished to take. She also wanted to know if there would be an opportunity to send in amendments before the WLL was dismantled in June 1918 (16). Mrs Robinson of the Manchester Central Branch, thought that the Conference ought to be discussing the underlying issue of whether this new system would, in fact, result in the progress of women's political organisation; and she wanted to know if women would be given the opportunity:

"for expressing the women's point of view in the counsels of the Labour Party." (17)

This disquiet was not without grounds, for many of the implications of this 'takeover' produced not only immediate negative results, but long-term disadvantage in terms of power-sharing which have been evident up until the present day. Hannah Mitchell later, prophetically, recorded what her response had been to the new Women's Sections:

"These I did not like. I believed in complete equality, and was not prepared to be a camp follower, or a member of what seemed to me a permanent Social Committee, or Official cake-maker to the Labour Party." (18)

Apart from having no conference of their own, although they were promised occasional, special conferences on women's subjects, as they were no longer an independent body, they could not be affiliated to any outside bodies. This meant that their members could not be representatives on any other women's organizations, unless their local LP affiliated to such organizations on their behalf. This would mean no affiliation to organizations which the LP felt were in conflict with its policies or philosophies; this effectively curbed much of the LP women's contribution to the wider Women's Movement.

The system of individual membership rates were also different for men and women, 1s for men and 6d for women. Some women at the 1918 Conference felt that if they were supposed to be equal to their male colleagues, then they should pay the same amount (19). But Marion Phillips was eager to point out that as if

in compensation, there were four reserved places for women on the LP Executive Committee.

The WLL was not given any real option to continue; Phillips told the Conference that branches had already had time to send in amendments, and that no new resolutions could now be taken. As Christine Collette noted in her recent book on the League:

"Branches had, of course, been presented with a fait accompli; the time for negotiation with the Party was past because its new constitution had been agreed; women's representation in the new structure was voted upon not by the League, but by the delegates (still overwhelmingly male) at the Labour Party conference." (20)

There were many women within the Labour Party who believed in and had worked towards the equality of men and women within the Party, working together as comrades. Women who had always seen the separation of women in the Labour and Union movements as a transitional stage towards this moment, with the priority being the fight for socialism. But there were others who were concerned that the women's issues would not be accorded a hearing within the LP without women having sufficient independence and power to ensure that such issues were placed on the agenda.

In the middle of 1918, the SJCIVO wrote to the LP suggesting that a joint conference of women should take place, and

in October 1918 a two-day 'National Conference on Women's Civic and Political Responsibilities' was held in London. It was attended by delegates from all the political parties, industrial women's groups, trades unions, professional and suffrage societies. An urgency resolution was passed concerning the protection of women workers during and after demobilisation, as well as other resolutions dealing with the franchise extension, equal civil rights, housing, health, food control and the withdrawal of Regulation 40D (21).

But the most significant debate dealt with the Political Organization of Women when Marion Phillips moved the resolution:

"That this conference recognises that the political power of the women's vote is dependent upon the extent of organization amongst them, and urges them, in considering the methods of organization to be adopted, to throw their strength into the development of a strong political organisation embracing both men and women, and not to follow the line of sex division." (22)

Whilst Mrs Fawcett and the NUWSS delegates supported this stance, a claim for sustaining a measure of separatism was made in an amendment (which was lost) moved by Florence Underwood of the WFL:

"affirming that separate organizations of women were necessary as a measure of expediency in removing the disabilities under which women still laboured." (23)

The debate concerning whether the pursuit of equality consisted of equality with men, or the pursuit of issues of specific concern to women, and how far these two objectives dictated the political organization of women, was one which remained unresolved. In fact, as the 1920s progressed it became more contentious and it is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 and 9.

The Franchise Extension.

As far as political equality was concerned, there was still unfinished business. There were approximately five million women who were still disenfranchised, which made the franchise extension the Movement's major objective. This five million included all women under thirty, but also large numbers of women over thirty in the following categories: professional and business women with business premises or unfurnished rooms; shop assistants and domestic workers who 'lived in' and daughters living at home. There were also inequalities for those women who did qualify. The right extended to male businessmen to vote in two constituencies if their domestic residence and their business premises were in two different counties, did not apply to women. Also the interpretation of 'joint occupation' meant that three single men sharing a house had a vote each; but in the case of three single women, 'joint occupation' only entitled two of them to a vote (24).

The women's organizations were quick to point out the heavy irony which seemed to have escaped the Government's notice: that for all the praise of working women who had contributed so much to the War effort, these were mainly the women who had not been enfranchised. The campaign to secure the vote for all women began at once with the inclusion of the demand for equal franchise at the head of all agendas. The NUWSS issued leaflets with the command to:

"GET BUSY NOW

and urge your M.P. to see that the Government's

pledge this year is kept by the

INTRODUCTION OF A GOVERNMENT BILL

NEXT SESSION

securing to women

EQUAL VOTING RIGHTS

with Men." (25)

Another immediate concern, linked to the franchise success which was an immediate priority, was women's entitlement to stand for Parliament. As there had been no specific statement that women could not stand as parliamentary candidates, Nina Boyle, of the WFL and the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL), took the initiative by standing in the Keighley By-Election in April 1918. Mrs Marion Holmes, also of the WFL and WWSL, working with Boyle, acted as the first female election agent. Failing any Parliamentary intervention, the candidature all hinged on whether Miss Boyle would be accepted by the Returning Officer on Nomination Day, April

19th. Her candidacy was duly accepted. But, ironically, there were found to be errors in her nomination papers and she was disqualified on a technicality (26).

However, it was not until four months later on August 8th 1918, that in response to questions in the House of Commons, Bonar Law stated that women were not entitled to be Parliamentary candidates. An immediate campaign was launched by the women's societies in order to secure this right for a post-War election. A motion was debated in the House on October 23rd which was carried by a majority of 249. A Bill was shortly introduced and became law on November 21st 1918 which gave the Movement another major success to celebrate.

Political Education.

The suffrage societies were eager to ensure that they instituted a crash programme of political education for women into the rights, responsibilities and implementation of citizenship. Six million women would be entitled to vote at the next election, many of whom would have had no experience or knowledge of political matters or procedures. If this new right was to be used to maximum advantage to improve women's lives, there was an urgent need to mobilise women in the Movement to increase political awareness among women voters.

The object was to help women to understand the scope of this new right. Most significantly, the possession of political power signalled the necessity for a change in personal psychology; an adjustment from being an observer, to being an active participant in the government of the country. In 1917, when the vote was almost assured, the WSPU member, Grace Hadow, had pinpointed the difficulty in changed self-perception which the vote would bring:

"We shan't know ourselves in any other role other than a derided minority." (27)

But they would have to learn; and so suffrage papers prefaced all calls to action with urgent reminders to their readers of the imperative need for women to exercise this new power of citizenship.

Some societies had begun work on political education in the previous year, as soon as the Franchise Bill was seen to be a reality. One of the most extensive education programmes was originated by the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) and the National Council of Women (NCW), at a special NCW meeting on October 3 1917. The NCW was made up of representatives from the branches and affiliated societies of the NUWW. A Committee was drawn up from members of the NUWW's Executive and from forty-nine affiliated societies, and this Committee decided upon the formation of a network of Women Citizens Associations (WCA) throughout the country, which should be open to women from all societies. The forty-nine societies involved in drawing up this plan included a

range of suffrage societies such as the NUWSS, the Church League for Women's Suffrage (CLWS) and the Conservative & Unionist Women's Franchise Association (CUWFA); professional and industrial groups like the Association of University Women Teachers (AUWT), the Women's Industrial Council (WIC), and the National Federation of Women Teachers (NFWT); political societies like the Fabian Women's Group (FWG) and the Women's Local Government Society (WLGS); as well as the traditional welfare organizations such as the Federation of Working Girls' Clubs (FWGC) and the Mothers' Union (MU) (28).

Membership was to be open to all women over sixteen, either as existing members of any other women's society, or on an individual basis. The WCAs were to operate as non-party, non-sectarian and democratic groups, whose objects were to:

- "a) Foster a sense of citizenship in women.
- b) Encourage the study of political, social and economic questions.
- c) Secure the adequate representation of the interests and experience of women in the affairs of the community. (29)

During the ensuing year, many local suffrage societies, or branches of larger suffrage societies changed their status after the R.P. Act, and re-formed as local WCAs; believing this to be more appropriate to the needs of the day:

"Many of our old Suffrage Societies, desiring to expand their objects so as to embrace administrative and social work in their own areas, have turned themselves into Women Citizens' Associations, sometimes by

amalgamation with other women's societies in their areas." (30)

As seen in the previous chapter, one feature of the Movement's wartime policy was getting representation for women on official committees. This representation could now be used as a power base to increase women's activity. For the third object of the WCAs combined education and action:

"The Association will probably first turn its attention to self-education of the members, but it is obvious that, in any live society, the result of their self-education will be that the members will not be satisfied with talk but will ask themselves what they can do." (31)

The LSWS was a good example of the rapid and efficient way in which women's organizations anticipated the need for new methods built on the experience and structures already in existence. By November 1917, it had published a leaflet on "Applied Suffrage" in which it suggested how societies could use the networks which had already been established during the War to:

"see to it that in the future no woman shall be ignorant of her new political power, and of the rights and liberties allowed to her by the law; that none shall be unaware of the possibilities of usefulness of her powers and capabilities." (32)

The pamphlet instanced how the LSWS and the Sheffield, Bristol and Manchester NUVSS sections, had all participated in general women's

interests' committees during the War, and it suggested that such committees could now ensure that all local public and legal affairs were equitably conducted. Such committees could also set up Women's Bureaux to provide information, education and training on political issues; as well as compiling a register of relevant public vacancies for which women could volunteer (33).

The inspirational force at the LSWS came from Phillipa Strachey, the Secretary and her sister-in-law, Ray, who was Chairman of the Employment Committee. They both stressed the importance of sustaining the links made during the War with the whole range of women's groups, and of forging them into a new, expanded network for the work ahead.

Like the LSWS, Mrs Despard of the WFL, urged the maintenance of the increased co-operation of the War, to form constituency associations which could provide a platform for women to discuss relevant political issues and gain information from visiting speakers. In her Presidential address to the Annual Conference at the end of February 1918, she noted with pleasure, concerning the War-time work:

"how Conferences, deputations, protests, demonstrations, have been carried through with marked success by Women's Societies working together. This augurs well for the future, when, as I hope, women will be able to combine in the use of political power for the attainment of important and necessary reforms." (34)

The women's organizations, only too aware of the importance not only of gaining new rights, but of using them, were eager not to waste the impetus from their franchise success.

Reconstruction.

By Autumn 1918, the suffrage societies had drawn up their agendas to include issues which had emerged as a result of the War, such as the nationality of married women, the continuation of a women's police force, and the representation of women in the peace process. There were also other pre-war issues, which had been exacerbated by the War and were high on the list of priorities, such as housing, infant mortality, maternity welfare and the equal moral standard. The NUWSS also included demands which were now of prime importance since the franchise achievement. These concerned the equal guardianship of children, the rights of married women, income tax and married women's property, endowments and pensions for mothers and widows, and women's entry to the legal profession (35).

The WFL introduced a novel method for securing equal rights for women, when they suggested working for:

"an amending Act to the Interpretations Act, 1889, which shall provide that all nouns denoting common gender (such as person or persons, people, all, anyone, no-one, etc) should include both sexes unless otherwise specifically declared." (36).

Their programme duplicated that of the NUWSS, with an additional commitment to fight for women's entry into the administration posts of the Civil Service and resolutions on welfare provision and improved educational facilities (37).

Complex as it was for individual organizations to prioritize the catalogue of demands, there was a general consensus that life could not return to its pre-War state and many women totally rejected the conditions which had previously governed their lives. Eleanor Rathbone, speaking at the opening conference of the Liverpool Council of Women Citizens in October 1918 declared that:

"women would never go back to the leper-compound of unskilled trades they had occupied before the war." (38)

The issues of reconstruction reinforced the continuing concerns of the Movement; they were not separate or an interruption, but a continuance of the fight for equality.

The women's organizations had been concerned about the need to face these reconstruction issues from as early as 1915. Having largely been responsible for salvaging some kind of order from the disruption caused by the outbreak of War and the ensuing unemployment for women, they were adamant about the need to prevent a repetition of events when peace came. They believed that forward planning and co-operation between the Government, Trade Unions and representative women's groups, might achieve a smoother transition to the post-War world. One in which women might retain the advantages which they had accrued during the War.

In the latter part of 1916, the SJCIVO had issued a report which was to be presented to the 'Joint Committee on Labour Problems After the War,' dealing with "The Position of Women After the War". Their conclusion was the forerunner to many similar assessments of women's industrial position, which encouraged suffrage societies to incorporate the theme into their new policy statements in 1918. The SJC maintained that:

"the war has changed the whole outlook as regards women's work, and has removed some of the disabilities. We, therefore, urge that every advantage should be taken of the present situation to secure a far higher standard of life for women, and a position of general industrial equality with men." (39)

The last chapter showed how women had sustained the equal pay struggle during the war; they had also increased their Union membership whilst gaining recognition of their ability to operate successfully in heavy industry. The Movement now wanted women to build on this industrial strength, using their new-found personal confidence, for as the WFL realized, it was essential to take steps so that:

"At all costs the regrettable antagonism between men and women workers must be averted after the war." (40)

From 1915 onwards, all sides of the Movement had been pressing for the equal representation of women on all reconstruction committees as a method of protecting women's post-War interests. Their insistence during the War of being included on

relevant committees had set a precedent which they wished to continue. Despite the praise for women's contribution to the war, there was still an evident reluctance to include women on committees in anything like representative numbers. In 1918 Women's groups were complaining that there were only three women on the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, out of a total of thirty-seven members: Lady Emmott of the LSWS, Gertrude Tuckwell from the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) and the NFWW, and Eleanor Barton of the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) (41). But it was Margaret Bondfield, trade unionist and LP activist, who had sounded the alarm for industrial women in 1916, when she warned them that:

"Women workers will be wise, however, not to depend too much on the "paper patriots"; they must learn to take care of themselves, to fight their own battles." (42)

These were the battles that the Movement realized it would do well to prepare for and to fight together.

Campaigns of 1918

Apart from the campaign to gain enabling legislation for women MPs, there were two other important struggles which occupied women's groups during the course of 1918. The first protest was a continuation of the equal moral standard campaign of the War (dealt with in Chapter 2) and concerned the sanctioning by the British Military Authorities of 'tolerated brothels' in France for the use of British soldiers, together with army issue prophylactics.

The Women's Movement did not share the opinion of the Under-Secretary for War who believed that it was a good thing to provide "clean women" to satisfy "human nature". A mass meeting in Caxton Hall on March 1st was called by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH) and addressed by Maude Royden and Dr Helen Wilson of the NUWSS, and Edith Picton-Turberville, which called for a single moral standard for men and women (43). In less than a month after the start of the campaign, it was announced in the Commons that British soldiers were now forbidden to visit such brothels. The International Woman Suffrage News (IWSN) commented that:

"Josephine Butler had to work seventeen years for the abolition of regulation in garrison and seaport towns. Now that women have votes things move more quickly." (44)

The second successful campaign concerned the significant issue of equal pay. At the beginning of March, a differentiation in salaries for elementary school teachers, awarding higher scales to men, was recommended to local authorities by the Board of Education. Having only a few days to act, before the London County Council met to consider the scale, the NPWT, supported by the WFL, launched a protest against the scale. The LCC then rejected the Board of Education's recommendation and the Women's Movement went on to challenge the new Education Bill which also sought to establish unequal pay scales. With these two successes behind them, a rally at the Albert Hall at the end of March consolidated the

teachers' campaign, with support from over a dozen suffrage societies and women's trade unions (45).

The equal pay campaign was important because it enabled a success on the part of one group of women to be used in a wider sense to induce among the campaign's participants a feeling of combined effort for all. This was particularly valuable in a campaign which dealt with the root of women's economic inequality, at a time when women were looking forward to protecting their gains in the post-War world. As an example of the indivisibility of women's struggle, Anna Munro of the WFL, who had worked for three years among the sweated workers of the East End, as well as in her native Scotland, knew that:

"Every gain was a gain for everyone in the struggle." (46)

Meanwhile, at the NUWSS' March Conference, Mrs Fawcett was struck by how exhilarating and encouraging it was for women to have the power of the vote behind all that they did. 'The Common Cause' reported that Mrs Fawcett believed that the last two years had been "wonderful" for women, and she talked of the liberating effect of the War and of the freedom which women had gained in the industrial world (47). Despite all the suffering which so many women and their families had had to endure, and which women's groups had helped to alleviate, the advances for women could not be denied. For example, it was noted at the NCW's Conference at the beginning of November 1918, how much the high quality of debates and speeches clearly

exhibited the benefits of women's recent experience in public work.

As the War drew to a close, the IWSN noted in November that:

"All the world is holding conferences just now and passing feminist resolutions." (48)

The Women's Movement had survived the war; it had helped both the country and itself and was now full of optimism and confidence for the future. On an individual level, this optimism was inevitably tempered with exhaustion, disillusion and sorrow. Nevertheless, many women who had worked hard for peace were determined that women would play their part to prevent a future repetition of the horrors of war. The strength of this conviction in a positive future for women was expressed by Eunice Murray of the WFL earlier in 1918:

"We are no longer outside the pale of politics, we are the law makers and we must see to it that each of our members knows how best to use the new power that is theirs." (49)

Notes

1. SCHREINER, Olive, quoted by HOLTBY, 1936, p.71.
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3. 'International Woman Suffrage News' April 1918, p.107.
4. Ibid.
5. WFL Report October 1915-April 1919, p.4.
6. 'The Labour Woman' November 1918, p.76.
7. 'Britannia' January 11 1918, front page.
8. WLL Executive Committee Report 1917, p.8.
9. Ibid.
10. WLL Executive Committee Report, p.9.
11. SHINWELL, 1963, p.97.
12. WLL Annual Conference Report, January 21 and 22 1918, p.46.
13. WLL Annual Conference Report, January 21 and 22 1918, p. 37.
14. 'Report of the Executive Committee of the WLL on the Draft Constitution of the LP and Their Recommendations in Connection Therewith', 1917, p.3.
15. WLL Annual Conference Report, January 21 and 22 1918, p.43.
16. WLL Annual Conference Report, January 21 and 22 1918, p.46 and 47.
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18. MITCHELL, 1977, p.189.
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20. COLLETTE, 1989, p.176.
21. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' November 1918, p.17 and 18.
22. 'The Labour Woman' November 1918, p.76.
23. Ibid.
24. NUWSS leaflet, 1918, Votes For Women Left Out, London.

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25. NUWSS leaflet, 1918, Votes For Women Left out, London.
 26. 'The Vote' April 12 1918, p.214; April 19, p.222; April 26, p.226.
 27. BRITAIN, 1960, p.146.
 28. NCW, n.d. approx. 1917-18, Women Citizens Associations, p.1.
 29. NCW, n.d. approx. 1917-18, Women Citizens Associations, p.3.
 30. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.25.
 31. EUSTACE, n.d. approx. 1918, p.4.
 32. STRACHEY, 1917, p.1-2.
 33. STRACHEY, 1917, p.2.
 34. WFL Report October 1915-April 1919, p.5.
 35. 'International Woman Suffrage News' April 1918, p.108.
 36. 'The Vote' March 1 1918, p.162.
 37. Ibid.
 38. QUILL, Gary, 26 October 1918, The Labour World, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, 703/8.
 39. SJCIWO, 1916, The Position of Women, p.20.
 40. 'The Vote' April 5 1918, p.207.
 41. 'The Vote' March 8 1918, p.172.
 42. BONDFIELD, 1916, p.256.
 43. 'The Vote' March 8 1918, p.173.
 44. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' April 1 1918, p.109.
 45. 'The Vote' March 22 1918, front page.
 46. 'The Vote' April 5 1918, p.207.
 47. 'International Woman Suffrage News' April 1 1918, p.107.
 48. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' November 1918, p.17.
 49. WFL Report October 1915-April 1919, p.13.

Chapter 4

Reconstruction I: The State of the Movement 1918-1922

"We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better.

Sleep to wake." (1)

When the Armistice was declared on November 11th 1918 it was the moment that the Women's Movement had been waiting for to participate as citizens in the nation's reconstruction, and to complete their work of gaining full emancipation for all women. They understood, better than anyone, that:

"Political emancipation is a condition of freedom;
it is not freedom itself." (2)

However, the chaos of demobilisation brought with it the realisation that recent gains were being lost, and progress reversed. Instead of going forward from the War, the Women's Movement saw that they were going to have to wage another battle to retain those rights which they thought were secure, as well as implementing their new agenda. Otherwise, history would repeat itself and, as 'Votes For Women' had predicted in 1914, it would be a case of:

".....exploitation during the war and contemptuous neglect after it is over." (3)

After a brief account of the effects of the War, this chapter focuses on women's entry into official political involvement with the historic 1918 General Election. It also

analyses the state of the existing organizations and the growth of new ones which contributed to the post-war Women's Movement, as it struggled through the era of reconstruction.

The Effects of War.

The Armistice combined the relief of peace, with the realisation of the enormous cost of the War. At the cessation of hostilities, Britain was left with 800,000 dead, and 1½ million permanently wounded. Of these wounded men, 240,000 suffered loss of limbs; and the remaining 1½ million had been blinded, suffered the effects of gas, had contracted tuberculosis, or were the victims of shell-shock. In economic terms, Britain had 'lost' £300 million in investment; the Government had lent £1,825 million to the Allies and borrowed £1,340 million; and they owed approximately £850 million to the United States (4). This was exactly what those 'dangerous' peace women had worked to prevent, now there were men and women for whom the War would never be over:

"When the sound of the victorious guns burst over London at 11a.m. on November 11th 1918, the men and women who looked incredulously into each other's faces did not cry jubilantly: "We've won the War!" They only said: "The War is over." " (5)

The War had provided women with many different experiences, whatever their class, no-one remained untouched. All the women interviewed for this research clearly remembered the War,

if later or earlier years were unclear. Miss Hart, was working as a milliner in Leeds at the outbreak of War:

"...three brothers in the Army, fighting, and me serving silly customers! I thought that wouldn't do at all. So I had a friend of mine at the Labour Exchange and I went in one morning and said, "Can you find me a job?"...I went back and told my mother, "Well!" she said, "Never in my life have I been so disgusted with anything. Imagine a daughter of mine working in a factory!" But it was absolutely wonderful. I was very happy there." (6)

Victoria Liddiard had been a member of the WSPU, and with her sister she had opened a residential club for professional women at the start of the War, and at weekends they both did relief work at a munitions factory in Battersea (7). While a student at Oxford, Lettice Cooper, who later became a novelist and worked briefly for Lady Rhondda on 'Time & Tide', used to work as a stretcher bearer at Didcot Station at weekends (8).

Even young women, such as Dr Ina Beasley, who was only 16 in 1914, still thought of becoming involved in some way. She and her sister had "vague ideas" of becoming nurses, but an Uncle who had been through the Boer War put a stop to that:

" "Oh, no, no, not nice girls like that. These men have lived hard and they die hard. Your girls can't go and do a thing like that!" So that was all off. And I don't think we were thinking of anything much, except the lady with the lamp." (9)

Later, Dr Beasley worked in a canteen for servicemen and did clerical work for a company providing parts for aeroplane engines, before she went on to College. Annie Huggett, who had been a member of Sylvia Pankhurst's ELFS and was a member of the WLL, spent the War trying to keep herself and her three children alive, whilst her husband, Ted, was in the army:

"I got 7/6 separation allowance from the Army to keep us on and pay the rent...and when potatoes were rationed, my Teddy was just about able to walk, we used to walk to Rainham, which is about six miles, and back with the pram... and we went up to the farmer and he'd let Teddy have his 1d or 2d worth, and I used to get another lot, so I was well off with two lots of potatoes!" (10)

Whatever women's experiences had been, their lives had changed irrevocably. Florence Priestley, who later joined the WFL, recalled:

"Well, all the easy-going acceptance of our life up to the beginning of the War was completely altered. After the War when my father came back an invalid, it took him many years before he recovered from it and he couldn't go back to the wholesale newsagent's business because of the unhealthy hours and he wasn't fit to do the job." (11)

Her family's whole way of life was altered by the economic consequences of their father's ill-health; with her mother having to go out to work for the first time:

"The War changed everything completely. There was no

question of money in the bank that we could just do what we wanted and buy what we wanted." (12)

There were adjustments to be made and expectations of what could be achieved with their new-found status. There was a deep-seated appreciation of the returning soldiers' position, but there was also a desire to continue working because:

"During the war a generation of middle-class women acquired the habit of independence in a manless England. This sudden achievement of all that feminists had dreamed for a hundred years was more than society at large had bargained for. In 1918 women were expected to surrender what they had gained, and to behave as if nothing had happened to themselves or to the world in the previous four years." (13)

Many working-class women had also improved their lives. Girls from rural districts with little or no opportunity for employment had moved into towns and worked in munition factories and earned regular money (14). Now came the return to 'normality', which meant a period of coming to terms with life. For society it meant coming to terms with the waste and horror of the War; for returning soldiers, coming to terms with civilian life and the changed women they came home to; and for women, coming to terms with what they had become and what society would allow them to be in the post-War world.

The apprehension and concern for the post-War reconstruction, which the Women's Movement had been articulating

since 1915 and urging the Government to plan for, was now upon them. The WFL's editorial three days after Armistice Day signalled their optimism and their fears:

"We must see, too, that the girls and women who responded so spontaneously^{to} their country's call for work in munition factories...are treated with consideration when demobilisation takes place. They must not be thrown to the wolves, but have safeguards for future employment, equal facilities and equal terms with men in every branch of industry." (15)

Mindful of international sisterhood, they reinforced the message that such a process was not simply national, but international. The International Woman Suffrage News in December 1918 carried messages from leading suffrage women and organisations to their sisters worldwide who had suffered as a result of the War. Mrs Fawcett looked forward to a League of Nations to unite them, while Charlotte Despard wrote of women's need to:

"hold and grasp the secret of power." (16)

Isabella Ford, NUWSS, ILP and WLL member, put her faith in "world reconstruction"; whilst Helena Swanwick, Maude Royden, Margaret Ashton and Kathleen Courtney of the NUWSS, hailed the power of the Modern Woman who:

"enfranchised in mind and heart, will set their minds and hearts to the future; will lift up their hearts heavy with grief and deeply troubled with wrong, with the mighty gesture of the free woman. They will cry: "This is the day

of the women!" (17)

The first opportunity to utilize this new freedom came with the announcement of the post-War General Election of December 14th 1918.

The General Election

The importance of this Election lay in women's ability to challenge their minority status by participating in the representative process and gaining direct access to political power in their own right, as voters and as parliamentary candidates. Eight and a half million women had won the right to vote and the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act enabled women over twenty-one to stand for Parliament. This created the somewhat contradictory situation of allowing women who did not have the vote to become prospective parliamentary candidates.

The campaign of political education, instigated by the suffrage societies in the Spring of 1918, was specifically aimed at enabling women to understand their entitlements and how to put them into practise, in preparation for a forthcoming election. The complexity of the R. P. Act was decoded by NUWSS publications such as Chrystal Macmillan's, "And Shall I Have a Parliamentary Vote?" which was a detailed 15-page explanation of qualifications and procedures. Other shorter leaflets such as "Six Million Women Can Vote", "The New Privilege of Citizenship" and "How Women Can Use the Vote" were all designed to help women and to ensure that all women

understood their new right and were registered within the specified time limit.

Some measure of the difficulty likely to be encountered was demonstrated in Maud Arncliffe-Sennett's papers. In February she had received a book from the legal publishers, Sweet & Maxwell, which offered explanations of the R.P. Act:

"They have no sooner passed a law than they realise that no-one can understand it." (18)

Her many attempts at registering to vote having been frustrated, Arncliffe-Sennett finally sent a telegram to the President of the Local Government Board who was responsible for administering the Election:

"Have written three times to Hampstead Town Clerk and called once asking to be put on Register as Parliamentary Voter. No pink form has been delivered or explanation offered. Please inform me what to do." (19)

Arncliffe-Sennett was an accomplished businesswoman with many years experience in the Movement, and was used to dealing with officials. But she still experienced these problems with the bureaucracy, as did her niece:

"Mrs Smith and I spent all morning trying to find the place to vote (i.e. to register) without success. Everyone we asked was so nasty I can quite understand how beastly it must have been to have had that wall of insulting prejudice against one in every turn if they are like this

now that it is won!" (20)

How much more difficult the process must have been for women with poor literacy skills, easily intimidated by authority.

This is a powerful example of how legislative success is only the first step in the emancipation process. Such rights only serve to gain access to power when accompanied by machinery to facilitate the use of those rights, in order as Rendel says, to give substance to the right (21). The suffrage societies now faced the task of countermending the prejudice of a system which they had not devised and were not controlling. Distributing procedural information was an important part of the process; but encouraging and supporting women to take on the system and claim their rights was even more crucial.

Operating the right of women to stand as Parliamentary candidates was also fraught with difficulties which would take longer to solve. The most immediate problem for the 1918 Election, however, was the timescale. The date of the General Election had been announced on November 14th, but the enabling act had not become law until November 21st. Nomination day for candidates was nine days later on December 4th and polling day came only ten days after that, on December 14th. Although the circumstances of this Election were exceptional, any women's organizations involved had only twenty-three days, in theory, to select candidates, locate contestable seats, enter the nomination, choose an election agent, finalise election policy, enlist voluntary support, raise

additional funds, organize a schedule of meetings and arrange publicity.

Although the suffrage societies had much of their election organization in place, and had been drawing up policy and encouraging women to come forward as prospective candidates since the R. P. Act, in expectation of their inclusion in an election, this was still an enormous task to complete with any hope of success. As Ray Strachey's mother recorded:

"They scarcely expected to be elected, so new was the idea of women MPs...But those who had fought for the political enfranchisement of women felt that even unsuccessful candidates were worthwhile." (22)

It was important to make as significant a showing as possible, for there were gains to be made in fighting the Election, other than those of winning seats. The WFL stressed that this was an historic event and women must show that they were capable of carrying the responsibility for which they had fought (23). This meant showing that they could operate the electoral machinery and were not intimidated by the political process, in order to eradicate any scope for criticism which might hinder their development.

The NUWSS understood that:

"Deprived for so many years of every means of approaching public service, she can hardly be expected immediately on her enfranchisement to develop knowledge of Parliamentary procedure or any great enthusiasm for those politics which

she has always been told are "not her business". " (24)

This required, as was mentioned in the last chapter, a considerable psychological transformation. For many women it might even be necessary to begin a stage earlier with the whole process of forming opinions. Mrs Rebecca Evans, a miner's wife, born in 1898 in the Rhondda Valley, divined the more basic truth that when you are poor, very often, you cannot afford to have opinions (25). Economic powerlessness coupled with 'sex' oppression was a potent recipe for silence.

Despite all the handicaps, the Women's Movement launched their campaign with their usual degree of optimism and fervour into what became known as the 'Coupon Election'. All Coalition candidates who had the support of Lloyd George, the Coalition leader, and Bonar Law, his Conservative ally and the Unionist leader, received a letter from them which endorsed the recipient's candidature. (The LP had withdrawn from the Coalition before the Election, and campaigned independently.) This letter became somewhat derisively known as a 'coupon' and was largely distributed among Conservative candidates, virtually ensuring their Election success (26).

The seventeen women candidates who stood were ranged across the political spectrum (27), with women from the non-party organizations standing as Independents and for specific political parties. Mrs Despard, the WFL President, was also an ILP member and a life-long socialist, and now stood as a Labour candidate; as did

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, who had a specific motive for standing when:

"The LP of the Rusholme Division of Manchester invited me to stand as a candidate for Parliament. The sole reason that I accepted this invitation was that an opportunity was offered to explain publicly the reasons why I believed that the only chance of permanent peace in Europe lay in a just settlement after the war." (28)

This was a courageous stand, as the 'khaki' Election, as it was also known, was characterized by the slogans, 'Make Germany Pay' and 'Hang the Kaiser', which emanated from Lloyd George's promises for German reparation in the peace settlement.

Such tactics did not improve Lloyd George's image with the Women's Movement which had been struggling for so long to promote peace and internationalism:

"After four years of savage mutual killing, moral issues blurred and the cry of "Hang the Kaiser and make Germans pay", on which Lloyd George rode to victory... left us in some doubt as to whose face was the dirtiest: the pot's or the kettle's." (29)

It was not surprising then, that with a large number of the women candidates standing on a feminist platform (30), they were not afforded the guarantee of a 'coupon'.

Seven women candidates had been involved in working for peace or in emphasising the need for a non-punitive peace

settlement, whilst others had supported alien refugees. The last thing that the Coalition leader needed was to have such women in Parliament exposing the folly of his extravagant claims for the peace in which:

"Germany could pay for the entire cost of the war, and dreams of wealth for the country in which all would share seized the imagination of the people." (31)

Neither the women candidates, nor their supporting societies, made any attempt, despite this prevalent mood of hostility, to adapt or tone down their message. Some of the women candidates had a rough reception when campaigning because of what was interpreted as their pro-Germany sympathies. Ray Strachey, standing as an Independent for Chiswick, suffered from such accusations, her meetings were disrupted and she was "greeted with hisses and catcalls" (32). Charlotte Despard was accused of treachery and heckled (33), whilst Mrs Pethick-Lawrence realized by a strange, but understandable, irony that it was not the women, but the soldiers who were her supporters, because for the women:

"this election was their chance of 'doing their bit' and they were all 'going over the top' to avenge their husbands and their sons." (34)

The only woman candidate who received Lloyd George's 'coupon' was Christabel Pankhurst, who was standing for the Women's Party as the Patriotic Candidate for Smethwick and Supporter of the Coalition. Her platform was certainly in accord with the Coalition leader's policy, as she intended to work for:

"a Victorious Peace true Social Reform and especially Industrial Salvation. We must in future have Britain for the British and a Britain worthy of the British." (35)

Not only did she have the guarantee of a coupon, but the alternative Coalition candidate had been withdrawn in her favour. This emphasis on nationalism and an aggressive peace settlement illustrated just how remote the Pankhursts and their few followers had become from the main body of the Movement. As the 'IWSN' announced shortly after the Election:

"Readers...outside Britain should not be misled by the high sounding title of the "Woman's Party", which includes a small unrepresentative minority of women, not working for feminist objects, but for a particular set of men." (36)

There were some women who wanted to stand, like Selina Cooper of the NUWSS, who could not find a seat (37); or like Arcliffe-Sennett, who had been offered a seat in Edinburgh but had to decline because:

"My husband objects. One cannot live in opposition to one's 'Other Half' and I decline. But Oh! My soul. And Oh! Never chide a woman because she cannot achieve reform until she stands an equal chance with man." (38)

Others, like Margaret Wynne Nevinson, now took part in their first election campaign, despite having been in the Movement for many years, because:

"All my life I had refused to speak at elections or canvass voters, I myself not being held fit to have a

vote." (39)

In view of their non-party philosophy and limited resources, the suffrage societies had the problem of deciding to whom they would lend their support during the electioneering. The NUWSS took the truly non-party, feminist solution and supported all the female candidates irrespective of party affiliations. However, with only 17 women candidates contesting 706 seats, it was also supporting any good male candidate who supported the feminists' demands. But as a suffrage society, it obviously felt that its first priority was to support the women candidates. Whilst approving all the women's candidatures and giving them all a degree of help, it specifically concentrated on working for two members of its Executive, Ray Strachey, who was its Honorary Parliamentary Secretary, and Mrs Corbett Ashby, who was standing as a Liberal in Birmingham. The NUWSS was pleased to be able to re-open its pre-War Election Fighting Fund which could now be allocated for the first time for the use of women candidates (40).

Similarly, the WFL worked for three of its members: Mrs Despard, who was contesting Battersea; Miss Phipps, standing as an Independent in Chelsea on behalf of the NFWT, of which she was an ex-president; and Mrs How-Martyn, an Independent for Hendon. The WFL also gave as much encouragement as possible to the other women candidates, but in constituencies where there was no woman standing, the WFL urged voters to support any male candidate who supported the equality platform. The WFL candidates were

specifically promoting equal political rights for men and women, equal pay, the abolition of Regulation 40D and the equal moral standard. While both Mrs Despard and Miss Phipps had a particular interest in welfare rights for women and children, in addition to improved educational opportunities (41).

Apart from seeking to get as many women as possible elected to Parliament, the suffrage societies were also addressing the other new role, of the woman voter. The emphasis was placed on the active participation of women as voters, with a positive function to perform; rather than as a body of people who were to wait to be 'acted upon' by the candidates and political parties. The women's organizations sought to involve women in the process more directly, by instructing them on how they might participate more fully during the campaign. As a by-product of such participation, they were educating themselves politically.

The emphasis lay on responsibility: that women should make themselves responsible for ascertaining the candidates' position on women's issues. Election campaigns were largely conducted through public meetings, which was familiar terrain for suffrage workers, but not for all women. Women's societies attempted to assist women by publishing lists of questions which might be used to interrogate candidates at public meetings to ascertain their position in relation to women's emancipation. The NUWSS issued a document to every constituency in which the fifteen demands to be made of candidates embraced all aspects of the Union's policy, including

the appointment of women among the official Government delegation to the Peace Conference (42).

The Women's Local Government Society (WLGS) also joined the NUWSS to compile another list of seven questions covering equal pay, the equal moral standard, the removal of restrictions on women's careers, equal opportunities in education and training, and the need for women on Government committees (43). Other societies like the Women's Political League (WPL), formerly the BWSS, also produced such plans and the WFL published their 'Candidates' Catechism' which was a fifteen point questionnaire dealing with the franchise extension, women's entry into the legal profession and other feminist demands (44). In such a way, the women's groups managed to cover large numbers of possible discriminatory practice. It was a timely opportunity to use concerted pressure to place women's issues back on the political agenda and in the public domain; yet another important by-product of the election campaign.

But there was real hope of success for some of the women candidates. Mary Macarthur was an official LP candidate, representing the needs of working women in Stourbridge, where:

"the voters included a number of the chainmakers and hollow-ware makers for whom she had fought in the early days of the Trade Boards." (45)

There were also high hopes for Mrs Despard who had the advantage of having lived and worked in Battersea for thirty years where she was

well-known and much-loved, while the male opposition candidate was totally unknown (46).

Such hopes made the disappointment all the more acute when the Coalition won the Election by a landslide and only one woman, Constance Markievicz, won a seat. Although sister to Eva Gore-Booth, the suffragist, Markievicz was involved in the Irish struggle for independence and was a member of Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein members refused to take the Oath of Allegiance as a gesture of defiance and protest to the British Crown and did not, therefore, take their seats in Parliament; a cruel irony for the Women's Movement (47).

After the publication of the results on December 28th, the Women's Movement analysed their performance in the face of this disappointment. The 1918 General Election popularly represented as a failure for the women's cause, was, more accurately, a triumph against virtually insuperable odds. The Women's Movement had not succeeded in getting a woman elected to Parliament, but they had achieved a good deal in laying down groundwork for the future. They had shown that they were equal to the challenge by preparing and mounting a vigorous campaign at a time when both funds and energy were low. At a Lyceum Club celebration dinner for all the women candidates, many organizers and candidates gave positive and optimistic accounts of their experiences. Mrs McEwan, who had stood as a Liberal in Enfield, stressed the educative value of the campaign for the candidates, the voters and the Movement (48). That

sentiment had also been expressed by the NUWSS who were keen to use this experience as a foundation for future political education (49).

Some of the handicaps which the women faced have already been dealt with: the inadequate amount of time in which they had to prepare; not having Lloyd George's official endorsement; lack of money; the small number of women candidates; no previous experience of direct participation in elections; and the difficulty of registration; but there were many others. One glaring example of individually experienced prejudice was the case of Mary Macarthur. Having only recently married, she did not use her married name of Mary Reid Anderson, for she was known to all in the industrial and Labour world by her maiden name, which was how she registered her candidacy. However, the Returning Officer, despite many protests, insisted that legally she must use her married name; consequently, that was what appeared on the ballot paper. Margaret Cole, in Macarthur's biography, pointed out that this effectively lost Macarthur many votes. The unfamiliarity of the name to many of the women workers, large numbers of whom were illiterate, plus the fact of never having voted before, led to confusion. They did not realise that Anderson and Macarthur were the same person (50).

At another celebration dinner at the Pioneer Club, Macarthur relayed how she had accused the Returning Officer of:

"...robbing me of my good name - for had I been nominated as Mary Macarthur I should have secured many more votes

than I did as Mary Reid Anderson. I regarded the result of the election...as a remarkable victory, and I still so regard it." (51)

Macarthur had still polled 7,587 votes, to the winner's 8,920, in a contest where she had been strongly favoured to win (52). One wonders what the result might have been without the display of prejudice.

Another disadvantage for independent candidates, who relied solely on the women's societies for electioneering support, was that they did not have the extensive machinery of the political parties backing their candidature. Although it often seemed that political party support for women could be less than enthusiastic, and in the case of the LP which was still in its early years of development often, as Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence wrote there was:

"next to no Labour organization." (53)

Rendel writes of how political parties can be channels through which women can gain political power (54), but in previous chapters it has been shown that the intention of the political parties had been to use women to increase the power of the party, not to empower women (55).

The WFL attempted to alleviate other drawbacks, such as those experienced by housebound mothers, by recruiting an army of volunteers to baby-sit to enable women to vote. They were also aware that:

"The real meaning of enfranchisement may not yet be under-

stood by every woman voter. Changes have come rapidly; the election has been hurried on, and there may be women who will not use their vote, prize their privileges, or recognize their responsibilities." (56)

Graves & Hodge suggested another reason for a certain section of women not voting:

"few women in the early thirties would care to register as voters, for fear of revealing their age; in those days excessive delicacy was still observed in the matter of mentioning a woman's age." (57)

They maintained this to be one reason for making the age limit thirty.

There were, of course, factors to be considered which affected the nation as a whole and although not confined to the women's situation, contributed to their performance. The NUWSS felt that:

it seems clear that the majority of women voted as the majority of men did, for the predominantly Conservative Government, whose platform was a "khaki", or victory platform.

The general feeling among election workers was that women were taken unprepared...there was considerable apathy and ignorance; no clear issues of constructive policy were presented to the electors." (58)

It was also generally accepted that despite the rancour and passion that the campaign aroused, there was also a mood of apathy and that

the Election turnout was only a little over 50%. This did not, however, apply as extensively to women. It would seem that these women were not so much voting against the women candidates as for the Coalition which had promised them revenge on Germany, new homes, plenty of work and a better life.

The WFL declared that the existing party organizations had given them little support and, most significant of all, no 'safe' seats. They acknowledged their disappointment, even their despondency, at the results; but, like the NUWSS, they saw the key issue as the education of the electorate, both male and female. Mrs Despard forecast success if only the Movement maintained its integrity and loyalty to one another. The WFL even suggested that as an act of good faith, the Government should reserve a number of safe seats for women (59).

The few women candidates must almost have been lost in the sea of male candidates and Coalition promises. And the women promoted a more realistic and painful analysis that people did not want to hear: that peace terms designed to punish could only result in laying the foundations for future conflict. After years of deprivation it was not a comforting message; but the Women's Movement had yet to learn the political art of dissembling:

"We are proud of such women candidates; they have set an example in electioneering which is full of promise for the future. They avoided personalities, but dealt fair and square with essentials; they disdained tricks

but upheld truth." (60)

The matter of how much their sex had contributed to the results was another important factor under discussion. Mrs How-Martyn thought that being a woman alone would not ensure success; but as a good candidate, the fact of "their womanhood" would be an advantage. Margery Corbett Ashby believed that it was not her sex that had lost her the Election, but that she had lost the party vote and had gained the votes of women wanted to be represented by a woman (61). The NUWSS was clear that:

"Women candidates have everywhere been criticised purely on the principles for which they stand; they have never had it thrown in their teeth that they are merely women." (62)

This concern about the influence of 'sex' in the Movement's ideology was a key issue, especially in the light of the allegations that it would be impossible to convince women to vote for other women, which was cited by the press as a significant reason for the women candidates' failures.

But an examination of their statistical results (63) in view of the enormous obstacles which they faced, could hardly be regarded as a negligible achievement. The factor which contributed most to the women's defeat and to the success of the Coalition, was to be of importance for the four years which lay ahead:

"Sir George Younger, the Coalition Unionist Whip, and his helpers who gave out the Coalition coupons with the wisdom of men intent on accomplishing a certain purpose.

Coalition and country was their cry; those who opposed were suspect, unpatriotic, even treacherous. The measure of the success achieved is the measure of the astuteness of the politician." (64)

The Coalition had secured 484 members from a possible total of 706, with the LP as the largest opposition group with 59 MPs. The composition of the new Parliament meant that it was largely an unknown quantity to the Women's Movement. As the NUSEC estimated in its 1919 Report, there were only 120 MPs left in the House who were known to have an interest in women's issues, and this was to be of great significance to the women's cause in the following years.

The Development of Women's Organisations, 1918-1922.

Instability and disillusion beset Britain in the winter which followed the end of the War and the General Election. During that winter the great influenza epidemic killed 200,000 in Britain and 27 million worldwide; there was a coal shortage which had severe effects on a country where coal was the main industrial and domestic fuel, and the Government and the Establishment were calling for a "united national effort" (65). This new national demand was to have a very special meaning for women, which testified to Mowat's theory of the regressive nature of post-War politics (66).

During the period from the end of 1918 to the middle of 1922, it must have seemed at times that the Women's Movement experienced no less opposition to their work than in the pre-War days before the vote. For the process of demobilisation ushered in huge objections to women's employment, and their attempts to extend the franchise continued to be contentious; to say nothing of the remainder of their agenda of reform. All this was to be tackled against a background of economic and social unrest which did nothing to smooth their path. A brief economic boom in 1919 resulted in inflation, to be followed from April 1920 to 1922 by a slump and an economic depression. As Seaman commented:

"An examination of the years from 1918 to 1922 gives the impression of a journey through chaos. The rulers of England were as unprepared for the problems of a sudden reversion to peace as they had been for the problems of sudden war in 1914." (67)

What state had the Women's Movement and its organizations emerged in from the War to tackle this task of achieving complete emancipation for women? The largest fundamental change was in their relation to the State now that they had the vote. But, as they were only too aware:

"Suffrage work is not yet done. When we strove with most passion for the vote, we sought it not for itself only, but as a symbol and a key. We have got the key now, we have turned it in the lock, but of what use will it be to us or to those who follow us, unless we can push the door

open, and hold it open? The symbol must be made real." (68)
 The symbol was to be made real by applying their newly acquired power to the whole range of objectives which had given these political, professional and industrial women's organizations their original impetus.

The struggle for the vote had unified these political, professional and industrial groups. Now, having established the principle and the partial practice of the franchise for women, such organizations were able to revert to their original aims. The constituent parts of the Movement could operate within their own particular sphere of expertise, whilst remaining within the larger embrace of the Movement to continue to work for common goals such as the franchise extension, and economic equality. As Ray Strachey recorded:

"The actual division of responsibilities among the societies was complicated and variable...With the granting of the vote all the organisations of women became more or less feminist and political, and the doctrines of equal legislation and equal pay became, as it were, common form to them all. The war, too, had left a legacy of co-operation among them..." (69)

Having learned the benefits which accrued from co-operation, they sustained the links forged by this network.

There was far too much work to be done by one society, however large it might be. The scale of the issues required a broad

base of expertise. What was essential for success, was a network of organisations comprising separate groups which could concentrate on specific issues by working out the related policy and the avenues of approach. But the amalgamated strength of all these societies was also needed to mount mass actions at critical points during a campaign. In such a way, expertise common to all could be pooled when required, without impeding the progress of separate ventures.

The sheer volume of women's groups which were in existence after the War and contributed in some way to this network prohibits an exhaustive treatment. This section attempts to indicate the variety of operation which formed the basis of the Movement's work in the 1920s, its pattern of development and the expansion of the significant feminist organizations.

With regard to the pattern of change in relation to individual groups, there was within this broad picture, an interesting variety. Some groups, like the US wound up their operations in February 1918 directly after the passing of the R.P. Act, as they felt that:

"Though our object in its entirety has not been attained, Society feels that to continue in existence only for the purpose of removing women's remaining political disabilities is impracticable, and that to widen our scope by undertaking other reforms would be but to add to the number of societies already in existence for such a purpose." (70)

Others, like the Pankhurst's Women's Party were to come to an end by default, rather than by any specific policy decision.

Certainly, in the December 20th 1918 edition of 'Britannia' the Women's Party's intention to continue was firm:

"The opening of the New Year will see the renewal of the Women's Party national work. Mrs Pankhurst is making plans for her own share in this, which will be announced later...The eligibility of women to parliament has, of course, necessitated an extension of the sphere of action of the Women's Party. But we reserve any further statement until a future issue...." (71)

However, this 'renewal' never really materialized, and the Women's Party limped through the first half of 1919 having little or no effect on the public scene. Then in the Autumn, Mrs Pankhurst left Britain for lecturing work in America. It was, as David Mitchell concluded, as if:

"Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel, by some sleight of history's hand, had been shuffled from the centre of the stage. The door of Downing Street was no longer open to them." (72)

Others, like Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Suffrage Federation (WSF), had been undergoing a process of ideological change which resulted in a very different organization from the original. The WSF had shifted its focus from the socialist feminism of the ELFS, to international socialism. During this post-War period it concentrated on the spread of communist propaganda,

encouraging British workers to make a stand against capitalism and start the Revolution in Britain. The original homely feminism directed at the problems of women in London's East End, had merged into the need for a socialist solution when the ELFS became the WSF in 1916 and set up branches all over the country.

By 1919, suffrage societies were in the process of introducing a second phase of re-evaluation in response to the challenges of reconstruction. The largest society, the NUWSS, played a significant part in this phase. At its Annual Council Meeting early in March 1919, it revised its constitution to enable any other women's organizations with the same object of implementing full equality for women, to affiliate to the Union, despite other aims which they might subscribe to. This resulted from the Union's observations of the Movement's future needs, and its desire to maximise the Movement's potential. It hoped that:

"In this way the Union will become the co-ordinating organ of all feminist activity throughout Great Britain. But even when perfectly co-ordinated, there is a danger that feminist activity may come to little if too widely diffused, for an "Equality" programme is bound to be a wide programme. To counteract this danger, the methods of the Union have been altered, so that the Union will never be working for more than six "Equality" reforms at the same time." (73)

The Union's name was changed to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC) to reflect its new objectives, and on Mrs Fawcett's retirement, Eleanor Rathbone succeeded her as President.

The NUSEC's new policy illuminated three important considerations: its awareness of the need for continued collective campaigning; the unifying foundation of the equality goal held in common by so many groups, which formed the basis for this collective action; and the necessity for different groups to concentrate on specific issues. The NUSEC was able to record the success of its new policy in its 1919 Annual Report, with the affiliation of the AMSH, the NFWT, the AWCS, the UJW, the WIC, the WIL, the IWSSLGA, and the BDWCU. Like the Women Citizens' Associations initiated by the NCW in the previous year, who were also affiliated to the NUSEC, this affiliation system ensured an expansion of the Movement and an opportunity to welcome more women into the organised struggle.

In its publication, 'Women Citizens' Association Handbook', the NUSEC outlined how to start such a group, and the lists of organizations, speakers and literature included in the pamphlet, are good indicators of the catholic direction which the Movement was taking. WCAs especially, could act as a means of binding all these different interest groups together into a community of women. The lists cut across political and religious boundaries, and indicated the path along which the Movement was travelling. Such co-ordination was an essential element in

fulfilling their ambition for equality (74). By October 1919 there were 182 WCAs, Equality groups and Local Correspondent Groups covering England, Wales and Scotland.

Whereas the NUSEC hoped to act as a co-ordinating force in addition to its function as an originator of policy and active campaigns, the NCW of Great Britain and Ireland, operated solely as a co-ordinating organization on a national and local level. By 1918 it was well-suited to this purpose with 126 local branches all over Great Britain and 142 affiliated women's organizations covering every aspect of women's activity. These included the whole gamut of women's groups, including many of a feminist tone, such as the IWSLGA, the AMSH, the NUSEC, the FSWG, the CLWS, the NFWT and the WFL. It had an Executive Committee and 7 Standing Committees which divided the country into districts. The business of the Council was carried out through its 15 Sectional Committees, for example the Industrial, Parliamentary & Legislation Committee; that for Public Health & Insurance; and one for Women Patrols. With its representative membership crossing party political lines, it was in a valuable position to feed into the Movement's activities (75).

The other stalwart suffrage society which had declared its satisfaction with the increasing amount of collective campaigning and its hope that this would set the tone for the post-War effort, was the WFL. Although a good deal smaller than the NUSEC, with fewer than 50 branches, these were still widely distributed throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Also, many of

the organizations which were affiliated to the NUSEC and the NCW, were subscribers to the WFL, such as the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries (AWCS), the Federation of Women Civil Servants (FWCS), the NFWT and the WIL. Many of the suffrage societies which had 'kept the flag flying' during the War were also still in existence and subscribed to the WFL; among them being the AFL, the CWSS and the NMFWS (76).

Although the British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was primarily concerned with the promotion of peace and international understanding, because its membership was drawn largely from the suffrage societies, it also supported other campaigns throughout the 1920s. The Irish women's suffrage groups were also still operating. The Women's Political League in Belfast (formerly the BWSS) and the Irish Women's Suffrage & Local Government Association in Dublin, which had become the Irish Women Citizens' and Local Government Association in November 1918, sustained their strong links with the Movement on the mainland until after the Anglo-Irish Treaty in the Summer of 1921. The partition of Ireland meant that these groups then became more involved with activities in Northern Ireland and Eire.

One of the most active groups continued to be the London Society for Women's Suffrage (LSWS). At its Annual Meeting in February 1919 it responded to the "altered character of the work to be carried out", by revising its rules and constitution. It also

changed its name to the London Society for Women's Service (LSWS) and passed a resolution that:

"the Society continue to stand for equal suffrage and equal opportunities for women, but resolve to concentrate its efforts for the present on obtaining economic equality for women." (77)

Although as Ray Strachey wrote to her mother, such changes did not go through unopposed:

"We had rather a fight for it, as a little band of about eighteen obstructionists turned up and disputed every word." (78)

Whereas before the NUWSS had altered its constitution and aims, the LSWS had been the London representatives of the NUWSS, it was now just one of the many London societies affiliated to the NUSEC. This, in turn, meant:

"that the National Union may now properly hold meetings in London without reference to the London Society, while the London Society may carry on its work in co-operation with any other Society sympathetic to its special aspect of equality without reference to the National Union." (79)

This enabled both groups to benefit from their traditional close working relationship, whilst broadening the LSWS's operational base. The Union would also be strengthened by the new expertise and contacts made by the LSWS which it could contribute to the Union.

In its Annual Report for 1917-1918, presented at the February 1919 meeting, the LSWS envisaged what its future role would be:

"Thousands of women have for the first time realised the meaning of the Suffrage Movement from their personal experience of work during the war. Thousands have begun to understand that it is necessary to organise and to co-operate, and that they look to the London Society and to its Women's Service Bureau as to their natural protectors." (80)

To facilitate this growth, the LSWS had appointed an organizer in 1918 with sole responsibility for establishing WCAs in the London region.

There were still many of the smaller suffrage societies operating, adding their weight to the Movement's work; such as the Independent WSPU, the CSWSS and the WWSL. There were also the smaller local groups such as the Hendon Women's Election Committee, the Birmingham United Suffragists and various local Women's Councils. Many of such groups were affiliated or subscribed to the larger societies such as the NUSEC or the WFL, and by so doing were contributing to the continued heterogeneity of the Women's Movement.

The process of demobilisation and its effects on the labour market, meant that all women's groups which were primarily concerned with the protection of women's employment were very

active from 1918 to 1922. Three unions which represented professional women and worked in close harmony with the suffrage societies during this time, had a particularly high profile. These were the FWCS, the AWCS, and the NUWT.

The FWCS began life in 1913 as a result of the struggle for equal pay. It comprised six constituent clerical associations (81) and their policy was to achieve equality of opportunity for women in the Civil Service, as well as working:

"To secure the removal of the civil and political disabilities of women." (82)

It was this awareness of the larger context in which their professional claims were set, which made them such an effective advocate of the woman's cause, and the reason for their participation in suffrage processions and demonstrations before the War.

The FWCS's close colleagues were the AWCS. They aimed to protect their clerical workers and abolish 'sex' differentiation within clerical work. They were most emphatic about the importance of co-operation with other organizations who were pursuing the same ends. In a newsletter to their members in October 1918, they reiterated the need for women to defend their rights and take the responsibility for accomplishing their personal objectives. This was a realisation which kept surfacing throughout this period, that such work could not be left to others, but must be advanced by

women. The prevalent trend in the emergence of specific groups working for women's rights was making an impact on the AWCS:

"Probably many of us, at the present moment, are bewildered by the numerous Associations and Unions which are springing up on every side and it behoves us to consider what we stand for, why we exist, and what our relations with other clerical Unions should be. Organization is today in everybody's mind, and we are all beginning to realize what a powerful weapon combination is... Those of us who are new to economic independence must realise that if we wish to retain it we must act collectively." (83)

Their organization was flourishing, with 300 new members in the month of August alone, and by 1922 they were to have a membership of 3000 women (84).

The third major professional women's union was that of the NFWT, which began its involvement with women's rights when it first began to campaign for equal pay in 1904, when women were still a part of the mixed National Union of Teachers (NUT). It originated as an Equal Pay League formed by women and men to pressurize the NUT into improving women teachers' pay and position. By 1906 the League's name was changed to the NFWT and all but one of the male members left. As a result of the fierce hostility which the women experienced at the hands of most male colleagues, by 1908 the Federation had taken up the suffrage issue and were firmly entrenched in the Women's Movement. All through the war they continued to fight for equal pay and in 1918 they once more

attempted to induce the NUT to include equal pay on its agenda. The Federation grew so rapidly, that by 1916 there was too much work for the honorary officers and a general secretary was employed. By 1919, the Federation had its own offices and over a dozen full-time workers, as well as a full-time organizer (85).

The increasing sophistication of these organizations ensured strong and assertive groups which mirrored the personal confidence of the membership. Another section of the Movement was that of the industrial organizations which represented working-class women. This section underwent a process of absorption by male organizations after the War, which tended to alter the focus of their power, and in some minds, to denude it. However, in 1919 it was still largely in place, with the major players being the SJCIWO, the NFWW, and the WTUL. In the last chapter the assimilation of the WLL into the LP machine as Women's Sections was described, and that was to set the pattern for the other groups concerned.

The SJCIWO came into existence in 1916, and two years later the WTUL, the WCG, the NFWW and the Railway Women's Guild (RWG) were all affiliated to it. In December 1918 the National Executive Committee of the LP requested the SJC to contribute advice on women's questions to the Party, and in January 1919 the SJC accepted this invitation. Meanwhile the CWG had been undergoing a steady growth throughout the War, so that by 1918 there were 36

new branches and 27 in the process of being formed. This was to herald a trend which continued throughout the 1920s.

The pattern of decline which the women's industrial groups were to experience during the early 1920s, was in marked contrast to their War-time growth. The escalating numbers drawn into heavy industry were reflected in the success of the women's unions which interested women in the principle of co-operation and the protection of their rights. After the War, the NFWW saw their largest branches in industrial centres such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Barrow and Woolwich, 'melt away'. But what the Union officers and membership had learned did not 'melt away', and although they were not as appreciable in size, other branches were set up in the new employment which their members now went into to. The pattern of such movement was appreciable enough for the NFWW to claim that:

"Having regard to the circumstances of the times, we believe the aggregate results are magnificent, and are eloquent testimony to the educational work of our branch officers; ...we are not unmindful of the great work done by those who have stood by the declining branches when everything seemed to be slipping away from them." (86)

In the Summer of 1918, the NFWW began negotiations with the National Union of General Workers (NUGW) with a view to a merger; the NFWW was to become the Women's Department of that Union. But that did not take effect until 1920 and for the next two years the NFWW carried on working for women's employment rights.

This included the operation of its Legal Advice Bureau which had built a successful reputation in securing compensation for women from insurance companies, employers and Government departments (87).

Despite the privations of the War, at the beginning of 1919 there was an impressive network of organizations marshalled to promote and protect women's rights during the years of reconstruction. However, almost without exception, the annual reports disclose the perilous financial position in which the Movement found itself, stripped as it was of any reserve assets. The suffrage societies' wartime fundraising had been used to finance their welfare work only, and it had been difficult because of war-time disruption to collect sufficient subscriptions to keep the societies' personal accounts healthy. The decline in union membership as women were forced to leave their employment, also meant a dramatic loss of revenue. Although at least at the end of 1919, the NFWV's accumulated funds had risen from £3,005 at the end of 1914 to £32,081, an indication of their war-time recruitment success (88).

Even societies as large as the NUSEC and the LSWS had to decrease their numbers of paid staff as a way of rationalising their operations. The precarious post-war economic position meant that donations decreased, costs increased and organizations had no surplus to fall back on. The NUSEC reported at the beginning of 1919 that they had had to restrict their spending severely (89).

The LSWS found that its work in 1919 was being impeded by the shortage of office staff, because there was no decrease in the amount of work to be done. The financial stress was an additional burden to the many other problems which they faced. The WFL Treasurer's Report graphically described the difficulties:

"The financial position during the years 1919, 1920 and 1921 has been a very difficult one...In 1919 salaries, light and coal and postage all rose and in 1920, fares, rent of halls, stationery and printing also increased whilst in 1921 though printing and stationery fell in cost, fares rose again. To meet our difficulties the NEC saved travelling expenses by meeting less frequently and the members of our diminished staff worked cheerfully at higher pressure..." (90)

Financial constraints had always been a perennial problem for the Movement, which they had faced with ingenuity. Because of women's financial position in society, having to rely largely on them for subscriptions, donations and participation in fund-raising, was bound to result in limited incomes for their organizations. This was why the involvement of wealthy middle and upper-class women had always been so vital to the continuation of the Movement's activities. Lady Astor's papers reveal a constant stream of donations to feminist groups (91); Lady Rhondda poured a quarter of a million pounds into 'Time & Tide' alone (92); Susan Lawrence put her private income at the disposal of the Labour and women's cause, giving £5,000 alone for the relief of women and

children during the 1926 Miner's Strike (93); large donations from Eleanor Rathbone and Mrs Fawcett to the NUSEC were a regular feature; Maud Arncliffe-Sennett used money from her business for the ELFS and to look after suffragette sisters' children when their mothers were in prison. These are just a few of the many examples.

Although every organization relied heavily on voluntary workers, when it came to paid staff, the women's societies were insistent on the need to set an example and pay their staff well. It was a demonstration of valuing women's work and recompensing them accordingly. The LSWS saw little point in their involvement in demanding equal pay and higher standards for employment and training, if they did not take a lead in setting adequate wage levels. But as the FWCS pleaded in 1920:

"Money is needed for the fight for Equality." (94)

The greater the funds, the more effective the campaigning could be and there was to be no shortage of campaigns over the next few years.

The AWCS newsletter of 1918 had noted the abundance of new women's groups which were emerging and the years from 1918 to 1922 saw the formation of some feminist organizations which were to become firmly established in the decade and make a significant contribution to the Cause. The attack on women's right to work which partly resulted in a contraction of new opportunities for middle-class women, brought with it additional resistance from new groups such as the Women's Industrial League (WIL), the Women's

Engineering Society (WES) and the Council for Women Civil Servants (CWCS).

The Women's Industrial League was founded in November 1918 with Lady Rhondda as its President, who maintained that the League's objective was:

"to organize public opinion and to keep the Government up to its promises." (95)

Although not intended to be a trade union, it did encourage and seek to educate women as to the benefits of combination. Equal pay for equal output was one of its main policies and its General Organizing Secretary, Miss Key Jones, saw its aim as being:

"To see women's status raised politically, industrially and professionally." (96)

WIL sought to provide protection for women who were working in industry, from the inevitable disruption that the end of the War would bring.

It attempted to do this by keeping the relevant issues in the public arena. It pressed for the employment of women with reference to Government initiatives; brought matters to the Government's attention by means of petitions, deputations and questionnaires; issued reports on women in industry; held public meetings; and arranged discussion groups, lectures and speakers' classes for working women. Rhondda and Key Jones, provided a standard combination of the Movement's origins, whilst Betty Archdale, the Honorary Secretary contributed her skills as a

reputedly brilliant young lawyer. Julia Varley, an ex-WSPU and WLL member, and an active trade unionist, regularly addressed the League's meetings.

The other association that was industrially-based, but of middle-class inspiration, was the Women's Engineering Society (WES) which was inaugurated on February 21st 1919 at a meeting at Caxton Hall. It was founded by three women with traditional male skills and qualifications, who also had considerable private means to finance the Society. Lady Rachel Parsons was a qualified engineer who led this group of women and became its President. The other two women involved in financing the Society were Laura A. Willson and Lady Moir. Mrs Willson although having married a wealthy, self-made man, had started her working life at the age of ten as a half-timer in a textile factory and had worked in the Trade Union Movement. She had taken sole charge of her husband's factory during the war, although her own trade was house-building. Lady Moir had been in charge of the supervision of relief work at munition factories during the War.

The WES sought to challenge the restoration of the Pre-War Trade Practices Act (PWTPA) of 1919 whereby the Government, Unions and employers pledged to reinstate the pre-War industrial pattern by dismissing women from those positions filled during the process of dilution or job substitution (see next chapter). This Act was particularly injurious to the position of women in the engineering trades where, paradoxically, although regarded as very much a male

occupation, many women had thrived during the War and gained great satisfaction from their new-found skills.

The WES aimed to enable women to overcome the barriers to entering engineering by providing information, keeping them up to date with modern developments, arranging lectures and annual conferences, giving them support and encouragement in establishing new ventures, providing a communication channel via their own magazine, 'The Woman Engineer', and raising its members' status by their membership of an accredited engineering society (97). This last aim was an important development in the Movement's history, as women discovered new ways of gaining access to power by creating their own institutions. This was one of the problems of being a member of a minority, where lack of access to institutions inhibited progress in a given career. As Lady Rhondda had noted of being a woman in the business world:

"One difficulty I have found which I think all women in higher positions in business and the professions still find. One is very largely cut off from the source of supply of gossip. Though one is in the life, one is not, one cannot yet be, altogether of it. No person who is cut off from the gossip of their professions...can realize how immensely important that talk is." (98)

The Secretary of the WES was Caroline Haslett who had been a WSPU member and in 1914 began work for the Cochran Boiler Company, gradually training as an engineer. In 1919 she applied for

the post at the WES and went on to become a prominent member of the 1920s Women's Movement. She saw her job at the WES as:

"one of consolidation so that the inroads into engineering women had made during the war years should not be whittled away; and of expansion by making available to all women the regulation training courses, hitherto restricted to men." (99)

The WES gradually expanded, establishing branches in the Midlands and the rest of the country.

Women who had been in a profession before the war, also found their jobs under threat as the post-War situation tended to affect their conditions of service and opportunities for advancement. In February 1920 three women civil servants in Bristol wrote to the Chief Woman Organising Officer, Miss Sanday, at the Ministry of Labour in London and set in motion the machinery for setting up the Council for Women Civil Servants (CWCS) (100). Several reconstruction committee reports had resulted in injustices relating to equal pay, access to promotion and appointment procedures, and the women determined to redress these inequalities by working through their new organization. Their first Chairwoman was the veteran pioneer, Adelaide Anderson, who had been the first woman factory inspector at the end of the nineteenth century, and who had a wealth of expertise to place at their disposal (101).

Another group of professional women whose organization although not new, was strengthened and renamed during this period,

was that of the National Federation of Women Teachers (NFWT). In 1918 the Women Teachers' Franchise Union amalgamated with the London Unit of the NFWT; and in 1920, at its Annual Conference, the NFWT changed its name to the National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT) (102). Women teachers were at a low ebb, they were poorly paid at a time when there had been a severe rise in the cost of living. It was this common economic vulnerability of women which made co-operation essential as a first step to some kind of survival.

Women, such as those who had joined the Services, had been unceremoniously discharged in the Autumn of 1919:

"At one point Women's Royal Air Force Records Office discharged about 12,000 girls within six weeks...all Immobiles were given seven days' dispersal leave with pay...." (103)

Little wonder then that many service women were reported to be delighted when an Association of Service Women (ASW) was formed early in 1920. The Council consisted of the women who had been the heads of the six women's services and their objectives included providing a loan fund for training for civilian work, as well as providing loans for women to set themselves up in business at home or abroad, as well as providing an employment registry and a range of accommodation (104).

There was an enormous disruption of women's lives to be catered for after the war, with psychological adjustments to be

made, as well as physical needs to be attended to. For women who were intent on sustaining their independence and had abandoned the idea of returning to the parental home, or whose husbands or fiancées had been killed, or who had no intention of marrying, there was a desperate shortage of suitable housing. Groups such as Women's Pioneer Housing Limited (WPH) were established to provide homes specifically designed for professional women. WPH was started as a co-operative society in 1920 by Etheldred Browning where:

"Tenants are members of the society, and take part in the management through direct representation on the Committee of Management. Most of the tenants are substantial investors in the Shares and Loan Stock of the Society." (105)

Many women who were prominent in the Women's Movement were involved with the WPH, either on the Management Committee or as holders of shares in the loan stock and as supporters of the project. Elizabeth Macadam and Eleanor Rathbone of the NUSEC, Lady Denman from the NCW and the NFWI, Lady Shelley-Rolls of the WES and Mrs Rollo Russell from the WIL, were just some women who supported the WPH. Amongst members of the 1921 Council were Lady Rhondda, Lady Emmott of the LSWS and the Hon. Mrs Franklin of the NUSEC. Ray Strachey was chairman of the Management Committee; with Betty Archdale of the WIL, Dorothy C.S. Peel a suffragist and journalist, and Mrs Constance Hoster, who owned and ran a business college for women and worked with the NUSEC and the WES, as some of the Committee members.

The WPH, like so many other women's organizations, was, despite such prestigious members, not immune from the financial difficulties of the time, as it was solely dependent on women for its income. As early in its history as April 1921 it was threatened with having to go into liquidation, but the Minutes of May 2nd record Ray Strachey's strategy which enabled them to continue (106).

Through this four-year period from 1918, it is possible to discern a superstructure of organizations forming which embraced all aspects of women's lives. One of the most important departures dealing with the welfare aspect of working-class women's lives was the development of voluntary groups which dealt with information on birth control. The establishment of the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (SCBCRP) in 1921 by Marie Stopes was a landmark in this movement. Although Stopes did not classify herself as a feminist and some of the eugenicist overtones of the 'racial progress' aspect of her theory would not have been entertained by socialist or other feminists, there was room for diversity within the Society:

"the scope of the Society is very wide...no one of the following is binding on an individual member
General agreement with the objects of the Society
suffices for membership." (107)

Stopes was instrumental in liberating working women from conditions which she saw as being akin to being a "shackled slave":

"poor women are still immensely at the mercy of ignorance

and prejudice and by their conditions are shut away from sources of sound information." (108)

The perpetuation of such ignorance was deliberate Government policy, as in line with post-War social policy to replace Britain's "lost generation", birth control information was not available at Government health clinics.

There were two organizations which came into being at this time to continue the tradition of the non-party political organization: the Six Point Group (SPG) and the Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations (CCWO). The SPG was formed at a meeting on February 17th 1921 with Lady Rhondda as President, with an Executive and Vice-Presidents which included Caroline Haslett, Secretary of the WES; Lady Moir of the WES; Winifred Cullis, Professor of Physiology at London University and President of the British Federation of University Women (BFUW); Adelaide Anderson, President of the CWCS; Mrs Philip Snowden, LP member of the SJCIWO and of the WIL; the two women MPs, Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham; and members from the AFL (109).

The SPG stood for a platform on women's questions which it defined as :

"certain specific matters which especially affect women, not so much on account of their sex as on account of their present position in the national economy." (110)

Its six agenda items related to legislation on child assault,

widowed mothers, unmarried mothers and their children, equal rights for the guardianship of parents, equal pay for teachers and equal opportunities in the civil service; a package of reforms which contained many of the major concerns of a large number of women. The paper, 'Time & Tide', financed by Lady Rhondda, was regarded as being the SPG's press organ, although during correspondence with the NUSEC in its columns in 1926, Lady Rhondda firmly denied this (111). Certainly by the mid-1920s the SPG was one of the most active and influential feminist organizations.

In March 1921, a Conference of Women attended by over 40 women's organizations, called by the first woman MP, Lady Astor, resulted in the formation of the Consultative Committee of Women's Organizations (CCWO), which was to act as a co-ordinating body for the Movement. Lady Astor, as the first woman M.P., had been in Parliament for a year and was eager to increase the effectiveness of women's organizations in relation to the business of the Commons. At the next CCWO meeting in April, there were representatives from over 80 groups who were either wholly or partly concerned with women's issues (112). With the aim of providing a central point from which information and ideas could be collectively acted upon, the Committee's objectives were:

- "i) To collect and communicate information of mutual interest respecting the activities of constituent Societies or the political situation generally.
- ii) To consult together on questions of policy and methods of action.

iii) To recommend action to its constituent bodies to be carried out by them jointly or severally." (113)

An indication of the range of the CCWO's work, was given in a notice in 'The Woman's Leader' when Astor and Edith Picton-Turbervill, who was Vice-Chairman and also a working member of the NUSEC, the YWCA and the NCW, declared:

"YOU DID YOUR BIT IN THE WAR.

ARE YOU FREE TO DO YOUR BIT IN THE PEACE?

THERE IS PLENTY OF WORK TO BE DONE." (114)

The work to be done consisted of social problems relating to women and children, political work, education, leisure facilities for town and country, health and housing, moral issues, and improving the working conditions of women in industry and the professions. In short, every aspect of women's lives.

Astor held regular 'At Homes' in London, so that women from the Movement could meet MPs and one another, to share ideas and strategies. There was also a 'Flying Column' which:

"organized educational campaigns in the constituencies of Members of Parliament who hinder the progress of women's causes in the House of Commons.." (115)

The Committee met, on average less than ten times a year, but would liaise for special campaigns, such as General Elections, and by 1925 there were 60 constituent societies involved with its work.

Following the tradition of its concern with peace and international issues, the horror of the War increased the Movement's promotion of internationalism as a tenet of feminism, and several international branches of existing societies were launched during this post-War period. Most important in its implications for women's participation in the peace-keeping activities of the future, was the organization for the Representation of Women on the League of Nations (RWLN) which was set up in 1919. The RWLN group was a co-ordinating organization which consisted of seven societies: the Catholic Women's League (CWL), the NCW, the NUSEC, the SJCIWO, the WIL, the NWCA, and the WLGS. Leading women such as Kathleen Courtney, Marjory Corbett Ashby and Dr Marion Phillips were on the organising committee for a Conference of Women which was held in September 1919 to discuss what they saw as the essential terms on which the League of Nations should be established (116).

The year 1919 also saw the establishment of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) with Winifred Cullis as its President. The IFUW's object was to raise the world level of education and establish friendship and understanding between University women world-wide. In 1921, the International Co-operative Women's Guild was formed at the Co-operative Convention at Basle, to further the international co-operative movement and raise the status of women. The significance of this continued participation in international work was to be re-affirmed in 1922

with the Women's Movement's official participation in the celebration of the League of Nations Day in Hyde Park:

"in order to demonstrate to the public that enfranchised women believe that international peace is the essential foundation for all reform." (117)

This immediate post-War period saw the Women's Movement operating within a society undergoing the strains of social and economic transformation. Such a combination of tensions did not easily facilitate their struggle for equal social, economic and political power. But the Movement demonstrated its ability to adapt itself to meet the new challenges of the post-war world:

"Your Committee in presenting this year's report is therefore presenting a record of the first nine months of changed work in a changed atmosphere. It believes that events have fully proved the necessity of strong organisations to watch the interests of women workers." (118)

The undoubted vitality of this reorganized Movement was now ready to tackle what was to be the biggest immediate obstacle to women's progress, demobilisation.

Notes

1. 'The Vote' January 3 1919, p.34.
2. HOLBY, 1934, p.34.
3. 'Votes For Women' August 21 1914, front page.
4. TAYLOR, 1965, pp.120 & 123.
WINTER, 1988, p.206-7.
LIDDLE, 1988, p.8.
5. BRITAIN, 1979, p.460.
6. Interview with MISS HART, February 1989, London.
7. Interview with MRS VICTORIA LIDIARD, September 1989, Hove.
8. Interview with MISS LETTICE COOPER, November 1989, Norfolk.
9. Interview with DR INA BEASLEY, November 1989, Margate.
10. Interview with MRS ANNIE HUGGETT, November 1989, Barking.
11. Interview with MRS FLORENCE PRIESTLEY, and with her husband,
DR PRIESTLEY, January 1990, Essex.
12. Ibid.
13. KORNITZER, 1932, p.24.
14. Interview with MRS FLORENCE PRIESTLEY.
15. 'The Vote' November 15 1918, p.460.
16. 'International Woman Suffrage News' (IWSN), December 1918
p.26-27.
17. Ibid.
18. Arncliffe-Sennett Collection, Sweet & Maxwell letter 9.2.18,
Vol.28 1918-36.
19. Arncliffe-Sennett Collection, telegram to the Local
Government Board April 16.1918, Vol.28 1918-36.
20. Arncliffe-Sennett Collection, Vol.28 1918-36.

21. Contemporary parallels of this problem of full and effective implementation of legislation have been seen in the struggles of the black Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.A, where judicial decrees and legislation repeatedly failed to be implemented because of the prejudice and hostility of sections of the white population. E.g. the 1954 High Court ban on the segregation in public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*; Judge W. Arthur Garretty's order for the citywide bussing of school children in Chicago, 1974.
22. Smith Papers, 1918.
23. 'The Vote' November 29 1918, p.474.
24. 'IWSN' December 1918, p.32.
25. Conversations with MRS REBECCA EVANS, (born 1892), the writer's grandmother, Glyn Nedd, South Wales. This appertained to her early years of marriage after 1910; when her husband, who was a miner, was frequently sacked because of his criticisms of the working conditions in the pits and his attempts to organize the other men. This resulted in him often coming home half way through the day with no wages and having to walk further and further afield to get work.
26. MOWATT, 1968, p.3.
27. 1918 General Election, 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.

	Defeated	Votes
	By.	Won.
Miss C. Pankhurst, Coalition, Smethwick	775	8,614
Mrs Lucas, Unionist, Kennington	-	3,573
Mrs Corbett Ashby, Liberal, Birmingham	7,853	1,554
Miss Alison V. Garland, Liberal, Portsmouth	11,559	4,283

Mrs J. McEwan, Liberal, Enfield	6,303	1,987
Miss Violet Markham, Liberal, Mansfield	4,957	4,000
Mrs Despard, Labour, Battersea	5,597	5,634
Mrs Pethick Lawrence, Labour, Rusholme (Manch.)	9,462	2,985
Miss Mary Macarthur, Labour, Stourbridge	1,333	7,587
Hon. Mrs Mackenzie, Labour, Univ. of Wales	563	176
Mrs Dacre Fox, Independent, Richmond	4,749	3,615
Mrs How-Martyn, Ind., Hendon	12,364	2,067
Miss Eunice G. Murray, Ind., Bridgeton (Glas.)	9,896	991
Miss E. Phipps, Ind., Chelsea	6,740	2,419
Mrs Oliver Strachey, Ind., Chiswick	7,814	1,263
Miss L. Carney, Sinn Fein, Belfast	8,916	395

Countess Markievicz, Sinn Fein, Dublin. Elected by

4,083 7,835

28. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, 1938, p.332.
29. STOCKS, 1970, p.119.
30. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
31. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, 1938, p.332.
32. 1918 January-November, p.5, Smith Papers, Oxford. Smith
33. MULVIHILL, 1989, p.125.
34. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, 1938, p.332.
35. 'Britannia' November 29 1918, p.211.
36. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
37. LIDDINGTON, 1984, pp.295-8.
38. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT Collection, Vol.26 1918-36.
39. NEVINSON, 1926, p.249.

40. 'IWSN' December 1918, p.32.
41. 'The Vote' November 29 1918, p.474.
42. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.48.
43. 'IWSN' December 1918, p.32.
44. 'The Vote' December 6 1918, p.3.
45. COLE, 1938, p.125.
46. 'The Vote' December 6 1918, p.2.
47. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
48. 'The Vote' January 17 1919, p.53.
49. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
50. COLE, 1938, p.125.
51. 'The Vote' January 17 1919, p.53.
52. See Note 27.
53. PETHICK-LAWRENCE, 1938, p.331.
54. RENDEL, 1981, p.25.
55. See Chapter 3, p.81.
56. 'The Vote' December 13 1918, p.12.
57. GRAVES & HODGE, 1985, p.21.
58. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
59. 'The Vote' January 3 1919, p.35.
60. 'The Vote' December 20 1918, p.18.
61. 'The Vote' January 17 1919, p.53.
62. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.49.
63. See note 22.
64. 'The Vote' January 3 1919, pp.34-36.
65. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.30.
66. MOWAT, 1968, p.9.

67. SEAMAN, 1966, pp.107-108.
68. 'The Woman's Leader' February 6 1920, p.7.
69. STRACHEY, 1979, p.374.
70. 'Votes for Women' February 1918, p.332.
71. 'Britannia' December 20 1918, p.234.
72. MITCHELL, 1967, p.77.
73. 'IWSN' April 1919, p.90
74. EUSTACE, 1918, pp.20-21.
75. Handbook & Report of the NCW of Great Britain & Ireland 1918-19.
76. The NMFWS finally handed over the residue of its funds (£5.4.12d) from its operations and ceased to function on September 25 1919. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT Collection, Vol.26 1918-1936.
77. LSWS Annual Report 1917-18, p.21.
78. Letter from Ray Strachey to her mother, Mary Costelloe, 25 February 1919, Smith Papers.
79. LSWS Annual Report 1919, p.7.
80. LSWS Annual Report 1917-18, p.13.
81. These six associations were: Ass'n of Post Office Women Clerks (APOWC); Ass'n of Women Clerks in the Ministry of Labour (AWCML); National Health Insurance Women Clerks' Ass'n (NHIWCA); Ass'n of Women Clerks in the Board of Education (AWCBE); Ass'n of Women Clerks in the Public Trustee's Office (AWCPTO); National Health Insurance Women Clerks Ass'n (Scotland) (NHIWCA/Sc.)
'Association Notes' October-December 1918, p.266.
82. 'Association Notes' October-December 1918, p.266.
83. AWCS Newsletter, October 1918. p.1.

84. Ibid and 'The Woman Clerk' February 1921, p.26.
85. PHIPPS, 1928.
86. NFWW Tenth Report for the Two Years Ended 31 December 1919,
p.5.
87. Ibid, pp.18-19
NUGW Women Workers' Section First Annual Report Ended
December 31 1921, pp.23-25.
88. NFWW Tenth Report for the Two Years Ended 31 December 1919,
p.4.
89. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, pp.25-26.
90. WFL Annual Report May 1919-April 1922, p.5.
91. See Societies IV, Women's Associations, MS 1416/1/1 822-828,
Lady Astor Collection,
92. Dictionary National Biography Vol.1951-60, p.969.
93. Dictionary Labour Biography, Vol. 111, pp.138-132.
94. 'The Woman's Leader' February 6 1920, p.7.
95. 'The Common Cause' March 1928 1919, p.615.
96. "Work of the Women's Industrial League", November 11 1919,
The Globe, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection.
97. 'The Woman Engineer' March 1921-June 1928.
98. RHONDDA, 1933, p.230.
99. MESSENGER, 1967, p.33.
100. Letter from the Misses Deane, McCleverty and Sadler to Miss
Sandy (Sanday), February 28 1920, CWCS Archive.
101. Standing Joint Committee of Women in the Higher Grades of
the Civil Service, Report 1920-23, p.4. CWCS Archive.
102. PHIPPS, 1928.

103. ESCOTT, 1989, p.72.
104. 'The Vote' March 1923 p.530.
105. Women's Pioneer Housing Leaflet, WPH Archive.
106. WPH Minutes January 10 1921-December 1922, WPH Archive.
107. 'The Tenets of the CBC' March 1923, p.1.
108. 'The Woman's Leader' May 6 1921, p.211.
109. Six Point Group Leaflet Series 1b, n.d. approx. 1921, p.1.,
TUC Library.
110. Six Point Group Leaflet Series 1b, n.d. approx. 1921, p.2.,
TUC Library.
111. 'Time & Tide' March 19 1926, p.288.

This denial took place during the heated exchanges in 'Time & Tide's' correspondence columns concerning the old and new feminism debate, which is dealt with in a later chapter. What Rhondda says is interesting because it discusses the overlapping of personnel within the Movement:

"no connection..personal or otherwise..other than one or two Directors of 'T & T' who are also on the Executive Committee of the SPG...This duplication of offices is so common, not only throughout the women's movement, but also throughout the journalistic, business and political worlds..."

112. 'Report of a Conference of Women March 1 1921'
'Report of the Conference of Women's Organizations April 13 1921' Lady Astor Collection.
113. Consultative Committee of Women's Organizations Annual Report 1922-23, p.2.

114. 'The Woman's Leader' August 5 1921, front page.
115. 'Report of the Conference of Women's Organizations April 13 1921' pp.2-3.
WFL Annual Report 1919-1922, p.7.
116. 'Conference of Women's Organizations to Consider the Representation of Women in the League of Nations' September 4 1919 and a circular letter from Norah E. Green, Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the RWLN, n.d., Middleton Papers.
117. 'IWSN' July 1922, p.154.
118. LSWS Annual Report 1918-19, p.7.

Chapter 5

Reconstruction 2: 'Demobilisation: 1918-1922'

"All women are not now in their right places
 Many got out of them in the War and need readjusting;
 there is much work for women which women refuse
 to do, and there are women in posts where, from
 any point of view, men should be." (1)

After the 1918 General Election, the most demanding challenge that the newly constituted Women's Movement had to deal with was the demobilisation of women war workers. Other accounts (see Braybon 1981; Boston 1980) have given details of the actual process, this study outlines the women's organizations' response to the problem. The significance of demobilisation lay not just in the short-term suffering which it caused for women and their dependents. More significantly, its long-term implications were representative of the far larger struggle for economic power, which after the franchise extension, was the main priority for the Movement.

Almost as soon as women entered war-time employment early in 1915, women trade unionists, suffrage organizations and political groups were calculating what the outcome would be for women at the end of the War. Referring to the National Conference on War Service (see chapter 3), which took place in April 1915, the NFWW recalled that:

"Long before the Armistice...the Federation submitted

definite constructive proposals to the Government for securing work during the period of unemployment which would follow the war.

However, no provision of any kind was made by the Government." (2)

By the Spring of 1918 the need for contingency plans was evident to Ann Munro of the WFL:

"If we wait, as is suggested, until the war is over to get the practical organisation for the redistribution of labour into working order, the country may be faced with unemployment to such an unprecedented degree that starvation and chaos, resulting in mental and physical degeneration, particularly to women, will inevitably ensue." (3)

During the reconstruction process, there were three and a half million men to be re-absorbed into civilian life. There was widespread unrest throughout the country, with police strikes in August 1918 and 1919; and in Glasgow, factory strikes, riotous behaviour and the raising of the red flag seemed to herald the possibility of a general strike in the New Year of 1919, as other sections of industrial workers also threatened industrial action (4). The difficulty was that Lloyd George:

"faced simultaneously the problems of demobilisation; of brief boom and rapid slump; of whether or not, and how fast to dismantle wartime controls; of how to cope with the intellectual and social ferment stirring in the Labour

movement and among the industrial workers... Like the wartime generals, Lloyd George and his ministers were confronted with problems beyond their capacity to master within the time at their disposal." (5)

It was hoped that the women at least had been assuaged by 'giving' them the vote; and that their co-operation was assured if they felt that they had to prove now that they were capable of appreciating the responsibility of citizenship (6). Perhaps Lloyd George had succeeded in defusing the 'woman problem'. Having conceded sufficient power to invalidate women's status as rebels, by denying women under thirty their political freedom, he had kept a measure of control by restricting their power. He had also created a sub-group which might become apathetic to the political system and thereby, apolitical. He had also prevented women from becoming the electoral majority; but as so many men believed that this would have been a political catastrophe, this must have given women a psychological advantage. However, the limitation of their enfranchisement was a signal reminder of who still retained political control.

Although this partial attainment of the vote had increased their political effectiveness, now that male MPs had to acknowledge the political existence of women, in some ways such limited power worked against them. It meant that opposition now took on a more devious flavour, which was harder to combat and resulted in what the NUSEC experienced as:

"The wresting from Parliament, friendly to such an extent in name only, of new legal rights for women." (7)

There was also the invidious position in which women were placed by their attempts to resist Government policy which intended to return women to their 1914 employment position, and in many cases, to one which was even worse.

The Demobilisation Pattern.

The demobilisation process, as far as women workers and the Women's Movement's response was concerned, followed a pattern linked to Government policy and economic conditions. The first phase, at the end of 1918, related to immediate fears of mass unemployment for women resulting from the Government's unplanned demobilisation of women who had no interim insurance benefits, no training programmes and no suitable alternative employment on offer. The Movement's immediate concern was to pressure the Government into making all three provisions available (8).

By the early Summer of 1919, the second stage came in the form of the Government's introduction of the Pre-War Trade Practices Act. This not only outlawed women from existing pre-War trades, but also from new War-time employment developments and subsequent work which was now on offer. It was essential for the women's organizations not only to challenge this particular legislation, but to prevent the concept of allowing this type of prejudice to become enshrined in law (9).

From the end of 1919, in the third development, there were attempts by the Government to take what had been regarded as temporary expedients to stabilise the country, and transform them into standard practice with regard to Government employees (10). This third phase was characterized particularly by the plight of women civil servants, but the Movement recognised that:

"Our fight is the fight of all women workers." (11)

As unemployment escalated through 1920 as a result of the rate of the demobilisation programme and the worsening economic situation, the financial position for women became acute and the consequent pressure on the Government to introduce ameliorative measures was increased.

The fourth and final major development came in 1921, when married women were singled out for special treatment and the implementation of a marriage bar began to be used by local councils to reduce their female workforce. This final attack saw the women's organizations escalate their campaign to redress a situation at crisis point, which threatened effectively to destroy all the economic progress which they had made immediately prior to and during the War.

The Immediate Post-War Position.

Whilst working class women had always had little choice about their participation in the workforce, the position for middle

class women had been very different, and the War had enabled them to grasp new freedoms:

"It was pathetic to see how many able-bodied women one house could contain, all 'housekeepers'...the war changed all that. The war called them out of their homes: taught them their value to the State; taught them also what greater value would have been theirs had they been able to offer the State not merely devoted service but trained service;taught them that they too had a market value. It seems impossible that they should ever return to the old life of dependence and restriction and aimless days." (12)

But for all women of whatever class, loss of employment equalled loss of economic power, status as a worker, self-esteem, access to possible training, personal development, contact with the world outside the domestic domain and the right to make a contribution.

But it was not a question of refusing to surrender a new-found freedom, as if it were an exciting novelty. What they were refusing to surrender was a key ingredient in their struggle of:

"establishing themselves "fairly and squarely" as citizens and workers." (13)

Women's groups constantly reiterated the fact that they had never had any intention of taking work away from the returning soldiers or of working in opposition to men. They wanted to work with men for the general good because:

"The interests of men and women are the same. We say this until we are tired of saying it because we believe it,

and because it is true." (14)

Women might well have been justified at this time of accusing some men of instigating a 'sex war', as Mrs Schofield Coates of the WFL did:

"The so-called sex war is waged by men in their efforts to keep back women who are endeavouring to render service and justify their existence." (15)

There were also the immediate practicalities of 1½ million wounded men, a large number of whom would never be able to work again; together with the 800,000 dead which left their female relatives with no alternative but one of having to earn a living and support their families. It also became evident to the Women's Movement, as these different phases of the demobilisation process unfolded, that what they were witnessing was the establishment of an employment agenda which was intended to set future employment patterns and it was therefore absolutely essential to :

"strain our powers of resistance to the utmost to hold our own against the forces of reaction, for it is now a moment when ground once lost may take years to recover." (16)

Assurances as to the existence of employment for women after the War by press and politicians, omitted to discuss what kind of work it would be or how the transition would be made from full employment. Nor, indeed, did they mention how large the problem would be with four and a half million women in industry, one and a half million of them in 'men's' jobs (17):

"As early as June 1918, some 50,000 women were out of work. In the first two weeks after the Armistice, 113,000 women were discharged." (18)

By April 1919 the figure had risen to approximately 600,000 but the real figure was probably much higher, as not all women would have registered as unemployed (19). The figure simply carried on rising until the demobilisation process was almost complete in June 1922. Unlike the provision made for demobilised soldiers where:

"To keep them quiet until the Peace Boom started, the Government gave every member of the Fighting Forces below commissioned rank a free Unemployment Insurance policy, which entitled him to benefit while he was seeking work." (20)

There was, initially, no such help available for women war workers.

The result of women's expressions of reluctance and resistance to return to the:

"narrow and hopeless conditions of a working woman's life" (21)

were to result in public hostility. At the start of 1919 this was mingled with a backlash against the War and anyone who had participated in it. Vera Brittain on her return to Oxford University realized that:

"Obviously it wasn't a popular thing to have been close to the War; patriots, especially of the female variety were as much discredited in 1919 as in 1914 they had been honoured." (22)

What began as an aversion, gathered momentum as far as women workers were concerned and developed into vitriolic attacks on women who continued to work or fight for employment rights. The LSWS was astonished to discover that women were actually being 'punished' for their participation in the War:

"That women should be refused the chance of other work simply because they have served their country during the war seems almost incredible, but it has been proved again and again by concrete instances that employers are refusing to consider the applications of women with war service behind them. " (23)

Perhaps employers feared the independence and emancipated views of women who had taken over men's work.

Such hostility could be contrasted with the lavish praise which had been showered on the 'heroines' of the War, as women helped to sustain the home front and manufacture supplies for battle (24). (Although, initially, women had experienced a degree of opposition when they took over men's jobs, which manifested itself in their male colleagues refusing to talk to them, train them, or work with them; hiding their tools, being abusive and calling them names (25)). After the war they were viewed as opportunists, who had ridden to economic freedom at the expense of the fighting man. Margaret Wynne Nevinson also divined that this anger manifested itself in a darker way:

"Crimes of violence are greatly increased, women generally the victims, one is murdered as a wife, as

a mistress, as a sweetheart, or even for saying "No thank you" to a would-be suitor." (26)

Again, such violence against women was not unknown during the War: the US ran a regular feature in 'Votes for Women', in which they contrasted light and heavy sentencing. Invariably, crimes of violence against women carried out by serving members of the Forces, were given light or negligible sentences (27).

Opposition to women taking their place in the employment market was also supported after the War particularly by the middle-class. Those who could afford it still insisted that unmarried women should remain at home, on call, even where there were servants:

"They none the less tended to regard their daughters as heaven-sent conveniences upon whom "duty" laid the combined functions of nurse, companion, secretary and maid-of-all work." (28)

It was such demands by their families, which led Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby and many women in their circle, to discuss endlessly the possible 'burdens' which marriage might bring, as yet another demand to come between them and their new-found work and independence (29).

With no women MPs, as yet, in Parliament, the Women's Movement had to ensure that they challenged with direct action every move on demobilisation against women taken by the Government. Throughout the war in countless committees, they had insisted on

the need for forward planning to protect women's employment position. The National Conference on War Service for Women in April 1915 (see chapter 3) had recognised the right of returning soldiers to take precedence over women who had taken the soldiers' place; however it also passed a resolution which sought to ensure that:

"Women who are displaced in this way shall be guaranteed employment." (30)

But no such arrangements had been honoured by the Government.

Mary Macarthur of the NFWW had been on that Conference Committee, and in November 1918, when the Woolwich munition workers were sacked, the NFWW responded with a spontaneous protest march through Whitehall. Mary Macarthur marched with the 6,000 women who came from Woolwich, one of the Union's largest branches, and from other districts in London. The grounds for the march lay in the fact that discharged women were only receiving 7/- a week unemployment benefit, whilst others, such as the dock workers:

"were dismissed without notice or wages...on the ground that they were casual workers...they received no payment of any kind during their unemployment." (31)

The women demanded action on the Government's promised 20/- unemployment donation which had still not been implemented. They made five other demands: most importantly, that any unemployment donation should be backdated for all demobilised women workers. The Government responded by making November 25th the date for implementing its 20/- donation (32). Sylvia Pankhurst, reporting in 'The Workers' Dreadnought', congratulated the women on their action

and declared it to be a sure sign of the emergence of 'workers' control' (33).

The Women's Movement celebrated this victory with the NFWW, but whilst viewing it as a "triumph", they realised that it had only been a partial success, because their real demand was for "work not doles" (34). Although they wanted the interim award of unemployment benefit to enable women to survive, what they really needed to establish for women's long-term prosperity and success, was the principle that women were entitled to work.

The NFWW followed this November success with a mass meeting in February of 1919 at the Albert Hall on the 'Unemployment of Women'. They had Mrs Despard of the WFL and Susan Lawrence, the LP member of the LCC and WTUL worker, as two of their speakers. The WFL, recognising the necessity for mass organisation, were keenly promoting a membership drive for women to join their trade unions, with the reminder that they must ensure that they were admitted on equal terms. The resolutions passed by the meeting concerned the right to work, the right to live and the right to leisure. The right to work was interpreted as the provision of suitable work by the Government; the right to life as an adequate living wage; and the right to leisure concerned the regulation of working hours (35).

However, the Government's interpretation of 'suitable' work for women at this time, was a return to traditional female

trades, and pre-eminent amongst these was domestic service. A large number of women had left domestic service to take up war work, and the Government now expected them to return to it. But in addition, such work was also being offered to women who had no such previous experience and were in possession of completely different skills. Even worse was that domestic posts were being offered by Employment Exchanges at pre-war wages and conditions, the final insult being that often women were expected to provide their own uniforms (36).

The attempt to force women into such work was reinforced by the economic position in which they found themselves. Unemployment benefit for women was lower than that for men, and was further reduced in the Spring of 1919 until it was barely sufficient to live on. But when it was discovered that women were refusing domestic work, a new rule was introduced which made such women ineligible for benefit. The only further recourse for such women was an appeal to the Court of Referees which operated on stringent, not to say punitive grounds; and was often taken to task in the pages of 'The Labour Woman' (37). The final insult was that if a woman succumbed to all this pressure and entered domestic service, she became ineligible for any future unemployment donation, as domestic service was one of two categories not covered by insurance legislation.

By instituting such regulations to serve its social policy, the Government were refusing to acknowledge exactly what the Women's Movement sought, the recognition of women's right to

economic self-determination. Where women desired to continue a process which had begun before the War and turn the temporary expedient operated during the War into accepted practice, the Government wanted women back in the home, their own or someone else's, depending upon their marital and class position.

What the Movement had to do was to gain freedom of choice for women in employment opportunities. They attempted to achieve this by pressing for equal benefit entitlement, fair rates of pay, good working conditions and training schemes. By working for equal pay or improved wages, they wanted women to be in a position to support themselves adequately, and dependents, if necessary. In such a way, they would be shedding the image of dependency and asserting their right to employment.

Being in such a vulnerable position and facing so much opposition, it was also necessary to be pragmatic. The LSWS assessed what lay before them in their 1917-18 Report published in February 1919:

"In the present uncertainty, training for any but the pre-war women's work seems almost too great a risk, and the period of re-settlement of men in civil life, which should be the time for the removal of as many women as possible from competition for the purpose of training them has become a period of panic and dismay. The London Society has in these circumstances an opportunity for vigorous and constructive work in the defence of women's

right to work." (38)

A Sub-Committee of the Women's Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction which was chaired by Susan Lawrence, had also written a report on the necessity for vocational training for women at the end of 1918. They were particularly concerned about the lack of provision for widows, of which in the first six months of 1919 they estimated there to be approximately 190,000. The Sub-Committee also stressed that this training should be extremely practical, in order to fit the type of work where there were vacancies available (39).

One of the continuing demands of the Movement was that the Government should provide training and education programmes for women on the same scale as it had for servicemen. The bone of contention was not so much the nature of the courses, but that the Government had failed to make sufficient funds available to cater for the number of women who wished to take advantage of this re-training (40). But making that level of funds available for women's training would also be an acknowledgement of women's right to have access to State funds on such a level, and the right of every woman who wanted to work to be trained to do so. The Government was not prepared to make either of those acknowledgments and it had the excuse of national economy to hide behind.

There was some dissension among the Movement concerning support for the establishment of training programmes for domestic work using Government money and the residue of money from the

wartime Queen's Work for Women Fund. These monies financed the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment programmes which were all directed towards some form of "Housecraft" training. However, the position was a complex one, especially with the Government's absolute insistence that the only abundant employment available for women was domestic work, coupled with the desperate nature of women's unemployment. It was, therefore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the necessity for pragmatism in hard times, that brought about the promotion of this expedient (41).

Organizations such as the NFWW, which amalgamated in 1920 with the NUGW to become that Union's Women Workers' Section; the WTUL, which became the Women Workers' Group of the TUC in 1922; the Fabian Women's Group (FWG) and the LSWS, were also concerned to raise the status of domestic work. They maintained that domestic work was a highly skilled occupation which needed a variety of expertise, and that consequently women ought to receive training for it. This was a way of elevating what had always been regarded as unskilled labour, into a skilled occupation. This, in turn meant that work which was broken down into separate skill levels became better paid, and therefore more highly regarded.

Three women from the FWG, Marian Berry, Margaret McKillop and Lilian Dawson, envisioned transforming domestic work into a profession by means of making it a public service which would be on offer to all classes. This level of training would raise its status and destigmatise it. As a 'profession' it would be better

organized, and organization would bring protection for its workers (42). The NFWW's Annual Report at the end of 1919, gave details of a Domestic Workers' Section which had been set up. Women who had previously been in the Union as members of their local munition factory branch, now transferred to this Section and brought to it their union experience and were:

"demanding a much greater amount of freedom and better wages and conditions than before." (43)

By the end of 1921 that Section had continued to expand and members were receiving job training; although frequently the poor working conditions which they still encountered acted as a reminder of the need for union organization (44).

For the Women's Movement not to have considered dealing with the domestic service issue would have meant abandoning women who had no choice but to take such employment: women who were often living on as little as 7s a week, with employers who were constantly attempting to raise the number of working hours. It was the perceived function of the women's organizations to be improving women's lives by giving support to women caught in that domestic service trap, as well as pushing the Government to introduce alternative measures. And by the Spring of 1919 the number of protests was rapidly increasing as the effects of the Government's policies took effect.

In March 1919 the SJCIWO sent a strong protest to the Government dealing with a number of items: its failure to provide

alternative employment; the reduction of the benefit rate; the treatment of women through the Court of Referees; and the enforcement of inadequately paid work (45). On March 20th, the WIL held a public meeting which demanded free access for women into all trades and professions; equal pay; and representation on public committees. The speeches which were made on "the economic liberty of women" were reported to have been received with great enthusiasm (46). The protests went on, with the NFWW and the AWCS (AWKS) leading a Deputation to Bonar Law on March 29th 1919, to demand either suitable work or adequate maintenance payments (47). By April of that year, the Government had launched a training programme whereby women could apply for training in any area which was not covered by the Treasury pledge. This pledge (see following page) had been entered into by the Government, trade unions and employers during the War to protect their separate interests and work to their mutual advantage.

This Government training programme resulted in the Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment (CCWTE) where the Government contributed £50,000 towards women's training, with the proviso that the Committee raised £100,000 (48). The initiative was regarded as totally inadequate by the women's industrial groups, who continued to harrass the Government until they gained an extension of both time and money. Although all these successes were small, they were helping to redress the balance to some extent. Women's groups were using their abilities to stem the flow of reaction, as the LSWS had predicted was so necessary. They were

also sustaining women's belief in themselves and their right to an economically independent future. Such sustained opposition was also acting as a barrier to the Government who were curtailing all the economic progress which women had so far achieved.

The Pre-War Trade Practices Act.

The first six months of demobilisation had largely affected industrial women workers. It was not until May 1919, as the LSWS reported (49), that large numbers of professional women began to feel the pressure. The NUSEC was aware that women were insufficiently organized to withstand this onslaught, which became even more serious in June of that year with the introduction of the Pre-War Trade Practices Bill which had wide-reaching implications for all women in employment. By June 2nd the Bill had been rushed through its Second Reading, and the Women's Movement had mobilised to resist it.

The Bill was the legal fulfilment of the wartime Treasury agreement between the Government, employers and trade unions whereby employment practices in industry would be returned to their 1914 position. The Bill ensured that it was illegal to employ women in any kind of engineering process or allied trade, whether skilled or unskilled; and on assembly work (50). Apart from the loss of current and future employment opportunities, it meant the total disregard of all women's accumulated skills throughout the last four years. At a time of growth and redevelopment, when the country

needed all its potential experience for the reconstruction process, women's contribution was being jettisoned. But in a wider political context it meant, as the WFL testified:

"A sinister attempt on the part of men trade unionists to legalise by Act of Parliament their pre-war practices of injustice to women." (51)

At a time when women had recently been accorded their political enfranchisement, it was a dangerous legislative development.

This whole Bill, and the issues involved, had been dispatched with no attempt to include representative women in the consultation process. It was another example of the denial of their right to be recognised as valid contributors to the economic process. But this was a position which one woman had seen clearly demonstrated in February 1919 at the National Industrial Conference, where the Government attempted to pacify the trade unions:

"One thing could hardly fail to strike a woman suffragist observer at the great Conference called by the Minister of Labour to consider industrial unrest, and that was the comparative invisibility of those who are, at the moment most deeply concerned of all. Six or seven women were present ...it was very difficult to distinguish the women among the serried ranks of men in the hall, and through the discussions one had the feeling that to most of the speakers the question of women's work was a side issue." (52)

Part of the same process of denying women anything other than a supplemental role in the world outside the home, the new Bill roused the full strength of the women's groups to defend their position:

"Women have opened the gate of opportunity, and they are not going to have it closed again. If we were equals and comrades during the war, we shall not rest as chattels and slaves after." (53)

The women's position, so stated by Councillor Mrs Schofield Coates of the WFL, embodied the League's policy. The League now proceeded to run a special campaign with open-air meetings in London parks, the distribution of propaganda at such venues as the WCG Congress in Middlesbrough and the LP Conference in Southport. The Minister of Labour refused to see the League's Deputation in July 1919, and they had to content themselves with sending him and the members of the House of Commons Standing Committee a written statement of their opposition (54).

The Women's Service Bureau, which was a part of the LSWS, and acted as an employment, training and advisory agency for women, was particularly active in opposition to the Bill. In June, a letter of complaint regarding the manner in which the women's position had been ignored, was sent to all MPs. Considering the Government's action 'unstatesmanlike', it condemned the attempt to deny women the right to choose their own work. It pointed out that in July 1918 out of the 792,000 women who had been employed in work

covered by this Bill, only 450,000 had been directly replacing men (55). This was a vital point in the women's defence case. It served to underline the fact that the process of dilution was being used as an excuse to impose wholesale bans on all types of employment for women, except those regarded as 'women's work, in an attempt to return women to the home.

Ray Strachey, Parliamentary Secretary for the LSWS, having trained as an engineer at Oxford and helped to found the Society of Women Welders, took a great interest in this issue. She put forward the most common argument used by the Movement, that most women worked for a livelihood, and many had dependents; it was not a question of working for amusement (56). The LSWS, and other groups, were working on an amendment to the Bill which would exclude new trades and processes from it, and state that sex alone should not operate to exclude a worker from employment.

Strachey discovered on her return to London at the end of May, that the Government was intending to put the Bill through all its stages in one afternoon. Although they were not successful with that strategy, they did move quickly enough to make co-ordinated opposition by the women's organizations, difficult. But the urgent work of Strachey and her secretary, Miss George, did pay off to some extent, in that speeches which she had written for two MPs, Acland and Major Wood, to deliver in the House, ensured a ten day

delay in the Bill's proceedings. Although she wrote that she had been:

"Simply gasping with rage at not being able to make the speeches myself!" (57)

One repercussion of this delay was that Strachey incurred the fury of the LP and she was certain that she had made some enemies for life in that camp.

The position of the LP and the trade unions in relation to this Bill, and their tradition of the defence of women's rights, was a complex one. The trade unions were committed to the concept of a family wage, and to the theory that it was a man's responsibility to maintain his wife and children (58). The LP's relationship to the unions inevitably placed them in the position of sustaining this theory.

But where did this leave the LP in their defence of the position of women industrial workers when they were forced to support a policy which effectively undercut women's employment? To argue that by ensuring the safe employment position of men, they were automatically protecting the financial position of the family and the women within it, simply was not sustainable in the light of the post-War position (See p.7). It was a stick that 'The Sunday Times' used to beat the LP with in December 1918, when the restoration of the pre-War employment situation was under discussion:

"Here we have clear evidence that Labour, which claims

to be the only section of the community which can knock off the chains which have fettered national action throughout the centuries, only proposes to do so in order that it may substitute other and stronger chains of its own forging. Advocating liberty for all, it is placing every conceivable obstacle in the path of the women who rendered victory possible." (59)

This also introduced a difficulty for LP women within the Party, who were in the position of defending women's need for an adequate standard of living, whilst remaining loyal to the class issues enshrined in Party policy. Although it should have provided no contradiction for:

"In the programme of the Labour Party the provision of adequate measures of social protection for those who are unable to protect themselves and are at the mercy of exploiters and profiteers of every kind is a feature. Many of these questions are of primary importance to women." (60)

This was also to be problematic with regard to the relationship between the industrial women's groups and the rest of the Women's Movement. The position in which Labour women now found themselves, having lost the independence of the separate women-only organization of the WLL, was reported by the WFL from the Women's Section Conference of the LP:

"It was very evident that the union of the Women's Labour

League and the Labour Party was a marriage of the old sort - resulting in subservience and economic dependence of the wife. A certain enthusiastic section of the women were planning action to be endorsed by the Women's Conference, but the platform toned it down to a recommendation to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party for their consideration. In reply to protests, their Chairman, Miss Lawrence, said: "We cannot do anything of ourselves. We haven't the money." " (61)

It seemed that the misgivings voiced by some of the WLL members (see chapter 4), had rapidly been fulfilled. Despite Margaret Bondfield and Miss Tynan being members on a Joint Committee from the National Industrial Conference, there had still been no consultation of Labour women as far as the new legislation was concerned. The position of Labour women within the LP and trade union movement during this period still needs a further detailed examination to explore these issues of power distribution, for as Strachey wrote in 'The Common Cause':

"Our sympathy with the Trade Union movement is intense.... Nevertheless, we are bound to endorse the accusation made during the course of the debate by Captain Losely that in regard to women the Trade Unions are in many matters "simply barbaric". " (62)

The women's societies had failed to halt the Pre-War Trade Practices Act or to introduce any amendments, but they had

demonstrated once again that they were not prepared to tolerate such infringements of their liberty. It was also a useful episode for gaining more Parliamentary experience; as Ray Strachey wrote:

"I have, however, got further into the working of Parliament over this Bill than over any of the others." (63)

The Attack on Government Employees.

By the end of 1919 the steady decline in employment opportunities and the effects on women's lives, was resulting in increased membership for women's employment organizations as well as other women's societies as women realized the necessity of representation and organization. Affiliations between societies also grew and the AWKS recorded in their 1919 Annual Report their 'rapprochement' with manual workers in the Spring and that they had begun to work with the NFWW, whilst their membership had doubled in that year (64). In the early Summer, together with the FWCS and the Civil Service Typists' Association (CSTA) the AWKS led a Deputation to the Treasury to request employment concessions for clerical workers, and managed to have some of their requests conceded. The AWKS also noted that:

"Throughout the year the Association has played an active part in the wider movements affecting women's interests as a whole. In the Summer it affiliated with the NUSEC." (65)

Such new affiliations, made possible by the extension of the NUSEC's new constitution had an invigorating effect on the NUSEC.

Their 1919 Annual Report was able to bring some optimism to an otherwise dismal period:

"It was wholesome for the older members to realise that new sources of strength are waiting to be tapped; that the younger people are keen and have definite views..." (66)

In the latter part of 1919, the position of Government employees came very much to the fore. The problems which were underlined by the demobilisation process for women civil servants, represented the continuing employment battles which the Women's Movement had been dealing with for many years. The inequalities to which civil service women employees were subjected, and the ensuing campaign to combat them, was extremely complex, and it is only possible here to extract the major features which had a bearing on the rest of the Movement.

The position of women who worked for the Government assumed such a high profile, because the Women's Movement regarded the way in which the Government treated its own women employees to be a reflection of its attitude towards the crucial subject of women's employment. The issues which arose related to: the dismissal of trained and experienced female staff in preference to untrained men; equal pay; conditions of entry to the Service; promotion opportunities; the type of work available to women; the employment of married women; and the representation of women on Government committees which considered women's future employment conditions.

The nature of the problem was different in the Civil Service because women had been established as permanent staff for some years before the War. They had also been involved in ongoing disputes, such as equal pay, before the War. This was, therefore, unlike the position of women in engineering and the allied trades, who had been accepted into jobs which women had never held before.

However, in the Civil Service, large additional numbers of 'temporary' women workers had been recruited into the Service during the War. During the demobilisation process, the problem was compounded by the differential treatment between the so-called 'temporary' staff and those regarded as permanent. It seemed that demobilisation was being used as a way of imposing new conditions of service to undercut the position of the permanent staff, or at the very least, to impede their progress in the Service. The women's groups were therefore attempting to defend the rights of ^{both} the temporary and the permanent staff. Peacetime and wartime issues had become interwoven in a complex web which the LSWS felt:

"illustrates very clearly the necessity of perpetual watchfulness." (67)

The basis for the defence of these temporary workers rested on arguments which were applicable to most other employed women. The Women's Advisory Committee for the Ministry of Reconstruction, in its interim report on women holding temporary appointments in Government departments stated that:

"They are not, for the most part, holding posts formerly

held by men who left for military service and now desire to return; the great majority of these posts represent either new work or an extension of old work. Those who have held these posts have, in some cases, shown administrative capacity of high grade, and their dismissal would result in a real loss to the efficiency of government." (68)

But little heed was paid to this information or the accompanying advice and large-scale dismissals went ahead.

During the Summer of 1919, the dismissals of women civil servants which were resisted, brought a good deal of customary abuse from the press; and these 'temporary' women were christened 'Whitehall Flappers' and 'Chocolate Dollies' (69). In that November, a protest meeting was held in London by the Women's Industrial League (WIL), and supported by the AWKs, on behalf of nearly 70,000 women clerks who had been dismissed without any provision being made for them. Mrs Archdale of the League, pointed out that men, regardless of their ability or training, were given these jobs; and that women so dismissed would be forced back into the sweated trades, with the consequent damage to their health. The demand was made for the provision of adequate training (70). At another meeting on the training issue several days later, Lady Rhondda, President of the WIL, was reported as saying that:

"the attitude of the Ministry of Labour appeared to be that there were only three forms of work available to women - tailoring, laundry work, and domestic service. The Ministry, she added, must have been asleep during the war." (71)

In the New Year of 1920, the AWKS had to defend over 700 War Office clerks who returned to dismissal notices after the Christmas holiday. A protest meeting, followed by the pursuit of the Prime Minister to Paris in a specially hired aeroplane, and, finally, a Deputation to Lloyd George on January 30th, was intended to bring new information to his attention. The Deputation was supported by the NFWT, the WFL, the CWSS, the WIL and others. Miss C. Maguire, the Honorary Organizer and Miss Dorothy Evans, the General Secretary of the AWKS led the presentation of their case to the Prime Minister (72).

They explained that these women had no unemployment donation, and many of them had no pre-War trade to fall back on, and any small income that some of them might have had, had been lost as a result of the War. Male relations who might have supported some of them, were often dead, and for others there was no available work. They protested that although the Civil Service Commissioners had orders only to employ ex-servicemen, there were many instances of men who had never been in the War, or young men straight from school, being given these jobs. Women who had passed examinations were replaced by men who had no qualifications or experience. But to their arguments for the establishment of equality in the workplace, Lloyd George forcefully contended that:

"It is no use pretending that the conditions are quite equal...A man enters the Civil Service. He is there, and he works his way up...That is his career...That is not the case with a woman...She marries and she leaves..."

The fact is that the conditions are not equal..anybody who places before women the prospect of absolute equality is doing something which is inconsistent with the nature of things. You must bear that in mind." (73)

Whilst the 'temporary' clerks joined the sisterhood of the unemployed, the 'permanent' women civil servants were engaged in their own struggle. The matter of the re-grading of women in the Civil Service was being assessed by the Re-Organization Committee of the Civil Service National Whitley Council. The Whitley Councils had originated in 1916 as a method of improving industrial relations between employers and employees. By 1920 there were fifty-six such joint councils, distributed among the different trades and occupations (74).

There was universal disapproval of this Council by the Women's Movement, as it was a Government board of civil servants ("the very people with vested interests who would be upset by any changes" (75)). And although a committee concerned to discuss women's equality in the Service, it boasted only four women among its twenty-five members. Its report, published in February 1920, set out five main provisions:

1. There would be a number of reserved places for women, whose appointment would be made by selection, not by competition as they were for male applicants.
2. Such positions would be in separate establishments.
3. The promotion procedure would also be separate from the men's.

4. There would be a different, and lower pay scale.
5. All routine work on the lowest grade of writing assistant, was to be allocated to women only (76).

This latter provision, most indicative of all, perhaps, of the Committee's bias, was deemed permissible because:

"the work is considered intolerable for men; women, it is said, suffer less from monotony owing to their "capacity for leading a double life of phantasy." (77)

Phillipa Fawcett, the Secretary of the LSWS, had been a member of the Women's Advisory Committee whose advice on 'temporary' women civil servants had been ignored, and now the LSWS was heavily committed to advancing the rights of the 'permanent' women staff. The LSWS reported that the Whitley Council's recommendations could hardly be said to promote the concept of equality which the women were concerned with (78). 1920 became almost the year of civil service women as the Movement united to fight against this principle of 'difference' which was being promoted by a Government agent. And as Vera Brittain noted, the whole process was actually a 'de-grading' as it effectively allocated all the higher grade posts to men (79).

Marion Phillips, wrote a report for the LP Executive on behalf of the SJCIWO, which strongly condemned the Whitley Council's scheme:

"This report makes proposals which so far as women are concerned are definitely retrograde and it appears

likely that unless some strong protests are made by Labour this report will be accepted and the position will be worse than it is at present." (80)

In her assessment, the report:

"cuts straight at the root of any attempt to get full equality." (81)

Women wanted to compete on a basis of equality with men, not on a separate road which invited the possibility of avenues of unequal and inferior treatment. This was a battle to be waged for all women workers, for as the LSWS perceived:

"so long as the wage is determined by the sex of the earner, both men and women workers will suffer, and from that suffering will spring increasing bitterness which will penetrate all classes of society and end by poisoning our national life." (82)

This equalitarian analysis of the feminist demand became applicable to many issues as the decade progressed.

A joint committee of organizations which had first met in 1919 now tackled the Whitley Council's Report. The Committee consisted of fourteen groups drawn from suffrage societies, professional associations and unions (83). Although employing all their standard campaigning tactics, they put their highest hopes on the amendment to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919. (See the following chapter for further details of the Act). This amendment guaranteed that any special regulation which concerned

the admission of women to the Civil Service had first to be put before Parliament for discussion. This, at least, guaranteed the Joint Committee an extension of time in which they could continue to exert pressure on the Government to change the Whitley Council's recommendations. However, as Zimmeck has described, the Treasury managed to totally circumvent the SD(R) Act as:

"Finally, it sidestepped the Act altogether and took the position that the issue was not legal but administrative. As long as the 'spirit of the Act', providing an increased outlet for women, was observed, the Treasury could, it alleged, rightly retain 'a certain amount of discretion as to the manner in which that principle should be carried out.' " (84)

The remainder of 1920 and 1921 witnessed the Movement's steady attack on these employment problems which were to remain on its agenda to some degree throughout the decade. In April 1920 the FWCS organized a Great Procession of Women Employees of National and Municipal Authorities which demanded equality of work, pay and opportunities and proved to be the year's campaigning highlight (85). Three thousand women from all branches of the civil service, the suffrage societies and large women's organizations were in attendance, and the WFL maintained that:

"Never since the height of the Suffrage Movement has such a procession of women been seen in the streets of London as that which marched from Hyde Park to Kingsway Hall..." (86)

The Joint Committee kept up the pressure throughout 1920, with ministerial deputations; and another Joint Committee was formed by the LSWS in May of that year consisting of twenty women's organizations to deal with the similar discontents being experienced by women employed by the municipal authorities. The LSWS regarded the successful arrangement of these two committees as being:

"an overwhelming testimony to the need of a non-party and non-sectional Society...to support the efforts of the women workers' own organizations." (87)

The NUWT, which had campaigned steadily on equal pay since the early years of the century, worked with the LSWS on the municipal workers Joint Committee, as well as staging their own events as part of the municipal workers' campaign. An equal pay procession and rally in Trafalgar Square in November 1920 organized by the NUWT was also described as being reminiscent of the old suffrage marches (88).

Although 'Time & Tide' accused the older suffrage societies of continuing to use the traditional methods of "educating by speech and propaganda" instead of using political action (89), these 'old methods' still served a useful function for the Movement. It was still important to keep women's issues in the public eye, and the publicity value of such events was no less important to their cause. Mass demonstrations had also always been a way of consolidating and inspiring the membership of the Movement, of witnessing and experiencing their collective power and

thereby gaining confidence in their organizations, and in themselves. The FWCS saw the NUWT's November equal pay rally in this light:

"Women themselves, perhaps, need to be reassured, by meeting together in their thousands, that the movement for equality is charged with more enthusiasm than ever before.

This procession will be unique in that it will mark the joining hands of both industrial and professional women in revolting against their handicap in the wage-earning world." (90)

Despite continued protest meetings and the sacrifices and persistence of the civil service women in the first half of 1921, no date had been set for the civil service changes to be discussed by Parliament. Women's unemployment continued to rise throughout the year; a year which was regarded by the LSWS as having "something of a nightmare atmosphere" (91). But August 5th 1921 did yield a victory, when Parliament finally debated the Parliamentary Resolution drafted by the LSWS's Joint Committee concerning the Whitley Council's Report.

By dint of the intense bombardment of Members with information and propaganda in preparation for the debate by the Movement, and with the support of their Parliamentary friends, there was a large attendance in the Commons. Although the Amendment was altered a great deal, several concessions were secured: that

after a provisional period of three years, entry requirements for women would be the same as for men; that the conditions of service should be the same for women as for men; and that women's pay would be reviewed in three years' time (92). With the perspective of time, this may seem to have been less a victory, than successful Governmental procrastination. However, in such a hostile employment climate, it was a considerable success which the Movement celebrated with enthusiasm. For it had, at the very least, used the provision of the SD(R) Act on the civil service to some good effect.

The Marriage Bar.

1921 brought little other cause for celebration, as the NUSEC commented it was:

"clear that women's questions are for the moment in the trough of the wave, and that much solid organization is necessary before anything approaching a real equality can be secured." (93)

The biggest blow to fall in that year was the escalation of the policy to get women out of the workplace and back to the home by the introduction of a marriage bar on married women's employment.

The marriage bar was not a new strategy for controlling women's participation in the workplace. It had been in operation in some employment spheres since the latter part of the nineteenth century, as soon as larger numbers of women began to enter

traditional areas of male employment. In the Post Office, for example:

"It gradually came to be assumed from the 1870s that they would cease work on marriage and this 'marriage bar' had become a formalised system when 'marriage gratuities' were introduced in 1894." (94)

In the Autumn of 1921, the St Pancras Borough Council dismissed four women on their marriage. Dr Gladys Miall Smith's dismissal provoked the greatest outcry and prolonged publicity, as she was a Medical Officer of Health. The other three women were Mrs Reid, a baths attendant; Mrs Cook and Mrs Barrett, who were assistants at the Borough cleansing station (95). Their dismissal seemed nothing short of a flagrant breach of the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act which had stated that neither sex nor marriage could be used to disqualify someone from employment.

The WFL mounted a Married Women's Right to Work protest meeting on November 25th with Professor Winifred Cullis from the School of Medicine for Women; Helena Normanton, the lawyer; Agnes Dawson of the NUWT; and Professor Louise McIlroy, who was Head of the Women's Unit of the Royal Free Hospital, as the main speakers. It was maintained that the right to marry was a basic human right, and Professor McIlroy proposed that if the same rule had been applied to men:

"there would have been a red revolution all over the country." (96)

This meeting was followed up with a Conference of the Employment of Married Women in February 1922, which had been called by seven of the leading women's organizations and attended by 34 societies (97).

Distressingly, this prohibition, which struck at the core of women's social condition, proceeded to gather momentum throughout the decade. And as vehemently and vociferously as the Women's Movement campaigned for its removal, so local authorities and other employers imposed the bar against married employees. The campaign against the marriage bar became, along with that for equal pay, one of the perennial issues of the 1920s and beyond into the 1940s (98).

The Sisterhood of the Unemployed

Apart from the campaigns mounted for specific groups of women, a major preoccupation throughout the years from 1918 to 1922, was the campaign to improve conditions for all unemployed women. For their numbers increased and their benefits and training opportunities decreased as the four-year period progressed. Women's organizations were constantly proposing schemes and suggestions to the Government, as well as providing them with information and statistics. None of these overtures was ever acknowledged.

The extreme poverty of 1922 brought the closure of the LSWS's Women's Employment Bureau which had done so much to help

address the issue of women's unemployment. During their last five and a half months operation they had conducted 7,569 interviews with unemployed women, but were only able to locate 566 vacancies. As the result of an urgent appeal they were able to retain the Training and General Information Section of the Bureau, so that at the very least they were able to refer women to possible sources of assistance (99). Although the TUC Report of September 1922 saw the WWG, the Women's Department of the TUC and the SJCIWO all passing resolutions on training, women in the civil service and the employment of married women, by this stage:

"The trade union movement was for the moment exhausted, and working-class morale was being slowly sapped by unemployment and pauperization." (100)

1922 brought two major conferences on the subject of women and unemployment. One was held in February by the recently constituted CCWC, with Lady Astor, the first woman MP, in the Chair. The second was arranged by the Women Workers Group of the TUC in the following month. The two women's conferences on unemployment were an urgent expression of the desperation of women's employment situation. By October 1921 unemployment for both men and women was at a record level, with 1,376,768 registered unemployed, besides the 395,000 who had exhausted their benefits, and the unknown number who were not registered (101). The worse that men's unemployment became, the more desperate was the women's position as they suffered from the knock-on effect of more of their jobs being given to men. By this time, even traditional 'women's

work' was being adapted and given to disabled soldiers (102). Lady Astor was fighting for equal treatment for married women under the Unemployed Workers Bill, but the concept of female dependency was still fostered. This was despite facts such as that provided by Ray Strachey and the LSWS's Employment Bureau which supported the necessity for women's continued employment: that there were 200,000 war widows, 9000 women whose husbands had been blinded by the War and a further 7,000 ^{men} who were deaf (103).

The Conference of Unemployed Women held by the Women Workers' Group "as instructed by the General Council", consisted of 234 delegates who were all unemployed. They covered a huge representative cross-section of women's employment ranging from chainmakers and cleaners to actresses and clerks. Margaret Bondfield chaired the Conference and a long list of speakers testified to the desperate financial situation which many women were suffering. Miss Froud of the NUWT, Julia Varley of the WWG and Miss Maguire of the AVKS (now affiliated to the SJCIWO), were some of the most well-known speakers. A Deputation was sent from the Conference to the Minister of Labour to plead the women's case, and at the close of the Conference the women were urged not to rest until they had succeeded in getting the present Government out of office (104).

The distinction between these two meetings, marked the separation which began to take place between the non-party societies and those of the Labour and Trade Union movement. In 1920

the National Conference of Labour Women had passed a resolution concerning the need for gaining extra power for the LP and:

"therefore urges all women in the industrial organizations to become members of the political Labour movement and to avoid dissipating their energies in non-party organizations." (105)

This echoed the LP's motive in annexing the WLL in 1918 to use the resulting Women's Sections to concentrate their efforts on strengthening the Party. In 1921 the SJCIWO was invited by Lady Astor to join the CCWO:

"but decided that it was not in accordance with the principles they had previously laid down with regard to non-party organizations, and therefore while expressing their readiness to co-operate for specific purposes, decided not to send representatives to the Committee." (106)

This was exactly why the non-party groups resisted any binding association with a political party; as it seemed almost inevitable that women's interests would become enveloped by the demands of party policy and the promotion of the party machine. Non-party groups could put women first, even if they were sacrificing the increased power which ought to have come from becoming part of the political establishment. But amalgamation with a male-dominated organization was more likely to result in the fate which befell the NFWW:

"The most militant union in the history of women's organizations, which had existed for a mere fourteen

years and organized more strikes than most unions do in a long history, became a 'submerged' district of the National Union. Far from the voice of women gaining the backing of a large industrial organization, by 1930 it had been so effectively silenced that the National Union of General Workers did not send one woman delegate to the TUC conference that year." (107)

The Women's Movement had fought a long, hard battle on demobilisation, with few positive gains. But what might have been the long-term prospect for women's employment if they had not tenaciously defended every erosion of their hard-won advances? It had been important for women to make the point that their supposed position as dependents was in so many cases a practical impossibility; and that, in addition, many women wanted to be economically independent. Also there had been some advance, as the WES noted:

"In the tumult of the present industrial upheaval it would seem almost impossible that any headway could be made in the establishing of women as engineers. Yet steady and substantial advance has been made during the past few months." (108)

Organizations had continued to grow, despite financial hardship; with groups like the AVKS enrolling nearly 8,500 new members in 1921 (109).

Whilst Labour women believed that the vote having been won, it was now time to unite and wage the fight of Labour against capital for a socialist Government, their suffrage sisters kept reiterating that those who believed that the fight was over were mistaken. The struggle was now on to keep "the door open" and the optimism, despite the opposition of the past four years was undaunted:

"The new girl, the new girl is steady, straight and strong,
She knows she has a Union that is helping her along;
She has a vote, she has a voice; MPs have cause to quake -
When the Woman Clerk is speaking, "Women, one and all awake!"

(110)

Notes

1. 'The Woman Clerk' March 1921, p.45.
2. NFWW Tenth Report for the Two Years Ended 31 December 1919, p.12-13.
3. 'The Vote' March 8 1918, p.172.
4. MOWAT, 1968, p.24 & 39.
5. SEAMAN, 1966, p.108.
6. See HARRISON, 1987, p.1.
7. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.28.
8. 'IWSN' January 1919, p.50.
LSWS Annual Report 1918-1919, p.15.
'The Common Cause' March 7 1919, p.568.
9. 'The Common Cause' June 6 1919, p.84.
10. ZIMNECK, 1984, p.910.
11. "Equality" an FWCS pamphlet in Association Notes, January-March 1920, front page.
12. MASSON, Rosaline, 1921, "Dark Stars (Unpaid) II. Unmarried", in Time & Tide, March 11, quoted by SPENDER, 1984, p.199.
13. GATES, 1924, p.42.
14. 'The Common Cause' November 14 1919, p.392.
15. WFL Annual Report April 1922-April 1923, p.6.
16. LSWS Annual Report 1919-1920, p.7.
17. See 'Premier's Promise to Women Workers' in Daily Chronicle, 10 December 1918, 702a/2, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection; 'The Vote' November 29 1918, p.475.
18. McFEELY, 1988, p.147.
19. BOSTON, 1980, p.137.

20. GRAVES & HODGE, 1985, p.27.
21. 'International Women's Suffrage News' January 1920, p.52.
22. BRITAIN, 1978, p.490.
23. LSWS Annual Report, 1919, p.17.
24. "...women and girls who sacrificed one of the possessions a woman holds dearest - namely, her physical beauty - to dabble in dangerous, noxious commodities which stained skin and hair and undermined health at the same time. All these workers who worked thus loyally were national heroes no less than those who fought in the field of battle." 'The Great War' November 3 1917, p.191.
25. BRAYBON, 1981; MARWICK, 1977.
26. NEVINSON, 1926, p.278.
27. 'Votes for Women' February 26 1915, p.183. This echoes many contemporary cases of sexual abuse and rape cases, which the recent phase of the Women's Movement has taken issue with, where light sentences or dismissals have been given by judges. With particular reference to offences carried out by military personnel, was the case of Guardsman Tom Holdsworth, convicted of a brutal sexual attack on a 17-year-old girl. He was given a six-month suspended sentence on appeal, having had a three-year sentence quashed, because the appeal judges felt that he was an asset to the British army. See PATTULLO, 1983, pp.16-23.
28. BRITAIN, 1960, p.ix.
29. HOLTBY & BRITAIN, 1960, p.183.
BRITAIN, 1978, pp.653-654.
30. 'National Conference on War Service for Women', War Emergency Workers National Committee, p.2. TUC Library.

31. 'The Labour Woman' December 1918, p.95.
32. Ibid.
33. 'The Workers' Dreadnought' November 23 1918, p.1134.
34. NFWW Annual Report for the Two Years Ended 31st December 1919, p.13.
35. 'The Vote' April 11 1919, p.148.
36. WES Minute Book 1919, 15 May.
'The Labour Woman' April 1919, p.29.
'The Common Cause' March 28 1919, p.566.
37. 'The Labour Woman' March 1919, p.36.
38. LSWS Annual Report 1917-18, pp. 12-13.
39. 'International Woman Suffrage News' January 1919, p.50.
40. GATES, 1924, p.352.
TUC Report 1922, pp 217-218.
'The Vote' December 5 1919.
41. LSWS Annual Report 1919-1920, p.14.
LSWS Annual Report 1922, p.8.
GATES, 1924, p.352.
42. 'The Common Cause' December 27th 1918, p.441
43. NFWW Annual Report for the Two Years Ended December 31 1919, p.16.
44. NUGW Women Workers' Section First Report for the Year Ended December 31 1921, p.26.
45. 'The Labour Woman' April 1919, pp.39-40.
46. 'The Common Cause' March 28 1919, p.615.
47. AWKS Annual Report 1919, p.2.
48. GATES, 1924, p.352.

49. LSWS Annual Report 1919, p.16.
50. LSWS Annual Report 1919, p.11.
51. 'International Woman Suffrage News' July 1919, p.137.
52. 'The Common Cause' March 7 1919, p.568.
53. WFL Annual Report May 1919-April 1922, p.4.
54. 'IWSN' July 1919, p.137; August 1919, p.154.
55. Folder 2, 1919, Section on the Pre-War Practices Bill, pp.3-5, Smith Collection, Oxford.
57. Folder 2, 1919, p.18, Smith Collection, Oxford.
58. Thanks to Dr Margherita Rendel for clarifying this point.
59. 'The Woman's Lead' in The Sunday Times, 8 December 1918, 702a/1, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection.
60. 'The Labour Woman' April 1918, p.282.
61. 'The Vote' July 4 1919, p.245.
62. 'The Common Cause' June 6 1919, p.84.
63. Folder 2, 1919, p.18, Smith Collection, Oxford.
64. AWKS Annual Report 1919, p.2.
65. AWKS Annual Report 1919, p.3.
66. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.42.
67. LSWS Annual Report 1919-1920, p.9.
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88. PHIPPS, 1928, p.60.
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91. LSWS Annual Report 1921, p.6.
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94. CLINTON, 1984, p.426.
95. 'The Vote' December 2 1921, front page.
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97. Five of the societies were: the WFL, the NUSEC, the FWCS, the BFUW, and the AHM.
98. The marriage bar was abolished for teachers in 1944. In October 1946 the Labour Government abolished it for the whole of the civil service.
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Chapter 6

Reconstruction 3: The Franchise Extension and
Allied Campaigns

"Any historian recording women's struggle for equal opportunities...has to leave the neatly-defined realms of legislation for a complex scene in which custom and prejudice decide the rate of advance." (1)

The preceding chapters dealt with two of the major concerns of the Women's Movement in the years from 1918 to 1922, that of women's initiation into the political process which the 1918 General Election occasioned, and the demobilisation of women. But there were many other campaigns which preoccupied the Movement during this period after the First World War, and this chapter will deal with the most prominent. The agenda was so large, that it is not possible to detail all the the inequalities which women's organisations sought to redress, but an attempt will be made to indicate the scale and complexity of their work and the systematic opposition which they still faced.

Broadly speaking, these reforms centred on three major types of concern. The first, and most complex, being attempted legislative reforms; the second set of reforms related to ensuring representative numbers of women in Parliament and Local Government positions; and the third, related to peace and internationalism. As

previously noted, the latter subject has already been well-served in previous research, and the major developments in terms of new organisations have already been dealt with in a previous chapter.

An important theme which dominated all the Movement's attempts to create equality for women in the post-War world, was the enormity of the prejudice which fuelled the opposition to all its attempted reforms. Lady Rhondda maintained that after the war the Movement was, in fact, engaged in two battles: one was to get legislative progress for women, and the second, perhaps most importantly, was the battle to change public opinion (2). Lady Rhondda found the struggle to alter people's point of view about the position of women in society far more challenging than engineering legislative change. It was, indeed, that motivation which had a good deal to do with her passion for establishing a paper which could become influential in this struggle, the result being the founding of 'Time & Tide' in May 1920.

As Vera Brittain wrote, retrospectively, in her history of women's emancipation, "Lady Into Woman":

"Much less responsive to revolutionary pressure are personal and social competition, economic status, moral tradition, and long-accepted habits which Virginia Woolf once called 'tough as roots but intangible as sea-mist'." (3)

It was the interweaving of concerns which made the process of counteracting remaining prejudice such a complex business, because the Movement was fighting on so many fronts. The NUSEC, who in 1919

prioritized its three major concerns as promoting women's participation in the Peace Conference and the League of Nations, gaining new legal rights for women and alleviating the employment problems of demobilisation, also had numerous other items on its agenda, but noted its awareness of:

"...the present deplorable attitude towards women that prevails in many circles...The public need education in sex equality quite as urgently as they did before the vote was won." (4)

Such prejudice contributed an extra dimension to the struggle, one which must have seemed curiously outmoded and surprising to women who imagined that their war-time contribution, and partial enfranchisement, had placed them within striking distance of total emancipation. This continued opposition heightened their awareness that the most imperative legislative reform was extending the franchise to the six million women who had been excluded from the previous legislation. But despite this climate of opposition, they also had high hopes of the passing of enabling legislation to assist women to gain entry to all the professions now closed to them.

The Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act.

The legislative programme of the Women's Movement was a copious one which could be broken down into the three major

components of:

1. Franchise extension, where the resultant Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act was an important development.
2. Access to the professions and public service; most significantly the law and the Civil Service.
3. Welfare provision; this encompassed increased benefit payments; maternal and infant health care and protection issues; and the equal moral standard.

The Movement's perennial optimism had been encouraged by an electoral statement made by Lloyd George and signed by him and Bonar Law, as part of the Coalition Government's election manifesto in November 1918 which declared that:

"It will be the duty of the New Government to remove all existing inequalities of the law as between men and women." (5)

The WFL, for one, were not going to allow Lloyd George to forget this declaration, and it was printed, bannerlike every month on the front cover of their paper 'The Vote'. In January 1919 the WFL, never an organization to indulge in polite circumlocution, announced their expectations of the Prime Minister:

"We bring home to him the fact that we shall not be satisfied now, any more than we were in our unenfranchised days, with words. Words must be followed by deeds. We shall be on the watch, and, as voters, we count. Our new power, we have been urged to use, is a power to be reckoned with; no longer can women be pushed on one side as negligible." (6)

The reference to women having been urged to use their power, was an astute reminder to Lloyd George of a speech which he gave on the eve of the 1918 Election to a woman-only audience, when he declared that:

"You must demand equality, equality having regard to all physical conditions. . . . You will never get any of these things if women do not vote. All those questions depend largely for their right solution upon the six million women exercising their votes." (7)

Now was the time for the six million women to expect the "right solution" to be delivered.

The Liberals and the LP had made similar manifesto promises of action in the women's cause; but the first rebuff was to come when there was no mention of any such projected reforms in the King's Speech:

"We then awaited results, and were - if not surprised, because suffragists have learned never to be surprised - at least somewhat disappointed to find that the word "women" was never mentioned in the King's speech." (8)

However, in April 1919 there was a welcome surprise for the Women's Movement, when the LP, remaining true to their past promises, introduced the Emancipation Bill into the Commons.

The Bill intended to enfranchise all women under thirty; make women eligible to sit in the Lords; open all professional and judicial posts to women; and enable women MPs to hold ministerial

office (9). In its May edition, 'The Labour Woman' was able to record of the Bill that:

"Its second reading was not obtained without opposition and the full list of members who went into the Opposition Lobby shows how strong is the prejudice which remains amongst the older parties. Practically all these members...were Coalition Unionists. " (10)

The Government's intention to amend the franchise clause of the Bill at the Committee Stage was defeated in June and the women's societies were taking part in deputations and propaganda work to ensure the passing of the Bill. On June 30th 1919 there was a colourful 'Women Under Thirty' procession in London; this was followed by a meeting jointly organized by the SJCIWO and the NUSEC, which was held just before the Third Reading of the Bill was passed on July 4th (11).

The Bill now went to the House of Lords, and on July 22nd the Government introduced its own Bill which took precedence over the Emancipation Bill. The new Bill would allow entry to the legal professions, and the office of magistrate; but it did not extend the franchise and it did not allow access to the senior civil service. 'The Labour Woman' contested that:

"If this was the meaning of the Government's pledge, then Mr Lloyd George's speech to the women electors should never have been delivered....

Has any Government ever more carelessly thrown down the challenge to those who have sought by constitutional

action the rights which all admit to be justly theirs?

Is it any wonder that the old militancy stirs again...." (12)

The new Bill, known as the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill (SD(R) Bill), led the NUSEC to expose how the Government had compromised itself as:

"It is an understood constitutional practice that the Government should either carry out the wishes of the House of Commons or resign, it will be seen in what an awkward position it has placed itself." (13)

But the women's societies were now placed in a difficult position, for as with the restrictions placed on the 1918 suffrage legislation, the NUSEC realised that they were forced to accept that:

"Seeing, however, that half a loaf was better than no bread, it proceeded, in co-operation with the LSWS and other Societies, by means of deputations and in other ways to try and improve the Bill as it stood." (14)

Their attempted improvements were by means of several amendments put forward by their supporters in the House, such as Lord Robert Cecil (Ind.C.), Major Hills (C.U.) and Sir Samuel Hoare (C). The amendments dealt with: the extension of the Franchise; the right of women to sit in the Lords; entry to the Civil Service on the same terms as men; and the right of the wives of jurors to be jurors (15).

On August 11th a Deputation from fourteen women's societies which included the BFUW, the FWCS, the AWKS, the NCW, the WLGS and the LSWS (16), was seen by Bonar Law and the Lord Chancellor. The Deputation was protesting, specifically, at a clause which related to the qualified entry of women into the civil service and the exclusion from certain branches of the Service altogether. Three days later the second reading of this new Bill was passed in the Commons; but on the following day, Lloyd George conducted what the WFL called a piece of "political trickery" which astonished everyone when the Government deliberately sabotaged its own Bill.

Ray Strachey surmised that it was evident from the strength of feeling in the House on the women's side, that the four amendments to the Bill would be carried, and if this were allowed to happen, it would negate the entire purpose of the Government's introduction of its own Bill (17). The Government, therefore, had recourse to several filibustering tactics on the afternoon of Friday August 15th:

"business had been interrupted that afternoon three times by other business of which the House had had no previous notice. At 4.30 the Government bench began to be filled with members of the Government who had neglected to put in an appearance from 12 to 4.30, the Prime Minister (who now so rarely visits the House of Commons) being amongst them. To the surprise of everyone not in the confidence of the Government, the Home Secretary moved immediately after

the passing of the second reading of the Land Settlement Bill "that the Lords' amendments to the Welsh Church Bill be now considered." " (18)

No-one had seen these amendments and they had been tabled for the following Monday. Lord Robert Cecil protested strongly at the postponement of the women's Bill, but the Government won the division and:

"At 5 p.m. an unsatisfied and talkative House was left with the impression that something shady had again been done, and that impression was founded on fact." (19)

With Parliament rising shortly afterwards until October, the women's hopes were yet again unfulfilled. Ray Strachey in an interview with 'The Times' was in no doubt that:

"Once again by means of Parliamentary chicanery, the Government pledge to women has been put off, and in all probability broken. The whole recourse of the Government on the question is as murky as it can be, and is a chapter of mistakes ending today with a cowardly retreat and a final discreditable betrayal." (20)

And she described how this event had once more activated the resentment of the women's societies. The WFL were furious, and not just with the Government's tactics, but with the failure of their supposed supporters in the House to be present to vote for the women:

"Not more than 34 of our supporters took the trouble to be present. If this is the measure of the House of

Commons courtesy towards the women of the country and of its consideration of women's interests, can women reasonably be expected to have much respect for the present House of Commons? We ask, where were our supporters?" (21)

In the Autumn session of 1919, the SD(R) Bill, with its amendments, came up again, and in the interim, the women's organizations had been working hard to ensure support for the amended Bill. However, the unamended Bill passed through all its stages with little difficulty in this session. The Bill, which became law on December 23rd 1919, provided for the admission of women to the legal profession; women householders were made eligible for jury service; and entrance to the civil service was extended; whilst the opening statement of the Bill seemed to provide a good deal of room for manoeuvre by declaring that:

"A person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation." (22)

It was hardly surprising, considering the origin of the Act, that the SD(R) Act was greeted with less than enthusiasm by the women's organizations, despite their appreciation that it did open more doors to women. But in the ensuing years women wrote of the Act with barely concealed contempt and dissatisfaction, as its limitations manifested themselves with dispiriting regularity.

Although the Government had had a few anxious moments during the Bill's passage, they had, nevertheless, manipulated the women into the position, yet again, of accepting 'half a loaf'. It was a sound indicator of how thin the women's power base was, despite the vote.

It was clear from the WFL's analysis, that MPs who had answered the women's election questionnaires with enthusiastic support, failed to manifest that support in attendance at the House of Commons during relevant debates. The Movement was in one accord as to Lloyd George's and Bonar Law's failure to honour their election pledge, and the WFL declared that:

"Women have no use for political claptrap and shiftless expediency, but what they demand from the Government of their country are honesty, plain-dealing and genuine statesmanship." (23)

This enduring optimism for the possibility of honesty within the political system, might have been regarded as more of a handicap to the women's struggle, than an enviable moral position. There was an apparent contradiction between their awareness of individual politicians' lack of integrity, and their ability to sustain this almost naive belief in the possibility of honest dealing. Prompted by this apparent contradiction to ask Ray Strachey's daughter, Barbara, if her mother and other women in the Movement had not placed too much trust in the democratic process, she replied that:

"It's all they had. Even if they had entrusted in

anything else it would have been hopeless. No. They had to do that." (24)

Major Hills, a Coalition Unionist and Lord Robert Cecil, an Independent Conservative, had managed to gain some improvements to the Bill, one of which was an amendment whereby both Oxford and Cambridge Universities could award degrees to women. Previously women could follow courses at the respective University, but they were not entitled to degree status, even though they had attained the required standard. Oxford now chose to allow women entry to all degrees, apart from those of Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Divinity. As Vera Brittain realized:

"The national changes which had given women the vote, and made them eligible for Parliament, spared the University authorities any disturbing suspicion that their revolutionary behaviour was, in fact, revolutionary." (25)

This was an apposite observation in relation to when and how the Establishment could bring itself to grant rights to women which were regarded by many, if not the intelligent majority, as well overdue. Brittain's point also brings into question the process whereby the Establishment can diminish the threat of a minority by embracing it within its institutions. But this process takes place in such a limited way, that the minority is never allowed sufficient power to gain access to total emancipation. Once 'inside' the system, the power granted and the rights accorded are

often gradually reduced or devalued, so that the minority finds itself accepted but powerless (26).

Cicely Hamilton, a member of the Women Writers' Suffrage League, believed, for example, that women had gained entry into politics at a time when:

"the much-demanded vote had declined in value -since representative institutions and all they stand for had practically ceased to exist." (27)

The reason for the timing of ceding a right to a minority, for which they have been pressing for some time, may also have more to do with how this reflects upon those in power, or how it accommodates their needs, rather than in their belief in justice. Evelyn Sharp, for instance, ex-WSPU member and founder member of the US, divined this situation to have been relevant with the timing of women getting the vote:

"...the popular error which still sometimes ascribes the victory of the suffrage cause, in 1918, to women's war service. This assumption is true only in so far as gratitude to women offered an excuse to the anti-suffragists in the Cabinet and elsewhere to climb down from a position that had become untenable before the war. I sometimes think that the art of politics consists in the provision of ladders to enable politicians to climb down from untenable positions." (28)

One of the women to take advantage of the opportunity of claiming this right to graduate from Oxford at the first ceremony of awarding women degrees on October 14th 1920, was Lady Rhondda. She was also to test the validity of the opening statement of the SD(R) Act (see page 10), at the end of 1920, when she submitted her claim as a peeress in her own right, to sit in the House of Lords. By March 1922, the suffrage papers announced their congratulations to Lady Rhondda on winning her case and breaking down another barrier for women (29). However, in May of that year, the Lords' Committee for Privileges reconsidered the case, and by a vote of 20 to 4, found against Lady Rhondda's claim. Proceedings were directed by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead (30), and Lord Cave outlined the grounds upon which Lady Rhondda's claim was rejected:

"In my opinion the common law gave no right or title to a Peeress to sit in this House...It was not the case of her having a right which she could not exercise. I think she had no right...the Act of 1919 while it removed all disqualifications, did not purport to offer any right. If the right to sit in this House is to be conferred on Peeresses, it must be done by express words." (31)

Lord Dunedin further elaborated that:

"It is certain that the words of the Act only remove a disability; they do not create a right." (32)

This case is important for what it revealed about the mixed feelings towards the 'woman question' within the Lords itself, and how the forces of reaction in the final analysis could

overcome the opinion of more liberal peers. What is also of interest is the way in which the Act was interpreted; not only in the precedent which it set for the future, but in the way that it demonstrated how the spirit of an Act could be undermined by the political will of the opposition.

This also raises the issue of how innovative legislation without a change in social consciousness, can reduce the efficacy of that legislation (33). It confirmed how accurate the women's societies were in their belief, expressed at the beginning of this chapter, (ironically enough by Lady Rhondda for one), that what was needed most was a change in people's attitudes towards women. It also indicated the remaining strength and efficacy of the opposition to women's total emancipation and gave tangible evidence to the Movement's suspicions of the inadequacy of the SD(R) Act.

Lady Rhondda's campaign, which she continued throughout the 1920s, should not be dismissed as being of minimal interest or importance, because entry to the House of Lords concerned only an elite group of women; it was important on a far wider scale than that of the personal attainment of peeresses. The Lords not only initiated legislation, but all legislation from the Commons had also to be passed by that Chamber; thus it would have provided women with another method of introducing and influencing women's legislation in Parliament. It would have made a contribution to the aim of securing places for women in all prestigious, public institutions; and with only two women MPs in the Commons, women in

the Lords could have given Astor and Wintringham support from the second chamber, as well as having opened up a further sphere of influence for women.

Even taking into account that not all peeresses so entitled would have taken advantage of their new right, and of those who did, not all would necessarily be ^{well} disposed towards the women's cause, increasing the number of influential women by any number at such a time would have been an advance. And enlarging the number of women as a physical presence, giving them visibility in such a powerful institution would have made a contribution to breaking down the barriers against the presence of women in public life. One of Lady Rhondda's many significant contributions to the Movement was her insistence upon immediately testing the viability of claiming a right when it had been won. There is no value to the winning of rights, if they are not claimed and utilized.

The Franchise Extension Campaign.

The battle for franchise extension recommenced in February 1920 when the Representation of the People Bill was introduced by the Labour MP, Thomas Grundy. It aimed to lower the voting age for women from 30 to 21 and to place the whole basis of the franchise for both sexes on residence only. Having passed its second reading with a large majority, on being referred to a standing committee, Government members suggested that there was insufficient time left in the current session to continue with the Bill. But protests by

the women's organizations and the LP ensured the continuance of the standing committee (34).

The Government while leaving the House free to consider the Bill, did not give any assurances as to the allotment of time in the future for its consideration. The Government further declared its opposition to the Bill on the grounds that if it succeeded in becoming law, then following constitutional procedure, the Government would have to call an election. The Government were not prepared to do this (35).

The NUSEC, in an effort to save the Bill, suggested that the Bill might easily be amended so that the actual legislation would not come into effect until the announcement of the next General Election. This amendment was accepted and passed, but not even this piece of quick-thinking was sufficient to salvage the Bill and ensure political emancipation for women which the Government seemed determined to oppose (36). The WFL outlined the Movement's point of view in its usual acerbic manner:

"Was there ever such a Government of Wasters - both of the time and money of this nation?"

The discussion on the Bill took place in a thin House.

Its opponents mostly based their objections on the fact that they personally did not feel that the time had arrived when the present measure of suffrage to women should be extended! Women's suffrage was on trial, and the trial was not yet finished! The time was not ripe for this sweeping

change!" (37)

Having mounted yet another propaganda campaign and succeeded in gaining so much support in the House, as well as the passing of an enabling amendment, it was a bitter blow to be beaten yet again by devious means:

"Finding that the time was getting short, the Labour members in charge of the Bill desired to present it to the House without any further delay, and were prepared, therefore, to accept various amendments. Owing to their ignorance of parliamentary procedure however, the Chairman of the Committee was able to induce the Labour members themselves to propose an obscurely worded resolution, which meant that the Committee did not desire to proceed further with the Bill. As this was directly contrary to what had been proposed by the Labour members, it is no exaggeration to say that the Bill was killed at this point by sheer trickery." (38)

Although Lady Astor was an MP by this time, vociferous as she was, one woman in the House could do little.

Despite this disappointment, the struggle continued. The WFL organized a joint mass meeting for 'Votes for Women Under 30' in October 1920. Eight major societies co-operated on the venture, including the NUSEC, the WES, the CWSS and the NUWT. It was chaired by Mrs Despard of the WFL, with Dorothy Evans of the SPG, Ray Strachey of the LSWS and Caroline Haslett from the WES as three of its major speakers (39). The main thrust of the argument to extend

the franchise was that it was women under thirty who had done so much of the war-time work and were engaged in responsible work at the present time who were still disenfranchised. The meeting was used to launch a petition to be sent to the Prime Minister and the AWKS urged its members to send for forms immediately and pointed out that:

"The campaign of the Government and the Members of Parliament against the right of women to live by their labour is the more significant when one realises that the majority of those concerned are still voteless." (40)

It was this right of self-determination which was symbolized by the attainment of full citizenship and its concomitant rights to full participation in the representative processes of the state, which would ensure that the Women's Movement would continue with this struggle. Not only did they feel that a huge wealth of talent was being denied to the country at this essential time, but also, that until all women were enfranchised, none of them could really be said to be fully enfranchised.

Women's organizations encouraged by the progress of the two previous Bills, believed that full enfranchisement was within their grasp; if not in the next few months, then certainly in time for the next General Election. It was essential, therefore, to sustain the pressure in order to demonstrate that young women wanted the vote. The NUSEC set up a special committee in the winter

of 1920 to mount such a campaign; and in conjunction with the SJCIWO, the NCW, the NWLF and others, it organized a petition to the Prime Minister (41). By the early Spring of 1921 this Committee was prepared for a vigorous campaign, and in the same month, February 1921, the WFL was organizing another Deputation to the Prime Minister, who had refused twice before to meet them.

Eventually, the Deputation of young women under thirty, was received on March 9th by 30 MPs at a meeting chaired by Lady Astor. Fourteen women's organizations were involved, and speeches were made, among others, by Miss Spencer Jones of the Women Shop Assistants' Union, Mary Stocks of the NUSEC, Miss James of the FWCS, and Councillor Jessie Stephen of the NFWW. The MPs were asked to pressure the Prime Minister into either adopting a Private Member's Bill or to bring in a government franchise measure during that session. The women argued that:

"Since the age of consent was sixteen years, surely a woman ought to have sufficient intelligence to exercise a vote at 21 years." (42)

Meanwhile, the NUSEC after a Conference on Equal Franchise, had decided to concentrate on promoting the equal franchise message at by-elections "on the old lines." An Elections Sub-Committee was appointed, chaired by Evelyn Deakin, and in 1921 they worked on twelve by-elections at which they held open-air meetings, had literature stalls, public meetings, distributed leaflets, gave press statements, questioned candidates and mounted

deputations. The Louth by-election in October 1921 was obviously the most satisfying of these actions, where Mrs Wintringham, standing as a Liberal, became the second woman MP. The NUSEC had sent one of their 'flying columns' of 25 women workers to assist in the campaign; local WCAs were involved, and women such as Ray Strachey and Eleanor Rathbone spoke at mass meetings on Mrs Wintringham's behalf (43).

The sheer joy of working for a woman candidate was described by the LSWS:

"Sufrage workers who were privileged to take part in that election lived through a continuous whirl of delights - first there was the luxury of a candidate to work for who was one of their very selves, next was the satisfaction of finding oneself everywhere supported by the record of the woman MP who had led the way, for Lady Astor's fearless sincerity had awakened an admiration amongst those remote Lincolnshire peasants which was a formidable asset in the election, and all the time there was the rapture of meeting in the women voters intelligent, well-informed citizens." (44)

The Equal Franchise Special Committee started the previous year, continued in 1921, chaired by Chrystal Macmillan, with co-opted members from the FWCS, the AWKS, the CWSS and the WFL. Two petitions had been launched, both urging the Government to introduce and pass a Bill in the next session, but the Prime Minister refused to receive both petitions (45). Asked in February

1922 if he intended to introduce such legislation into the House, Lloyd George replied that it would not be wise to do so, when the question had been settled already in the last Parliament (46).

Although the LP was the only party which had the franchise extension in its programme, Strachey wrote to her husband in February 1922 that she was:

".... now in the thick of the group of discontented Conservatives of whom Lord Robert Cecil is the chief. They are really indistinguishable from Liberals, and I expect there will be some kind of fusion in the end." (47)

Cecil tested Parliament's feelings on the matter, when he introduced a Private Member's Bill under the Ten Minutes' Rule to extend the franchise to women on the same terms as men. Working closely with Strachey, he asked the NUSEC if they would frame the Bill, which they did. The resolution was carried by a majority of 208 to 60, and the WFL published the names of the members who had voted against it. The NUSEC concluded that these were:

"figures which in spite of the fact that the vote was not taken very seriously, are an indication of the manner in which the opinion of the House is growing more and more in favour of this reform." (48)

There was no more movement on the issue that year, and as a General Election was expected, the women's organizations concentrated on trying to pressure the Government into extending the franchise before the Election.

Although four years of campaigning had not achieved legislative success, it had moved the issue forward on many fronts. The Movement had heightened the awareness of sitting MPs, candidates and the electorate, thereby fulfilling its educative role. It had extended its organizational framework with an expansion of the networks of new and established groups, both professional and industrial, party and non-party, all working together. Committees such as the NUSEC's Equal Franchise Special Committee (EFSC), for example, had doubled its number of co-opted societies operating on a cross-party basis (49). The framing of Bills for eminent MPs such as Lord Robert Cecil, was also a measure of the NUSEC's political credibility and growing influence. All these factors pointed to progress for the political hopes of the Movement.

Women Into Parliament.

Complementary to the franchise extension campaign, was the issue of prospective Parliamentary candidates (PPCs), and preparations for a General Election which seemed to be imminent. Part of this drive to get women representatives in key political positions, was the encouragement of women candidates for Local Government elections, which was often a more accessible method of gaining political power for women. After the disappointment of the 1918 General Election, the WFL actively promoted women's participation in the London County Council and Provincial County Council elections in March 1919 (50). One of its members, Rose

Lamartine Yates, an ex-WSPU member, gained a seat on the LCC, and another, Edith How-Martyn was successful on the Middlesex County Council (51).

Women were also encouraged to stand for Parish and Urban Councils, as well as for the Board of Guardians. The Women's Local Government Society (WLGS) was also in the forefront of this campaign, and in 1919 was able to publish a list of nearly 60 women who had been elected as Town Councillors all over the country, many of whom were prominent in the Movement. Mrs Fawcett who was a member of the NFWW had gained a seat for Labour in York; Mrs Barton, also Labour, had won in Sheffield and was a member of the WCG and the WFL; Mrs Schofield Coates of the WFL, took a seat in Middlesborough for Labour; and Mrs Rackham, standing as an Independent in Cambridge was a member of the NUSEC. In London, 121 women had gained seats; giving Labour just under 50 women councillors (52).

Under the SD(R) Act, women were now able to become magistrates, and in December 1919, the Lord Chancellor announced the appointment of the first seven women magistrates (53). The whole issue of women in the courts was to raise controversy, but it enabled women to gain access to another source of power in public life. In July 1920, 234 additional women magistrates were appointed and as with the councillors, many of them were active in the Women's Movement. In fact out of 31 newly-appointed magistrates in London, 21 of them were members of one or more of the women's

organizations (54). One of the functions of the Movement as a training ground for public office could now be seen to be producing results. Also the contention made over the years by women's organizations that women who were being tried by the judicial system should be represented in it, was at last beginning to be recognized.

It was perhaps an unfortunate irony, although a predictable one, that the first two women MPs should gain seats which had previously been held by their respective husbands: Lady Astor's as a result of her husband inheriting the family title, and Mrs Wintringham's on her husband's death. Melville Currell has analysed this phenomenon of "male equivalence", why women have been tolerated and what the expectations of them are:

"The crucial point is that the woman stands in a derived position, as an alter ego rather than solely in her own right. The woman is expected to carry on the man's work... acting almost as a projection of him." (55)

If that was the way in which male MPs viewed Astor, it did not make her first two years, from taking her seat on December 1st 1919 to being joined by Mrs Wintringham in October 1921, any easier. Many MPs ignored her and refused to communicate with her on any level (56).

Whatever their private apprehensions, the women's societies congratulated and welcomed Astor in their publications, and Astor demonstrated very rapidly that:

"Her sympathies were warmly with these champions of her sex." (57)

Astor was rich, a society hostess and a Conservative, which might not have been thought to make for an auspicious start for a women's champion. But in her post-election speech she declared her intention of working for women and children. A day after taking her seat, she circulated a letter to the women's societies:

"Since I am the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons. I feel that I have a special opportunity of helping Women's Societies, and I am therefore anxious to be thoroughly in touch with their opinions and wishes.... I am determined to do my best to be useful to the causes and interests of women. I hope and beg that your organization will back me up in so far as it politically can. What I hope is that we women will be able to act up to our beliefs irrespective of party politics. I see no political salvation until we do." (58)

The bulging folders of correspondence which she received from women's groups testify to the response which her letter produced (59).

It was imperative that this opportunity of having a woman MP was not wasted, and on November 19th, two days after her election success, Ray Strachey offered to be Lady Astor's political secretary:

"It is so important that the first woman MP should act sensibly; and she, though full of good sense of a kind, is

lamentably ignorant of everything she ought to know as a Member of the House....I have two objects in doing this. First of all to make sure that the first woman MP doesn't break down somewhere, and then to help her to be of the maximum use to all the things that we want to get done... My second object is purely selfish. I want to get further into political things, and this I should have a real opportunity of doing..." (60)

Strachey felt that she would have a freer hand if she acted in an unpaid capacity, although she would get Astor to pay for Strachey's own secretary. Astor had a great advantage in her work for women, as her wealth meant that she could afford as many paid staff as were necessary to get the job done. She had an accountant, a constituency agent, a personal secretary (Hilda Matheson, later to be Head of Talks at the BBC), and two typists (61).

Strachey saw her own role as being to:

"write her memoranda and speeches, watch events for her, prepare her Parliamentary questions, see her deputations, select what invitations she must accept, and so on." (62)

Strachey worked for Astor in the Lady Member's room in the Commons every afternoon. As Strachey was a member of many women's committees, she was in a key position to assist all of them. And because of her wide network of contacts and interests, she was probably one of the most suitable women to have been in this position to maximise Astor's potential for the Women's Movement.

The Movement was eager to ensure that Astor did not remain the only woman MP for very long. The WFL, who wanted to see another 100 women in the next Parliament, as soon as the 1918 Election was over was urging its members to form more election committees and begin the education process to bring this about (63). Simultaneously, the NUSEC:

"realised that public opinion and the great Party organizations were not yet alive to the need of having Women Candidates. A campaign has been organized to put the matter before the country. It was inaugurated by a large Public Meeting in the Queen's Hall held jointly with the National Council of Women." (64)

This meeting was held on February 12th 1920. Chaired by Mrs Ogilvie Gordon of the NCW, it was addressed by Lady Astor, Eleanor Rathbone, and Mrs Lloyd George, acting for her husband, who was unable to attend.

Lady Astor outlined the immense task of one "isolated" woman trying to deal with every aspect of women and children's lives; whilst Eleanor Rathbone:

"pointed out that it was hopeless to try and get a footing in the constituencies without the help of the party caucuses. Women must have a chance to fight for seats, not only for forlorn hopes." (65)

This was an interesting point, coming as it did from the President of the largest non-party organization.

This February meeting led to the formation of the usual joint committee with the NUSEC and the NCW, and an input from the WFL. It "aroused interest" through its extensive network of branches, held meetings nationwide, compiled a list of women from all political parties, arranged deputations to the Party whips, and instigated an appeal fund. In April 1920 it worked for the candidature of Margaret Bondfield when she stood in the Northampton by-election (66). The NUSEC also held election classes for both PPCs and workers, at which political strategists like Philippa Strachey, President of the LSWS and Marian Berry, Secretary of the WLGS, gave talks. This was all essential preparation for building a strong infrastructure for the future.

The Legislative Agenda.

The years after 1918 have sometimes been interpreted as heralding a period of legislative progress and success for women, and that such legislative gains came almost without effort as a result of the vote (67). But as this chapter has begun to show, the existence of such new legislation did not indicate either that the legislation contained all the provisions which the Women's Movement wanted; or that it had been achieved without a great deal of persistent effort and continuous campaigning over many years. As the Birmingham Society for Equal Citizenship and Women's Citizens' Association reported at the end of 1920:

"..we still find, as we expected, that sex disabilities and injustices do not quickly fall to the sound of feminist

trumpets, but must be patiently undermined and destroyed, albeit with far more effective instruments than of old." (68)

Legislation, such as the Maternity & Child Welfare Act of 1918, was the result of long years of work by and on behalf of women, which had begun with the infant mortality movement at the end of the nineteenth century. Other legislation which met with repeated rebuffs led the NUSEC by 1921 to assert that:

"It has convinced even the most shortsighted that our work for equality is not yet at an end, and has keyed our Societies to a higher pitch of effort." (69)

The campaign, for example, to gain entry into the legal profession predated the provisions of the SD(R) Act, and had been on the programme of the WFL and the NUWSS from the beginning of 1918. Activists, such as Helena Normanton of the WFL, tried throughout 1918 to gain admission as a law student to the Middle Temple. The NUSEC relaunched its campaign for the Women Solicitors' Bill in Spring 1919 (70), with the WFL carrying out intensive lobbying to get support for the Bill. By May 1919, with little tangible progress recorded, the WFL was pushing for the Government to introduce and make law the Barristers' and Solicitors' (Qualification of Women) Bill, which had already passed through the Lords (71). In December 1919, the SD(R) Act included measures to enable women to enter the legal profession.

The point of interest lies in estimating how far the a

continuing pressure of the women's groups contributed to the inclusion of those measures in the final Bill and how far the campaign prepared the ground for an acceptance of the concept of women in the legal profession.

As well as the creation of new rights, campaigns sometimes sought to re-establish lost ground. A case in point was the nationality of married women. Until 1870, a woman who married a foreigner retained her own nationality; in that year, the law was changed, so that on marriage a woman had to take the nationality of her husband (72). This echoed the sentiment of coverture, or loss of identity on marriage, a concept which the Movement had fought against for many years. During the War the position had also caused great distress to British women who were married to men regarded as enemy aliens (73) and the problems continued into the post-War years, as Helena Normanton described:

"Her property may be confiscated to pay the war debts owing by the enemy state to her own land of birth. In other words, the British government has seized the British property of 2,000 British-born women because Germany went mad in 1914. It would be humorous if it were not so tragic." (74)

This issue was addressed through the British Parliament, but also via the League of Nations and the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance, as it affected women throughout the British Empire (75). The Government promised a Committee of Enquiry in 1918. However, by 1935 Ray Strachey's daughter, Barbara, was still supposed to obtain

a visa in order to be able to remain in Britain. Having married a foreigner, she automatically took on his status (76).

During these four years a pattern emerged in the Movement's method of effecting the introduction of legislation into Parliament. An organization which had a specific legislative change as its chief objective would take responsibility for drafting a proposed Bill. For example, a group such as the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child (NCUMC) which had originated with the express intention of working for legislative reforms for this particular section of the community would make the preliminary moves. Often, the initiator would be a large organization, like the NUSEC; or the NUSEC would take over a Bill when a smaller group like the NCUMC enlisted its support if it had not achieved great success with its first attempt. The NUSEC could then use its greater resources, and call upon its affiliated organizations and other societies in the Movement to contribute their expertise in the promotion of the Bill.

Diana Hopkinson outlined the process which her mother, Eva Hubback, as Parliamentary Secretary of the NUSEC used to follow, when she drew up prospective parliamentary legislation:

"Before the new legislation could be placed on the Statute Book, a long and laborious campaign had to be planned. In the first place, Eva was responsible for informing the local societies about the proposed changes, and for collating the suggestions that came from them. She had to make provincial

journeys to speak at meetings of the societies and of other sympathetic organizations. At these meetings she heard women's opinions on the necessary changes in the law and collected the case histories of those who suffered under its existing form. When she felt sufficiently knowledgeable...she summarized the information. With the help of lawyers and one or more Members of Parliament...she drafted the relative Parliamentary Bill." (77)

Having completed the drafting stage, and organized supporters in the House, the next step was a campaign to put pressure on the Government to introduce a Government Bill on the subject. More usually, a supporter in the House would try and draw a slot in which to introduce a Private Member's Bill. This was a haphazard route, strewn with difficulties and obstacles, of which the actual chances of success were minimal. But the process enabled the societies to make an opportunity to propagandize the House; attest to the strength of feeling on the issue of both men and women; and attract publicity and support in order to exert indirect pressure on the Government.

It was a method of gaining maximum attention and putting the subject on Parliament's and the public's agenda. It was also a way of using the political machinery. For with only two women MPs and no women in the Lords, it was necessary to canvass the support of male MPs through external pressure and enable sympathetic MPs to be aware of women's legislative needs. Besides which, repeated

efforts at Private Members' Bills were likely to convince the Government of the strength of feeling for a piece of legislation, which might induce them to introduce a Government Bill.

One such long-running battle to effect favourable legislation, concerned the attempted establishment of an equal moral standard between men and women; as demonstrated in legislation relating to the control of vice and prostitution. The women's societies hoped that Regulation 40D of the DORA, (see chapter 3) would be repealed immediately after the Armistice. This did not happen and the Movement, led by Alison Neilans of the AMSH, relaunched their opposition campaign in November 1918 with a joint protest meeting in London of fifty-four organizations (78).

In the Spring of 1920, the AMSH issued guidelines for the use of feminist societies which recommended them to oppose any legislation which contained the following tenets:

- "a) which make of women, or of any women a special class liable to special penalties, or special health regulations.
- b) which tend to place women under police control other than that commonly exercised over all persons equally.
- c) which permit either police or medical officers to enforce compulsory medical examination of women for venereal disease. (79)

In the Summer of 1920 three Bills relating to the equal moral standard claimed the Movement's attention: the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No.1) of the Bishop of London, raising the age of

consent for girls from 13 to 18; the CLA Bill (No.2) from the Home Office introducing compulsory 'rescue' homes; and a Sexual Offences Bill (80).

After considerable protests and concentrated effort by representatives of over 58 women's organizations, for the strength of feeling on this issue was as marked as ever, a Government Bill was introduced in 1922. It was 'nursed' through its Parliamentary stages by a Joint Committee of five women's organizations and supported by Mrs Wintringham, MP. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill which became law at the end of July, raised the age of consent to 16. Although it was far from fulfilling all the conditions desired by the women's societies, it did provide a measure of protection for young girls (81).

There were three major pieces of welfare legislation which the women's societies tried to introduce during this period: a Bill to give pensions to civilian widows with children; the Equal Guardianship of Children Bill, later the Guardianship of Infants Bill; and the Bastardy Bill, which later became the Children of Unmarried Parents Bill. Even a brief outline of their Parliamentary progress will serve to demonstrate how lengthy the process was and the problems which beset the women's groups in their attempts at such reform.

Women's groups were concerned that civilian widows had to face identical problems to servicemen's widows; the difficulty of

supporting a family with the post-War rise in the cost of living and the lack of suitable employment available, But unlike the servicemen's widows who had children, civilian widows had no pension. The NUSEC had drawn up a Bill in 1919, but it was not until 1920 that the LP, supported by Lady Astor, introduced the Bill into the Commons (82). The Government contested that the country simply could not afford to implement such a measure because of the enormous war debts and the economic crisis; and by 1921, after three years of work:

"The National Union has had to bow to the insistent call for economy, and did not press for a Bill incorporating this reform during the latter months of last year, although, as we are never tired of saying, economy at the expense of the least protected and most needy section of the child population of this country is a false and not a true economy." (83)

They did not, however, abandon the campaign, but continued with the propaganda in order to build support for a more auspicious moment for action.

In 1919, the NUSEC had also completed its preparations for the presentation of a Bill for the Equal Guardianship of Children, which intended to give the mother the same rights and responsibilities as the father. In July 1920, the Bill was introduced as a Private Member's Bill; but having passed its second reading and been referred to a standing committee, it 'died' at the end of the Parliamentary session (84). In 1921, it was reintroduced

as the Guardianship of Infants Bill, but was lost because of the large number of amendments which were introduced, which had the effect of making the Bill too controversial to stand any chance of becoming law (85). There were many ways to obstruct women's progress, and when the WFL reported on the 'wrecking' of three of the women's Bills in 1921, it saw the only remedy as being:

"-that of extending the suffrage to women on equal terms with men, and of securing a far greater number of women in Parliament." (86)

The third Bill to suffer the same fate, was the NCUMC's Bastardy Bill, which they brought forward in May 1919. It was concerned with the payment of maintenance to support the illegitimate child and to ensure that the child should become legitimate on the subsequent marriage of the parents. The Bill passed its second reading with a large majority, but the standing committee managed to nullify most of its major provisions, and what was left of the Bill did not complete all its stages before the end of the Parliamentary session. In 1920 the NUSEC took over the Bill and redrafted it, basing it on the Bastardy Bill but calling it the Children of Unmarried Parents Bill (87). By 1921 the Bill had still not found a place in the ballot, and the NUSEC then decided to support a similar Bill which had. This Bill passed twice through all its stages in the Commons, but was eventually thrown out by the Lords. But there was no capitulation on the part of the Women's Movement, and the NCUMC called together a Joint Consultative

Committee of all interested groups who wished to continue to work on the Parliamentary campaign (88).

In the face of so much opposition and so many permutations for defeating the women's Bills, Ray Strachey insisted that:

"It is a question of tactics. Some cry, "all or nothing," and it is only too likely that "nothing" will be the result.

A study of Parliamentary tactics is to be recommended to those who speak for the organized women today." (89)

But even skilful tactics and support were no guarantee of enduring success. There were several instances where progress had seemingly been achieved, but where women were to find themselves having to wage the struggle repeatedly to sustain that progress. Two noted examples during this period were those of women jurors and women police.

The SD(R) Act had made provision for women to become jurors, and this right became operational from the beginning of 1921 (90). Almost immediately, opposition to women jurors began to manifest itself, and unfortunately, the Act enabled such prejudice to take tangible form. The Act gave judges and counsels the power to exclude women jurors from the courts by appointing men-only juries. The reverse case was also possible; but it was always the refusal of jurors on the grounds of being female which was utilized. The justification for this exclusion was that women's delicacy and sensitivity made them unsuited to the rigours of the kind of evidence which many cases involved (91).

The option not to use women jurors was invariably exercised in cases such as those involving sexual attacks on women and young girls, incest and divorce, where the defendants were invariably male. Elizabeth Macadam of the NUSEC divined that:

"The motive for this campaign is not too difficult to penetrate, but disguised as it has been beneath a cloak of professedly chivalrous desire to protect women from hearing unpleasant details, shocking to their delicate susceptibilities, it has succeeded in awakening some sympathy among the less thoughtful and more sentimental sections of the public." (92)

But it was precisely in such cases that the women's societies felt that women should be present.

Margaret Nevinson, the first woman Justice of the Peace in London, and a member of the NUSEC, wrote of this country which had drawn up the Magna Carta, and yet failed to see the illogicality of its position, where until 1919 with regard to women and the law, it had been men who:

"take them, handle them, try them, sentence them, imprison them (without one woman present, not even in the jury), even hang them by the neck until they are dead." (93)

And now there were men who were trying to perpetuate that unrepresentative system, and based on the most spurious of reasons. Nevinson, as a magistrate, pinpointed the inequality of the allegations of women's unfitness for jury service:

"In my experience I have never seen either a woman-magistrate

or juror faint in Court, but not long ago when some poor jurywoman, overcome by bad air, swooned in the box, many people commented on woman's unfitness for public life; shortly after, when a man-juror went one better and died in Court, the incident attracted little or no attention." (94)

By the Summer of 1921, two MPs were attempting to negate the legislation relating to women's right to serve as jurors, by suggesting that women's jury service should become optional, and that there should be a referendum of women on the subject. The NUSEC began a campaign to defend the position of women jurors, and drafted a Women Jurors' Bill which aimed to redress the exclusion provision of the SD(R) Act, and to enable more women to sit on juries (95). The WFL at its 1921 conference, called upon the Government to pass an amendment to the Act and to bring about the reforms demanded by the NUSEC, with special emphasis on establishing equal numbers of women jurors (96). There was no further legislative success and the position, whereby women juror's ability was called into question, and women were excluded from juries, became yet another perennial struggle for the Movement.

The same theme of opposition rooted in the belief of women's unfitness to perform certain tasks, another manifestation of prejudice, was found in an allied branch of law enforcement, that of women police (see chapter 3 for origins). After the War, in November 1918, in recognition of the valuable work which women police had performed during the War, a group of one hundred women

was chosen by the Metropolitan Police as an experimental force. They were to be a trained and paid part of the Force, known as the Women Patrols, under the command of a Mrs Feo Stanley (97). Lillian Wyles, as one of these women later recorded the reception which the women had received in 1918 from their male colleagues:

"- they proclaimed their distaste of the idea loudly and forcibly. That the Home Secretary and the Commissioner must be completely deranged, they were certain... Women to invade the Police Force: it was laughable; it was grotesque." (98)

Although they had 'stormed' another male stronghold for women, it was by no means a complete victory. The reservation was firmly made that the Women Patrols were only an experiment, and if it failed, they would be disbanded.

Gradually the work of the Women Patrols was extended, and although the hostility of their colleagues was still much in evidence, their work was enormously appreciated by women. By 1922 women officers were dealing with a large majority of sex cases, escorting women prisoners, caring for attempted suicides and many other aspects of welfare work related to women and children (99). However, in February 1922, the first part of the ^{report of the} Committee on National Expenditure, which came to be known as the Geddes Report, was published. In the light of the country's financial crisis its remit had been to recommend cuts in public expenditure. One of the savings it suggested was the disbanding of the Women Police Patrols. Interestingly, no women had been involved in giving evidence to the Geddes Committee (100).

An immediate campaign of public protest meetings was organized by the NCW, with Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham fronting the Parliamentary fight. A deputation to the Home Secretary on March 20th 1922 supported by 59 women's societies testified to the appreciation of the valuable work performed by the women police (101). The Home Secretary demonstrated the kind of prejudice which women's issues faced when he described the women's work as welfare work, not police work. He could not, therefore, justify spending public money designated for police work, to fund the continuation of the Women Patrols (102).

This was a classic example of the devaluation of women's work, deriving from the long tradition of welfare work being traditionally voluntary in nature and performed, in the main, by women. It was a clear example of establishing value using male criteria and was indicative of the continuing failure of Parliament and the Government to place women and children's issues on the nation's agenda. In the face of such a dismissive attitude towards welfare work, the fate of the three Bills discussed above, was hardly surprising.

Yet again, the Movement refused to yield, despite the fact that the dismissals had already taken place. This meant that it was now a double battle of reinstatement and retention, a much more difficult position to be fighting from. But the campaign continued and by June 1922, a measure of success was achieved, when it was announced that a force of 20 women would be retained within the

Metropolitan Force (103). At least this was sufficient to keep the principle alive, and for the remainder of the decade, Lady Astor, in particular, gave a great deal of energy to the expansion, improvement and consolidation of the concept of a women's police force.

The issue of women police was important for several other reasons: not only was it concerned with opening up another employment opportunity for women, but it also proved women's ability and desire to exhibit their competence in traditional male occupations, within the normal demands of peace time. The concept of women being able to work within the most unpleasant and dangerous conditions, would contribute towards dispelling the remnants of the traditional Victorian image of womanhood. It was also an example of women's progress from the voluntary to the professional sector, which was part of the 1920s movement to upgrade the status of women's work which would give women credibility on a broader scale within society.

The same process of ascribing status to women's work was being debated in the medical world. The women's societies were supporting the aspirations of Mrs Bedford-Fenwick, Matron of St Bartholomew's Hospital and suffragist, to implement the state registration of nurses (104). This would take the training of nurses out of the purview of individual hospitals, and replace it with a standardised system of nationally recognized qualifications. It would shift the emphasis of control and representation of

interests from the individual hospital hierarchies, to the nurses, from the employers to the employees (105).

Two other issues in the medical world were of concern to the Women's Movement: the lack of representation of women on hospital governing boards, which was part of the effort to increase the number of women on all public bodies; and the training of women doctors. The latter was another example of regressive action, where hospitals which had opened their doors to female medical students during the War, were, by 1921, reversing the decision with the excuse that it had only been a wartime expedient (106). As with women jurors, the decision had been made on the grounds of 'delicacy'. Again, what was particularly worrying was the revival of this outmoded concept to bar women from professions and public involvement in society; leaving women to restage a battle which they had imagined had been won. This was why the SD(R) Act, in lieu of any other emancipatory legislation, was so important; and why the women's organizations' disillusion with it became so great when it repeatedly failed to do its job. And, more disturbingly, when it actually served to undermine the position of women.

Helena Normanton expressed much of the anger and sense of 'betrayal' which was felt, when in the late Spring of 1921 a Government paper was published which set out further restrictions relating to the Civil Service's employment of women, which were solely based on sex. The paper reserved all diplomatic and consular posts for men; this also applied to Government appointments made in

Great Britain to the Colonies; it barred women from the Indian Civil Service; and, finally, all vacancies in the Trade Commissioner Service and the Commercial Diplomatic Service, with the exception of some chief clerkships, were exclusively reserved for men. In the light of all these exclusions, Normanton felt that:

"The Sex Disqualification Act is all done away with, except for the admission of women to the legal profession and justiceship of the peace....I return to the Government election pledge...And this is how H.M. Government carries it out!" (107)

Meanwhile, Lady Rhondda declared that the 'Removal' of discrimination in the Act had never managed to get outside its brackets! She was sure that the opposition stemmed from the belief that:

"When a being of a class which throughout the ages has been considered to be in certain directions inferior... has been regarded as belonging to the permanent serfdom of the race - gets into a hitherto barred profession...it lowers the whole prestige attached to entering that particular profession...the whole standard of values is lowered." (108)

Whereas women were earnestly attempting to raise their status, some men perceived the women's rise as a diminution for men. That was part of the prejudice, a perceptual gap, which was extremely difficult to overcome. It sometimes must have seemed as if men's support for women's emancipation, did not extend beyond an

admittance of the principle, as exemplified by Margaret Nevinson's experience of:

"the eternal assertion: "I don't mind women having the vote, but I hope they won't want to sit in Parliament," made me aware of the prejudice we were up against." (109)

There was an expectation by the Women's Movement in the reconstruction period after the War, that within the agreed limits of necessary economic restraints, the way would be clear for them to seek and achieve progress, in line with their new status as citizens. What did that new status represent, if it were not a recognition of their right to be accepted and acknowledged within the mainstream of society as having a contribution to make, along the lines which they might choose both individually and collectively?

But in whatever direction it turned, the Movement was confronted by prejudice translated into tangible opposition within the very institutions to which it believed it had so recently gained access. The energy which it wished to dedicate to the completion of the emancipation process, it had to utilize to sustain its present position and struggle to avoid having its recent gains overturned. Yet again, by dint of its tenacity and the thoroughness of its organizational network it was able to stand its ground remarkably well. Even more surprisingly, it was able to make small advances. The importance of this caucus of women lay in its refusal to accede to 'the forces of reaction'. It was 'keeping the

flag' flying in readiness for more propitious times; and for all those women who were not in a position to fight for themselves, for those who were engrossed in the earnest business of survival (110).

But what was certain, as the WFL maintained at the beginning of 1922 in an article entitled, 'Deliberate Betrayal', was that they had nothing to thank the present Government for, and plenty to fight against in the coming General Election:

"It is now more than four years since the passing of the Representation of the People Act, and more than three years since this 'New' Government came into existence...It has failed to enfranchise them on equal terms with men; the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act has proved a mockery so far as married women and women's position and opportunities in the Civil Service are concerned; British women married to aliens are still automatically deprived of their own nationality; and the Government has failed to give proper support...to any other Bill during the life of the present Parliament, the object of which was to improve the position of women....In all seriousness, we ask: 'What reason have women to support this Government or any of its representatives at the coming General Election?' " (111)

Notes

1. BRITTAIN, 1953, p.95.
2. RHONDDA, 1933, p.299.
3. BRITTAIN, 1953, p.95.
4. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.27.
5. 'The Vote' May 9 1919, front page.
6. 'The Vote' January 3 1919, p.35.
7. 'The Vote' December 13 1918, pp.12-13.
8. 'International Woman Suffrage News' March 1919, p.78.
9. 'The Labour Woman' February 1919, p.10.
10. 'The Labour Woman' May 1919, p.46.
11. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.30.
12. 'The Labour Woman' August 1919, p.94.
13. 'International Woman Suffrage News' September 1919, p.171.
14. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.31.
15. Ibid.
16. 'Association Notes' July-September 1919, p.228. The rest of the societies were: AHM; CSA; ASWO; CSTA; ATCGO; NUC; WSIHVA.
17. 'International Woman Suffrage News' 1919, p.172.
18. 'The Vote' August 22 1919, p.300.
19. 'International Woman Suffrage News' September 1919, p.172.
20. Folder 2, 1919 p.12, Smith Papers, Oxford.
21. 'The Vote' August 22 1919, front page.
22. Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 23rd December 1919, Section 1.
23. 'The Vote' August 22 1919, front page.
24. Interview with Barbara Strachey, Oxford June 12 1989.

25. BRITTAIN, 1960, p.151. *Cambridge did not act until 1948.*
26. An example of this reduction of power took place at Oxford University in 1927. Alarmed at the rapid increase in women students in residence at the women's colleges and the election of a woman to their ranks, the Hebdominal Council succeeded in limiting the number of women students by statute. See BRITTAIN, 1960, pp 161-172.
27. 'The New Group' in Time & Tide, February 25 1921, as quoted by Spender, 1984, p.172.
28. SHARP, 1933, pp.155-156.
29. 'The Vote' March 10 1922, front page.
30. The fact that Lord Birkenhead directed this case is somewhat ironic, in that:
- "Birkenhead, who allowed himself to be eager for posthumous fame was inclined to rest his claim to remembrance on the part played by him as a law reformer."
- It is to be hoped that he was not resting his claim on this case. DNB, 1922-30, p.787.
31. 'Proceedings and Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Committee for Privileges', Margaret Haig, Viscountess Rhondda, House of Lords, 1922, p.clxxv.
32. 'Proceedings and Minutes' etc, p.clxxvi.
33. Cf. the rather disappointing results of the 1970 EPA and the 1975 SDA for lack of take-up and number of recorded successes for the ways in which a piece of legislation can be effectively ignored. See RENDEL, 1985, pp.91-93.
34. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, p.5.

35. Ibid.
36. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, p.5; 'IWSN' May-June 1920, p.140; 'The Vote' March 5 1920, p.524.
37. 'The Vote' March 5 1920, p.524.
38. 'International Woman Suffrage News' August 1920, p.177.
39. 'The Vote' October 8 1920, p.221. The other groups participating were: AVCS; FWCS; WIL; NFWW.
40. 'The Woman Clerk' November 1920, p.1.
41. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, p.6.
42. 'The Vote' March 18 1921, p.407.
43. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, pp.5-8.
44. LSWS Annual Report 1921, pp.6-7.
45. LSWS Annual Report 1921, pp.9-10.
46. 'International Woman Suffrage News' March 1922, p.85
47. February 18 1922, p.1., Smith Papers, Oxford.
48. NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.14.
49. Cf. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.9 with NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.13.
50. 'The Vote' February 2 1919, pp 98-99.
51. 'The Vote' March 14 1919, p.117.
52. 'The Labour Woman' December 1919, p.142.
'The Vote' November 7 & 14 1919, p.385/386 & p.394.
53. The seven women magistrates were: the Marchioness of Crewe; the Marchioness of Londonderry; Mrs Lloyd George; Miss Elizabeth Haldane; Miss Gertrude Tuckwell; Mrs Sidney Webb; Mrs Humphrey Ward.

- 'Women in the Seat of Justice' in The Daily Express, December 24, 1919, front page, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection.
54. 'The Vote' July 23 1920, p.133
55. CURRELL, 1974, p.167.
56. See COLLIS, 1960, p.77 for the famous story of why Winston Churchill resolutely ignored Astor in the Commons, even though they were old friends.
57. COLLIS, 1960, p.56.
58. 'International Woman Suffrage News' January 1920, p.58.
59. The Lady Astor Collection at Reading University contains numerous folders of correspondence from a wide variety of women's organizations who approached Astor. There were few that she did not assist in one way or another.
- MS 1416/1/1:822-828:Societies IV - Women's Associations 1922-29.
- MS 1416/1/1:829-833:Societies V - Membership or Office Accepted.
60. November 20 1919, p.32., Smith Papers, Oxford.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. 'The Vote' January 3 1919, p.36.
64. NUSEC Annual Report 1919, p.33.
65. 'International Woman Suffrage News' March 1920, p.88.
66. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, pp 6-7.
67. For one such contemporary interpretation see BANKS, 1981, p.164.
68. BSEC & WCA Annual Report 1919-1920, p.19.
69. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.3.
70. 'International Woman Suffrage News' March 1919, p.78.

71. 'The Vote' May 9 1919, front page.
72. 'The Vote' July 4 1919, p.242.
73. WFL Report October 1915-April 1919, p.12.
74. NORMANTON, Helen, "Who Would Be a Married Woman?" in Woman Magazine, July 1924, p.382.
75. 'International Woman Suffrage News' April 1 1918, p.108.
'International Woman Suffrage News' August 1 1918, p.172.
76. Interview with Barbara Strachey, 12 June 1989, Oxford.
77. HOPKINSON, 1954, p.87.
78. ARNCLIFFE-SENNETT, Vol. 28 1918-1938, 6.11.1918.
79. 'International Woman Suffrage News' April 1920, p.105.
80. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, pp 7-8.
81. NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.16.
82. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, p.9,
83. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.15.
84. 'International Woman Suffrage News' August 1920, p.177.
85. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.14.
'The Vote' October 28 1921, p.658.
86. 'The Vote' December 9 1921, front page.
87. NUSEC Annual Report 1920, p.8.
88. 'The Vote' December 9 1921, front page.
NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.12.
89. 'International Woman Suffrage News' February 1921, p.75
90. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.17.
91. HANSARD,
92. 'International Woman Suffrage News' March 1921, p.92.
93. NEVINSON, 1926, p.252.

94. NEVINSON, 1926, p.282.
95. NUSEC Annual Report 1921, p.17,
96. WFL Report May 1919-April 1922, p.17.
97. WYLES, 1952, pp.11-15.
98. WYLES, 1952, p.12.
99. WYLES, 1952, pp 81-83.
100. 'The Vote' February 22 1922, p.52.
101. 'The Vote' March 3 1922, front page.
102. 'The Vote' March 24 1922, p.94.
103. AMSH Annual Report 1922, p.16.
104. Interview with Margaret Broadley, ex-Assistant Matron of the London Hospital, 30 March 1989, London Hospital Archive.
105. 'International Woman Suffrage News' February 1919, p.64.
106. Interview with Margaret Broadley, 30 March 1989.
107. 'The Vote' May 6 1921, front page.
108. RHONDDA, 1933, p.277.
109. NEVINSON, 1926, p.284.
110. Interview with Annie Huggett, 9 November 1989. "After 1918 we were all trying to get back to normal after the War...we were more interested in getting ourselves on our feet than politics then. Although I still went to meetings and I was still Secretary of the Women's Section."
111. 'The Vote' February 17 1922, p.52.

Chapter 7

The General Elections from 1922-1924

"It is historically accurate to say that British politics, even after the enfranchisement of women, has been predominantly about, by and for, men." (1)

Between 1922 and 1924, the Women's Movement contested three General Elections. This important, but gruelling, three-year period, which stretched the Movement's resources to the limit, provides an opportunity to examine the logistics of their campaigning operation and its results, which indicates what progress women were making with regard to the parliamentary machine, and their own political development. It also demonstrates the operational implications of the rival, party and non-party ideologies, both inside and outside Parliament, and what effect they were to have on the future direction of the Movement as it progressed towards the middle years of the decade.

Party Versus Non-Party Organizations.

The emphasis on the maintenance of a non-party position by suffrage societies was asserted by its inclusion in each society's constitution. The betrayal of the women's cause in 1884 when so many of their supposed Liberal allies voted against the women's suffrage amendment of Gladstone's Reform Bill, served to highlight their position in relation to party politics. As the stalwart suffragist Mrs Wolstenholme Elmy assessed:

"I think it a mistake on the part of any woman to be a party woman first and a Suffragist only in the second place." (2)

Now, in 1922, when a section of women were participators within the political arena, the issue of putting sex allegiance before that of a particular political ideology, was ripe for re-examination. Consequently, the pages of suffrage papers held many debates regarding their non-political stance; whilst the women's party political groups attempted to alert women to the necessity for the success of women's objectives, of giving their allegiance to a specific party.

The renewed interest of the political parties in capturing women as both voters and party members in the 1920s, echoed the need to enlist their aid in the early 1880s, when the increased size of the electorate and the passing of the Corrupt Practices Act, brought the formation of women's groups within the Conservative and Liberal Parties. Needing their help in electioneering work, women joined in large numbers and often, as a result, such women became politicised in the women's cause. They were thus able to capitalise on the skills they had acquired in electioneering on behalf of the men, for their own ends. It also raised women's political awareness, for:

"The contrast between the anxiety of politicians for women's assistance at elections and their indifference to women's suffrage once safely elected could hardly pass unnoticed." (3)

Similarly, the politicians' eagerness to enlist women as party members, now that they were voters, gathered momentum during the 1920s, as General Elections followed one another in rapid succession. The political fate and the struggle for supremacy of the three major parties, as they now were, became more acute, in the wake of the fall of Lloyd George's Coalition Government in Autumn 1922. The knowledge that an additional eight million voters were there to be 'captured', led male politicians into trying to solve "the problem of the woman voter" (4). The Labour Party realized in 1922 that:

"It is true to say that at this election women hold the key of the situation. With their support Labour will win. Without it Labour cannot win." (5)

In Chapter 4, Arthur Henderson's directive concerning the establishment of the Women's Sections, was seen to be part of the renunciation of independent political action for Labour and industrial women. The energies of LP women were needed to strengthen the Party as it came under attack for its supposed Bolshevism (6), and by assisting with its expansion, to secure its position as the second major party on the electoral scene. The amalgamation of the NFWW and the VTUL seemed to complement this process. It marked their absorption into the male-dominated political party proper and the pronouncement of a difference between Labour women, and the rest of the Movement. A difference which the declining economic fortunes of working-class women, could only serve to emphasise.

But as far as the Labour Party was concerned, the early initiative of the Women's Sections had paid massive dividends, for in the past four years, the Party had attracted 100,000 women members (7). Barbara Ayrton Gould spelled out the particular importance of the women's vote for Labour:

"It is large: it is going to become larger: and it is new. Consider the importance of that. Men voters are still bound fast in the hoary and Tory traditions of the old-established Parties...Women...simply because they are newcomers to politics are free from this constraint." (8)

'Time & Tide' in June 1923 noted how clever the LP were being in attracting women to the Women's Sections by realising that:

"the best way to rope in the women is to talk big about what the party can do for them. So all over the country the women are told, "The Labour Party is the women's party, and the Labour Party stands for women's rights." (9)

Rallies were held across the country at which this message was enforced. There were full-time organizers allocated to geographical regions, whose main task was to establish Women's Sections, as well as giving talks, distributing propaganda, and acting as a conduit from the regions to party headquarters. Dr Marion Phillips, who was the Chief Woman Organizer, held ultimate responsibility for the Women's Sections, and was tireless in her promotion of the Party.

The Minutes of the Newark and of the Sittingbourne Women's Sections give some indication of this grassroots activity. The process of educating women for citizenship which was placed on the

agenda by the Movement in the immediate aftermath of the RPA, was very evidently a motivation in the Women's Sections. This process involved regular lectures from male and female party members, and at the above groups covered such topics as women's part in the Labour Movement, the suffrage movement, social and economic issues. The inaugural meeting of the Sittingbourne group in November 1922, addressed by a Mr Wells, revealed the clear intentions of some male Labour members:

"He laid particular stress upon the tremendous drawback the absence of women workers had been to the Party during the recent election. Until the eve of the poll they had been almost entirely without such assistance as only women organized into the Party could give." (10)

This was certainly reminiscent of the political cry of the late 1890s. Six months later, Mr Wells was asking the Sittingbourne women to take up this special women's work as:

"canvassing was work which could well be done by members of the women's sections." (11)

It becomes increasingly evident upon reading these Minutes that, as usual, this special women's contribution seems, too often, to have involved menial routine, which Labour men did not relish. The Women's Sections seemed to have been regarded as a supporters' club whose main priority was to provide storm troopers for male candidates at elections, rather than to educate possible women candidates and to fight for women's rights. The vocal protests and

reservations at the dissolution of the WLL (see chapter 4) had been accurate in their forecasts.

There were nine regional women organizers servicing these sections; and Miss Taverner, whose district covered London, the Home Counties, Kent, plus nine other counties, was regularly beseeching Sittingbourne to help the Labour Movement by assisting male candidates in elections and by helping with the opening of new Sections. It seemed far from surprising that she suffered a nervous breakdown after what appeared to be a punishing work load (12). Once enrolled into a party, women were, however, in a position to become politicised and to use their position, if they were strong enough, to promote the women's cause. Women's Sections did enable women to practice public speaking, rehearse arguments, and develop a feeling of solidarity and strength as women.

Annie Huggett, who was the Secretary of the Barking Women's Section, recalled how welcome the meetings were as a means of support for women whose lives were an endless struggle against poverty. As Annie pointed out, being poor is time-consuming, it takes so much longer to make ends meet, and much of their time would be spent exchanging information on how they could provide for their families most cheaply (13). This was to be the crux of the growing divide between Labour Party women and the non-party women: the priority to defeat capitalism in the fight against increasing poverty in a post-war world where the reverse had been promised. Such poverty increased the priority of class for socialist women.

Labour women were prepared to invest so much of themselves in the Party for the promotion of men and women, for as Ellen Wilkinson believed:

"the woman who earns her living, whether as wife or wage-earner...is suffering mainly from the wrongs that afflict all her class." (14)

However, strong socialist though she was, Wilkinson had also been an organizer with the NUWSS, and she was able to take a broader viewpoint of the shortcomings of party political organization with regard to the Women's Sections. She saw how the work that they had done had not been appreciated, and that by segregating women in this way, within a political party, their existence had been trivialized by:

"regarding the Women's Sections as a butt for the chairman's jokes, or a useful institution for organizing whist drives." (15)

Many women found this division by sex a contradiction in terms of the equality for which they had fought. And it was a different matter to have such a separation operating within a mixed organization, where the real power was held, by and large, by men; whereas non-party groups, even with mixed memberships, were very definitely women's organizations, with the power and policy held and determined by women. The status and advisability of Women's Sections is still a contentious issue amongst feminists, especially since the revival of the institution by the contemporary women's movement. The debate still focuses on whether such sections operate

as a training ground and a power base for women to launch themselves and women's issues into the mainstream, or merely shunt women and their concerns out of the main political arena, thus enabling men to retain control.

The best means whereby women could achieve full equality was a more complex question now that women were involved within the parliamentary machine as voters, MPs, and prospective candidates. It was now necessary for non-party, independent candidates to decide on a strategy for use within the House of Commons; whilst those staunch non-party women who made the decision to become party candidates, had even more conflicting positions to resolve. It was a question of accomodating the Women's Movement to their new role within the institutions of Government and power, and as the NUSEC understood:

"The future of the feminist movement in Great Britain is dependent on women's parliamentary success to a greater degree than they have yet realised." (16)

Ellen Wilkinson's espousal of socialism and the dedication of her life to fighting for the oppressed (17), did not prevent her from also making her avowal as a feminist. She was not afraid to work within the Commons on a cross-party basis for women, and with non-party groups outside the House. This did not mean either that she shrank from being in contention with other women members when party ideologies were at issue. Wilkinson operated in much the same way as Lady Astor; who, more like a Liberal than a

Conservative, could almost have been viewed as a Woman's Party candidate, if there had been one, because of the way in which she worked across party lines to support women's concerns.

In much of Lady Astor's correspondence with women's organizations, she can be seen to be highly favourable in her response to non-party groups, which she treated most generously both in terms of time and money (18). She also made her all-party stance abundantly clear in her adoption speech in 1919:

"If you want a party hack don't elect me. Surely we have outgrown party ties. I have. The war has taught us that there is a greater thing than parties and that is the State." (19)

Her biographer, Sykes, also noted that:

"Against all protocol, and contradicting her resolve (which proved impossible in practice) not to be a 'sex-candidate', Nancy sent Mrs Wintringham, a telegram of congratulations on this Conservative defeat...She always welcomed new women members regardless of party..." (20)

Wilkinson and Astor certainly had their moments of conflict rooted in party difference, but what they also sustained was a friendly co-operation used to good effect for the promotion of women's issues in the House. This became a workable compromise with many of the women MPs in the House.

Less flexible was the attitude emanating from Dr Marion Phillips, categorised by 'Time & Tide' as of the "my party, right

or wrong" school (21). It was her hardline stance against non-party groups that was severally cited in 'The Woman's Leader' as the basis for discussions of the clash between party and non-party factions. The SJCIWO, led by Phillips, had produced a significant letter early in 1920 which they sent to all their branches and affiliated societies which purported to give "advice" on the position of LP women's affiliation to non-party organizations. Citing the Women Citizens' Associations as of most importance, the SJC warned that these groups were largely middle class in nature, made up of such societies as the NUSEC and the WLGS. The letter suggests that LP women refuse the WCAs invitations to join their ranks, on the grounds that:

"action cannot be taken without introducing party politics, and therefore the WCAs will either fail to do anything but talk, or they will be led on to run special Women Citizen Candidates for local authorities and even for Parliament." (22)

The fear was that such women did not support the aims of the working class and represented a rival for parliamentary power.

Phillips' enforced this position with a resolution at the Labour Women's Conference later in 1920, which was reported in 'The Woman's Leader':

"That this Conference of working women recognises that the time is now come for a great effort to secure full political power for Labour, and therefore urges all women in industrial organizations to become members of the

political Labour movement, and to avoid dissipating their energies in non-party political organizations." (23)

However, the discussion which followed illuminated the problems of such a prescriptive resolution, as well as the lack of unity of delegates to accept it. As has already been illustrated, many socialist feminists belonged to a wide range of non-party groups which were active in working for different aspects of women's rights, and they questioned the definition of a non-party group. They pointed out that even the Chairman, Mary Macarthur, who worked on committees of non-party associations could not be said to abide by such a stricture. Dr Phillips's maintained that the term 'non-party' did not apply to groups which were formed on a temporary basis to achieve a specific object. But delegates decried her definition by pointing out that:

"This description would cover a multitude of political bodies, such as, for instance, Women's Suffrage Associations, Temperance Leagues, the League of Nations Union - in fact it might apply to almost all political organizations, which, after all, are all temporary in the sense that they exist only until their object is attained." (24)

Delegates demanded clarification. Should they only belong to other political organizations as long as they did not use up too much energy, or not at all? It sounded as though it was an exasperated Mary Macarthur who ruled that delegates might put their own interpretation on the resolution and act accordingly.

This was an important debate, because it emphasised the impracticality of trying to impose rulings on a membership with inter-organizational allegiances, which reflected the breadth of their commitments and concerns and which could not always be neatly contained within the limitations of party dogma. It also demonstrated the difference between theory and practice, and the need to allow for a measure of flexibility in the interests of pragmatism, which was what the suffrage societies were in a position to do, untrammelled as they were by party political considerations. They had always maintained that their non-party stance thus enabled them to appeal to women from all parties and persuasions for the collective good of all women. Again, this turned upon the belief in the sustainability of a representative 'community of interest'.

In 1923 the debate was revived in the pages of 'The Woman's Leader' when Marion Phillips, in a speech to the Monmouthshire Labour Women's Advisory Council in February 1923, counselled her audience to have nothing to do with groups who:

"come to them in the guise of friends and ask them to co-operate in regard to certain individual points in the Labour Party's programme." (25)

She specifically cited the NUSEC and the Women's Institutes as examples of such organizations. Helena Auerbach, had been a member of the LSWS, an Executive member of the NUWSS, Vice President of the NUSEC and was also the Honorary Treasurer of the Women's Institute. She defended the WI on the grounds that there was no

clash of interests between party and non-party women. The WI, begun in 1915, as an organization for women in isolated rural districts, now had 2,600 branches (March 1923) (26). Auerbach protested that working for specific political ends, did not exclude catering for other needs which women might have. Rather, the two were complementary:

"If Dr Marion Phillips would carefully study the democratic constitution of the NFWI she would realize that the educational work which is done by the WI Movement must render women not less, but infinitely more capable than they have ever been before of taking part in every kind of responsible Political work." (27)

As Grace Hadow, the ex-suffragette and Vice-President of the NFWI, pointed out the following year, there had been an incorrect analysis of the term, non-party. Hadow believed that to be 'non-party' did not forbid an interest in politics, but presented a wider interpretation:

"I fail to see how anyone can take even the most elementary interest in children and cooking, without inevitably taking an interest in politics..." (28)

The 'Woman's Leader' was at a loss to understand why the NUSEC had been so singled out for condemnation, when it advocated a number of policies which were of interest to women of all parties. NUSEC felt that Labour were losing the opportunity of making contact with a new audience, who through ignorance of LP policies

might sustain anti-Labour feelings. It also maintained that Labour women could be nourished by contact with other sections of women (29). This more opportunistic frame of mind, ready to take advantage of working with women from any sphere, contrasted sharply with Phillips' response to the paper of:

"The dangers of organizations which dealt with women's questions that were not the most important and urgent matters for working women, and dealt even with them from a more or less superficial standpoint, because fundamentally the women who belong to such organizations hold differing views on social and economic arrangements." (30)

In conclusion, she explained that Labour women wanted their ideas translated into action (as if non-party groups did not), and that this could best be done by concentrating their efforts within their own camp, and only liaising with others on specific demonstrations or campaigns. It was, again, the notion of concentration of effort channeled within and bounded by strict party ideology.

Phillips' position, based on a class analysis, was comprehensible in terms of political expediency for a young party which was desperately concerned to gain maximum representation and power to redress the economic gulf between the classes. In the early years of the 1920s unemployment continued to rise and the working class in industrial regions were suffering in appalling living conditions. The dole had been cut, and the only redress for many were the erratic handouts of local poor law relief. 'The Labour Woman' throughout this period details the degradation which

people were suffering, being especially concerned with the plight of women and children (31). Reading such accounts, it was not surprising that socialist women desperately concentrated their efforts on the defeat of capitalism. Little wonder when viewed from this perspective, that Marion Phillips' resolve for social justice seemed unable to consider close working relationships with organizations largely consisting of middle and upper class women, whose freedom to participate in politics rested on their private incomes.

This purist line had been demonstrated on many occasions within the SJCIWO, of which Phillips was Secretary. The SJCIWO had consistently refused their co-operation in working with other non-party groups: such as the Women's Industrial League and the Women's International League in 1919 (32). In 1920 they withdrew from the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations (33), and after attending an initial meeting, they declined to participate in the Consultative Committee of Women's Organizations, initiated by Lady Astor (34). But as 'The Woman's Leader' pointed out in an article on sex loyalty:

"Labour women may feel more conscious of the economic social differences which divide, than of the feminist affinities which unite." (35)

Individual Conservative Party women were members of many non-party organizations, but the Women's Unionist Organization (WUO), formed in 1918 after the passing of the RPAAct to organize

women electors, was far from being part of the Women's Movement. Nevertheless, it is productive to review its position in relation to this question, as a way of completing the political scene. The WUO's response to the non-party issue lay more in terms of a reaction to the success of the LP's Women's Sections, than in any interest in the issues involved. The Unionist obsession with the Red Menace, which was at its height as the LP continued to increase its percentage of the vote at each election, meant that the WUO saw the non-party groups as in danger of infiltration by socialists, and they were eager, therefore, to persuade WUO members to prevent such a take-over. However, the WUO was also reinforcing its efforts against the LP by direct appeals to non-party women. The links between the non-party groups and the LP were a target to be undermined by reminding women's groups that:

"Non-party women's interests have been hopelessly disappointed and betrayed by the Socialists. They have not given, as promised, equal franchise, equal rights in the home, widows' pensions, nor equal pay for equal work." (36)

This attack came shortly after the Labour Government's brief nine month span in office in 1924. But what is interesting is that the WUO was still reacting to the LP women's influence, rather than attempting to positively attract non-party women to the WUO by virtue of what they had to offer as the organization which "defends the home and the family" (37).

But despite the damage which seemed to have been done to the close working relationship between Labour and suffrage women established prior to the War, there were still women who maintained their dual loyalties, and were intent on sustaining the juggling act between being a Party and a non-party woman. Muriel Matters Porter retained her membership of the WFL and the LP, and as a prospective parliamentary candidate for the LP, she asserted in the pages of 'The Vote' her intention to maintain her independence should she win:

"I could be relied upon not to follow tamely the crack of the Party whip when questions which can never be made purely Party issues are under discussion. I recognize that Party organization is necessary....I believe that the Labour Party's programme promises to this country those things which to me mean so much for the welfare of all... if I go into the House it is to urge and vote upon issues the furtherance of which is more to me than the Party." (38)

Porter was testifying to the non-party credo summed up by the phrase first used by Charlotte Bronte and later by Mrs Fawcett, of "being your own woman" (39).

Older feminists within the post-War Women's Movement had been members of non-party women's organizations for longer than women had been allowed to participate in party politics. As outsiders they had concluded that it was perhaps the most advantageous position to be in. In this way, they assured

themselves of the greater freedom of being able to negotiate with the party machine from a safe distance. At the same time, there was

a recognition of the contradictions which this stance involved:

"On the one hand, it seems necessary to conserve every ounce of energy, every penny of money for the struggle against those inequalities of economic opportunity...On the other hand it seems possible at the same time and through the same machinery to pursue feminist ideals....Women of all parties, all creeds, and all nations shall include among their loyalties a loyalty which shall unite them as women. But are willing to admit that it is 'not enough'." (40)

Edith How-Martyn maintained in defence of the non-party position that there was no easy solution and that:

"Women should join the society, party or otherwise, in which they will be happiest, as then they will do their best work." (41)

Some women, such as Edith Picton-Turbervill, who sustained dual allegiances, were also cautious in this post-War world of:

"grinding the Feminist axe too freely." (42)

She felt that it was sometimes inappropriate because women now operated in such a wide sphere of the world's activities and institutions, that the label was restrictive and too often, caused suspicion amongst political parties, thus delaying women's progress.

But all through the 1920s, the suffrage societies had plenty of occasion to caution against putting too much faith in political parties, as promises were broken and women's issues were cast aside. It was felt, as it always had been, that feminist solidarity was more likely to build strength and co-operation, than the inevitable divisiveness of party politics (43). But 'Time & Tide' had quite a different perception of the efficacy of the non-party system and believed that:

"it is the strength of the non-party women's organizations rather than the number of women attached to the party organizations which is likely to decide the amount of interest taken by the parties in women's questions." (44)

Such faith in the strength of their own organizations, coupled with an understanding of the many forces at work in the new post-War political scene, assured the LSWS of their ability to resist any schisms on the debate:

"Political work is more complex than it was in the days of the Suffrage fight....Party feeling which was not always easily overcome even when we were voteless, is a stronger force among us today, but so long as the Society holds to its non-party traditions, and is swayed by no consideration save that of forcing upon all parties the advancement of the object for which it exists, differences of political opinions among its members will continue to be not only no drawback, but positively advantageous." (45)

The General Elections

The 1918 Election had hardly given women sufficient time to mount an adequate campaign, as it had been little more than an opportunity to mark an historic event where women could vote for the first time and stand as candidates. The 1922 November General Election was to be the first occasion on which women were able to mount serious campaigns as political contenders. Unlike 1918, the women's societies had had plenty of advanced warning of this coming Election, with rumours beginning as early as the end of 1921 (46).

Although both Liberal factions were united with the Conservatives against the growing Labour Party, there was increasing distrust of Lloyd George. The Conservatives feared that in the interests of his personal political survival, which was somewhat precarious, Lloyd George might attempt to split the Conservative Party, just as he had done to the Liberals. After repeated rumours of an election throughout 1922, which made it difficult for the women's groups to carry on with their normal parliamentary activities, the Conservatives forced the issue in the Autumn and voted to withdraw from the Coalition (47). The Election was called for November 15 1922.

The suffrage societies swung into action, determined at the very least, to retain the seats of the two existing women MPs, Lady Astor in Plymouth, and Mrs Wintringham at Louth; but also to return more women to help these two in their massive task. There was great concern within the Movement regarding their burden of

work, as both women rarely refused any request which the women's organizations made of them. Apart from this practical consideration, there was the glaring injustice of the lack of representative numbers of women in Parliament.

No sooner had the 1918 Election results been analysed, than the societies began making plans for the next election: raising election fighting funds, instituting party machinery, encouraging women to come forward as candidates, running education classes, and propagandizing their members, the public and Parliament on the need for more women MPs. For example, the WFL's paper, 'The Vote', had been running a front-page series entitled, "If I Were MP", where prominent party women who hoped to stand as prospective candidates, detailed their priorities and discussed the issues which they would tackle in the Commons. The WFL regularly urged its members to come forward as candidates and held meetings for this purpose (48).

This was an important part of the non-party organizations' work, to act as a catalyst for action by persuading and cajoling people into the acceptance of an idea. The more innovative the idea was, the greater the need to constantly keep it in the public gaze. Constant exposure of an idea, would lessen its novelty, and when the time came for action, there might be less open hostility, and more active support. The suffrage societies had always appreciated the value of publicity and placed great faith in the communication of information through a massive output

of leaflets and pamphlets; the General Election was no exception. They had to overcome any public prejudice to the novel concept of women candidates, and build up confidence in the individual women concerned.

The decision as to which candidates each society would support was made on consideration of several factors, an important priority being the availability of resources and their allocation. Evidently, the most significant factor was the candidate's belief in and desire to work for the aims of the Women's Movement in general, and the specific policies of the supporting society in particular. The use of questionnaires to elicit the views of prospective MPs on women's issues had been used before, but it had now become a widespread electioneering tool used by many women's organizations to determine who the group would choose to support.

The NUSEC's questionnaire was sent out to every candidate, whether male or female and it consisted of sixteen questions covering equal franchise, equal pay and opportunities, unemployment, the equal guardianship of children, the equal moral standard, the League of Nations, women in the House of Lords, illegitimate children, women police, separation and maintenance orders, women's nationality, women jurors, widow's pensions, the admission of women to Cambridge University, the taxation of married women and proportional representation (49). The first six issues were designated of greatest importance.

The WFL sent out different questionnaires to male and female candidates. That to the men contained five sections, subdivided into sub-sections which covered the franchise, women in the Lords, equal pay and opportunities, raising the age of consent for boys and girls, equal status for married women and equal training and relief for the unemployed (50). Other societies sent out questionnaires which included general questions relating to equality issues, as well as more specific enquiries relating to their members. For example, the Professional and Clerical Women's Election Questionnaire sent out by the AWCS covered public administration, the protection of office workers, transport and housing, unemployment, equal citizenship and general health topics (51).

Candidates were inundated with such questionnaires. Mary Grant, a suffrage worker and Liberal candidate, told a meeting of the Women's Election Committee that she had received one hundred (52). As well as being sent to individual candidates, they were also sent to the headquarters of the political parties, to ascertain official party policy on women's issues.

Having discovered the exact attitude of candidates, major support was allocated first to women candidates, and more specifically, to those women who were members of the particular organization involved; although it was more often a question of the amount of help which was distributed in this way, rather than a matter of denying it totally to non-members. Considering the limits

of their available resources, the women's societies succeeded in managing to offer some kind of assistance to nearly all the qualifying female candidates. The NUSEC, for example, with their vast organizational network, were able to use their regional groups to help women candidates in their districts and also:

"did excellent work in reaching voters who could not have been approached from the party platforms." (53)

The LSWS had entered into an agreement with the NUSEC to take responsibility for election work in its own district, one that covered most of the Metropolitan Boroughs. This created some problems as:

"nine (women) stood for constituencies within the Society's area. It was obviously impossible to give adequate help to all these, especially as some of them were standing against men who were old friends of the society and constant supporters of the women's causes." (54)

It was this type of dilemma which made the non-party stand problematic on occasion. The societies could hardly afford to neglect or offend the support of sitting male candidates who had previously supported the women's cause, especially as with only 33 women standing, compared to over 1400 men, it was essential for the Parliamentary survival of the women's cause that they continued to support sympathetic male candidates. But the problem, as ever, was lack of resources.

Another difficulty was that of party affiliation. Of the 33 women who were standing in 1922, only two of them, Eleanor Rathbone and Ray Strachey, who were NUSEC members, were standing as Independents. But as the NUSEC Report concluded:

"The Committee gave help quite impartially to all parties, but the preponderance of Liberal and Labour over Conservative women who were brought forward as candidates inevitably led to a large measure of support for these parties." (55)

This apparent preference was accidental, for as a non-party association, it was not political party which qualified a candidate for support, but the manner in which they responded to the society's questionnaire. The WFL, as with the NUSEC, and other organizations:

"is specially supporting the women who are known to us as standing for the full equality of the sexes, and who have favoured us by replying to the questionnaire which we sent round to all women candidates several months ago." (56)

The WFL then appealed to its readers to work for and support 21 of the candidates. As an organization they were placing their maximum assistance at the disposal of just four women. Although they stressed that if they had had the available resources, they would have wished to have supported all of the women candidates, it was simply a question of priorities (57).

The questionnaires had two other important uses: the results were published and used as propaganda to advertize and

promote those candidates who were supporters of the women's cause, which was especially valuable for the new women voters who wanted to know who they should support in order to maximize the use of their vote to women's advantage. Secondly, the WFL stressed the need to keep all such information for future use in bye-elections, when candidates who did not succeed in this Election might reappear in the future (58). This accumulated information thus became an information bank from which societies could advise workers in future campaigns.

It was always made clear to candidates who completed such forms, that their views would be made public within their constituencies, and would remain on file. 'Time & Tide', the paper with links with the militant SPG, devised another method of publishing the views of MPs to help voters make their choice. They drew up Black Lists and White Lists of MPs which were compiled on the basis of their previous record with regard ^{to} women's issues in the House of Commons. They also informed their readers that additional information was also available on request from the SPG. It was an ingenious tactic and had the advantage over questionnaires of being able to be compiled without recourse to the MPs, and presented in a simple and readily comprehended format (59).

After this 1922 Election, an article in 'The Labour Woman' cast doubt on the value of the non-party organizations' questionnaires:

"We suggest to these women that it was a waste of time to

get pledges from members of the Anti-Labour Parties.

Experience has amply proved that promises given by any of them before an election are of little value afterwards." (60)

This was rather an unhelpful and partisan perception, which ignored the good offices of many Conservative MPs, such as Robert Cecil, as well as the Liberal supporters of the Cause. The education of women voters was regarded by the women's societies as an imperative part of the election process, on the road to the exercise of their citizenship. For women with no political experience it was a bewildering process; the information gleaned from questionnaires at least provided some guidelines as to candidates' anticipated performance, as well as pointing women in the direction of the issues which needed to be addressed.

On these lines, the NUSEC appreciated that:

"An election is a great opportunity for educating the electorate as well as the candidates, and every effort should be made to utilize it fully." (61)

Canvassing, setting-up local information shops, distributing election literature, getting maximum press coverage, holding meetings and arranging deputations to individual candidates, were all methods of accomplishing this dual function. It was also an invaluable opportunity for increasing organization membership.

In constituencies where there was a woman candidate, the WFL advised women to vote for her, otherwise it counselled them:

"to put aside all party prejudices and predilections, and

to vote for the candidate who, she honestly believes, will be the greatest help to women in the new House of Commons. The only way to secure the reforms we have worked for is by making the best and wisest use of the political power which most of the women over thirty years of age now possess." (62)

It was easy to see from such advice, why some LP women were not over-enthusiastic about working with or lending support to the non-party sector. Such political opportunism, as recommended by the WFL, demonstrated an ability to abandon adherence to a sound political ideology in favour of pragmatic expediency.

The NUSEC propounded a similar policy, where running a non-party campaign meant using every opportunity to secure the return of members who would work for their programme of reforms. In this second General Election in which women could directly participate, there was a great deal at stake, and it was imperative for women to find the most influential method of increasing their power. Whilst approving the Liberal and Labour manifestos, which both professed the intention of implementing equality between the sexes, the NUSEC counselled :

"But we cannot trust solely to any such general professions of faith from Party Headquarters... Every candidate should be questioned on these reforms by the women voters, and should be made to feel that women are in earnest in demanding them, not from any selfish motive, but because they truly believe that only by setting women

free from artificial disabilities will they be enabled, in a real comradeship with men, to perform their best service to the State." (63)

It amounted to women voters having to prove the seriousness of their intentions, by establishing their political credibility. By being regarded as positive contributors to the political process, women voters could smooth the path for women candidates to be accepted as representatives of the whole electorate, not just as sex representatives. Part of this process involved rebuffing the inevitable accusations of sex interest which could follow from recommendations such as the WUSEC's to hold women-only meetings where possible; or from statements which emphasised that:

"Every woman who cares for the causes for which women, as women, are primarily responsible, should strain every nerve to secure the return of as many suitable women as possible in the coming Election." (64)

Measures which would improve the efficacy and collective strength of their women's campaign could also be turned against them. They had a difficult task on hand.

Out of the 33 women standing in 1922, only 8 had neither suffrage society nor party political membership, but had gained their experience of public affairs in philanthropic, church or social work. Of the remaining 25 women, 8 had party political affiliations only, whilst 7 had only non-party connections. There

were a further 10 who had memberships or affiliations of both political parties and suffrage societies. These combinations, in turn, meant that there were 17 non-party women and 18 party women standing as candidates. Women like Dr Ethel Bentham, who was a LP activist and was standing for Labour, but had also been a member of the WSPU, the NUWSS and the WLL; or Margery Corbett Ashby who was a lifelong Liberal, had worked for the WFL and was now also on the NUSEC Executive and President of the IWSA. Then there was Eleanor Barton, who was a Co-operative Party candidate and was also a member of the WFL; along with Commandant Mary Allen who had always been firmly identified with the WFL, yet was not standing as an Independent, but as a Liberal.

That the overwhelming percentage of women candidates emanated from one or other branch of the broader Women's Movement was hardly surprising in the light of its contribution to women's political development. But it did emphasise the interdependence of party and non-party organizations, and the importance of both branches in constructing a broad church from which women could launch their campaigns. It might be difficult for Labour women to appreciate why avowedly non-party women remained resolutely outside the party machines, but during these three election years, LP women candidates benefitted from, and appreciated, the assistance which their non-party sisters gave them. Margaret Bondfield was a staunch LP woman, but the NUSEC, whilst acknowledging that she was:

"not exactly 'one of ourselves'..." (65)

still sent some temporary organizers to assist her in the Northampton constituency during the campaign (66). In this way they demonstrated the reality of their non-party theory and the hope that for party and non-party women:

"Above and below the party barriers that divide them, they will be conscious of the feminist solidarity which unites them." (67)

Women candidates had to be particularly careful in their election speeches to avoid falling into the frequent pitfalls which the prejudice of the press and male politicians were willingly constructing for them. Nancy Astor, who had been a Conservative MP for three years, had been identified as "the fiercest feminist of them all" (68) and convincingly steered the path between party and non-party, as well as trying to avoid being stereotyped as a 'woman's MP':

"Being the first woman MP I naturally specialized in questions affecting women and children.... while my help to the men of the upper and lower deck, to teachers, to the unemployed, etc, shows that I have not only been a sex representative. This election in the Sutton Division is no party fight. I appeal for the support of men and women of all parties and classes." (69)

Winifred Coombe-Tennant, standing as a National Liberal, also voiced this fear of women candidates:

"I do not want anyone to vote for me solely because I am a woman - nor to vote against me solely for that

reason." (70)

The greatest difficulty must have been experienced by Independent candidates, for although they were free from party policy, they did not have a party label to use as shorthand for establishing their identity with the electorate. They had to work hard to construct that identity, and, as Ray Strachey discovered, they were liable to all kinds of misinterpretation, whether deliberate or accidental. It was noticeable with the women's election addresses that they were careful to present a balanced viewpoint, references to their feminist beliefs and parliamentary intentions for women were cautious; witness Strachey's address in 1922:

"I do not approve of extremes in politics. I distrust Revolution on the one hand and Reaction on the other, and I believe we ought to pursue a middle course. I see, however, a serious danger in class bitterness... I am a woman, but if you elected me I should, of course, endeavour to represent the men as well as the women in the Division." (71)

However, when she was giving talks to women-only groups, she urged women who were electioneering not to try and agree with everyone, and to stand up for their feminist beliefs (72).

When campaigning for women candidates, it was necessary for non-party workers to adopt similar discretion. Because of their desire to get as many women as possible into Parliament, they were

often in a position of working for women who were standing for political parties at odds with their own beliefs. However, the NUSEC avoided the possible problem of a collision of views, by neutralising the situation with the formation of Equal Citizenship Committees which worked on strict non-party lines. For meetings, the NUSEC advised the choice of a chairman with "no strict party bias" (73) and the avoidance of all party issues. Similarly, with deputations to specific candidates which:

"should be...composed of representative women of all parties as well as those known to be neutral in their political sympathies." (74)

Societies also had to be cautious in their use of staff and expenditure of money in order not to contravene the Act relating to election expenses.

The suffrage societies eagerly paid attention to the smallest detail to maximise the women's chances of success. Women electors, no less than women candidates, were singled out for special attention by the press, as there was great speculation as to their collective electoral behaviour, assisted by their political novelty value. The pressure thus induced on women who had to perform in such an atmosphere was sufficient explanation for their political circumspection. Strachey noted how some male candidates treated women electors as if they were less intelligent than male voters, and to think that women would be content with a "political sop" (75). It was even more important, in these circumstances, for women candidates to expose such behaviour,

whilst encouraging confidence in their own ability to respond to the women electors' priorities and defeat the undoubted tendency for women to cast their votes in the same way as their husbands or male relatives.

With their usual optimism, the suffrage societies all felt that despite such difficulties, the 1922 campaign had gone well, and Elizabeth Macadam of the NUSEC was prepared to venture that:

"In the present state of political chaos there is little data on which to base an estimate of possible results but we venture to predict with some degree of confidence that the new House of Commons will see a group composed of six or eight women..." (76)

Sadly, her prediction was wrong, and despite the tremendous amount of hard work, skilful organization and planning, and the undoubted ability of many of the women candidates, only Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham won parliamentary seats. The Election was an enormous success for the Conservative Party, with Bonar Law now becoming Prime Minister. However, the LP took second place, having increased their seats from 59 in the 1918 Election, to 142 in this (77). The Women's Movement now began the important process of analysing the Election results in preparation for the next one, which was to be upon them far more quickly than anyone anticipated.

Although Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham had retained their seats, it had not been without a struggle, which Elizabeth Macadam ascribed to a "wave of reaction" (78). The contest had been

particularly tough for Astor. But despite a rival Conservative candidate who fought for the drinks lobby, against her temperance stand, and a popular Labour candidate, Astor had secured the loyalty of the feminists through her good work for the Cause. Because of this regard, the Countess of Selborne, who was President of the NCW, had refused to speak for Astor's rival during the campaign, and Mrs Philip Snowden refused to stand against her as a Labour candidate:

"I am a Labour woman, but the work which Lady Astor is doing for women and children both in Parliament and the country makes her services invaluable." (79)

But although there was great relief at the safe return of Astor and Wintringham, there was also intense disappointment at the failure of the other 31 candidates.

Why They Failed

Apart from the prevalent spirit of reaction which was noted in the last chapter, the Movement also isolated several other sound reasons for the lack of new women MPs; arguments that stood up well to the standard accusation that women would not vote for their their own sex. The NUSEC in a post-election pamphlet declared that:

"In any case, it is surely rash to assume as a matter of course that the defeat of women candidates was mainly due to their sex." (80)

Prior to the Election, the small number of women candidates had been remarked upon in the press as proof that despite all the fuss which had been made to secure the vote for women, the majority of women were evidently not interested in the political process. The WFL retorted that as men had been involved in the political process since the first Parliament of 1265, and women only for four years, that 33 candidates was not an inconsiderable number (81). In view of the many thousands of women who had been involved in the franchise struggle and the many who were still committed to the Women's Movement, as well as the efforts of the women's societies to recruit candidates, 33 might have seemed a small number. However, the barriers to women's political participation were still considerable. Margaret Wynne Nevinson, who had been in the Movement for many years, gave her reason for not standing as:

"Coming late into the possession^s of a vote and after my long experience of the fight to get it, I could never be an enthusiastic party politician, and to stand as an Independent is to court disaster...To waste all that money and energy, and not to get in, offends my sense of economy." (82)

It was necessary to be in a position to dedicate all one's time and energy to the campaign, with the view to a long-term commitment as an MP. It had to be a particularly resilient and confident type of woman who could place herself in the public forum in this way, as well as being in possession of the necessary skills. Dr Christine Murrell, Chairman of the Women's Election

Committee, which had been formed to support any woman candidate who stood on the equality platform, pointed out that lack of money prevented many women from standing (83). In 1922, the candidate's deposit alone was £150, which might represent many people's wages for an entire year. This was without all the expenses that running a campaign would involve. Working-class women, if they were experienced enough, could spare neither time nor money. Even middle and upper-class women might not actually be in a position to acquire the necessary funds for candidature.

Dr Murreil also noted that prospective candidate's lack of money also dissuaded some political parties from adopting women, in constituencies where they might otherwise have considered a woman (84). As Eleanor Rathbone wrote:

"It is much rarer to find women than men who can afford to spend lavishly on nursing and fighting a constituency; also they are less able to cultivate friendly and natural relations of the "come and have a drink" sort with the men it would be useful to cultivate." (85)

She also maintained that the older suffrage women in the non-party societies were too far removed from the political party machines to be able to make any demands on such political groups; and that younger feminists were concentrating all their time and energy on cultivating their professional careers.

One of the most compelling reasons for not standing was given by an anonymous writer in 'The Woman's Leader' in 1923, and

it was cited in 1922 as an explanation for why women had not gained more seats:

"I stood as a candidate at the last General Election (1922) for a hopeless seat....When the present Election came along I decided I would not fight any seat which had not a fair chance of being won because I felt that if women candidates in numbers accepted hopeless seats from their Parties it would tend to establish the legend that "Women never get in." (86)

'Time & Tide', 'The Vote', 'The IWSN' and 'The Woman's Leader', all protested at the fact that in the 1922 Election not one woman had been given a safe seat by her Party. Worse than that

"Of the defeated thirty-one, only one, Lady Cooper, was standing for a seat previously held by a candidate of her own political party..." (87)

Such treatment from all parties was hardly conducive to securing the loyalty of the women candidates or the electors; if anything, it served to confirm the non-party societies' suspicion of the party system (88).

Rathbone posed and answered the question:

"One may ask why women do not succeed in securing fairer play from the party organizations?...Women have only recently come into this field, the party organizations are officered mainly by men, who have men's prejudices and, wanting to win, are afraid of experimenting with the unknown. They probably believe the press nonsense about women being jealous of women." (89)

This was the assessment of a non-party woman. But there also seemed to be good cause for George Bernard Shaw's fury on Margaret Bondfield's behalf, that despite her hard-won reputation as a dedicated and hard-working LP member, she was still not given a safe seat to contest:

"You are the best man of the lot, and they shove you off on a place where the water is too cold for their dainty feet just as they shoved Mary (Macarthur) off on Stourbridge, and keep the safe seats for their now quite numerous imbeciles." (90)

With these factors to consider, as the WFL contested, having as many as 33 women candidates was an achievement.

It was also extremely hard work being a PPC, although the type of constituency played a large part in determining how burdensome the campaign would be. Edith Picton-Turbervill, who first stood for Labour in 1922, wrote of the sheer determination required to travel round the country, often alone, to badly-attended meetings; and of the difficulties which beset a rural candidate:

"How dismal-oh, how dismal very often is the nursing by Labour candidates of villages in country constituencies. The fear of being seen by landlord or others in authority, going to a Labour Party meeting whether it is justified or not still hinders many of the village folk of England attending such meetings." (91)

But with as few as 33 candidates distributed around the country, compared to 1400 men, the mere presence of the women was bound to be swamped. The local constituencies which had selected a woman would not expend great resources on a seat which stood little chance of being won; despite this being rather a circular argument. These were the cases in which the non-party societies were essential in providing even a limited measure of support to all women candidates, whatever their party. In this sense, party and non-party women shared a common ^{problem} of fighting poor seats with few resources. Even Nancy Astor and Mrs Wintringham, in addition to other candidates, thanked the WEC for their "valuable help", and Professor Winifred Cullis reported to their Annual Meeting in 1923 on:

"the enormous amount of work which had been done with a minimum of expense." (92)

Once again, the years of sustaining a Movement on a minimal income were turned to positive account. It was, after all, only an advantage to have the backing of a political party if that party had the belief and confidence in a candidate which it was willing to translate into tangible assistance. Otherwise, as 'Time & Tide' attested, they were paying little more than:

"lip service to the proposition that it is desirable to have women in Parliament." (93)

The prejudice which Rathbone wrote of, was spoken of more immediately by one of the unsuccessful candidates at a WEC meeting

in December 1922. Mary Grant, who had been a suffrage worker before the War and then joined the women police, had stood as a Liberal in Leeds and considered that prejudice against women was a definite factor to be considered in their failure, especially in connection with certain subjects. The hostility from male audiences had been very evident, for example, when she spoke about equal pay. She also believed that religious differences in some districts accounted for a loss of votes for women. But she also reasoned that the experience had been put to good use in the amount of propaganda that each candidate had generated for the Women's Movement (94). Ray Strachey had been the object of what her mother termed, "deleterious rumours", started by her opponents. As a result she was forced to issue a leaflet to counteract them:

"PLEASE NOTE: Mrs Oliver Strachey is NOT a Bolshevist, an Atheist or a Communist..Her husband was NOT a Conscientious Objector and her children are NOT neglected." (95)

Of course, the drawbacks which handicapped the women candidates were not only directly related to their position as parliamentary candidates, there were others which concerned the electoral machine itself. The obstacles of the registration process was one, and the method employed for vote allocation was another; both of which had been on the Movement's agenda since 1918. The complexities of the registration process were dealt with in chapter 5, but there had been several disturbing developments since the 1918 Election which the women's organizations wanted the Government

to address, preferably as part of a package including an extension of the franchise.

During the four years since women had attained the vote, there had been two major instances where women over thirty had found themselves to have been disenfranchised. Before demobilization had been completed, some officials had claimed that women whose husbands were away on military service had, as a result of this absence, lost their right to vote (96). There was no truth in this claim, but it had nevertheless done considerable damage, and it was still found necessary during the 1922 campaign to remind people that it was not the case. Apart from the temporary disenfranchisement which this false ruling had engendered, it had increased the confusion in an already complex procedure.

The other reason for disenfranchisement which was inherent in the legislation and branded as stupidity by the WFL, was the case of a working woman who took her meals with the family from whom she rented her accommodation, which disqualified her from claiming her vote (97). There was also the case of wives of conscientious objectors whose husbands were disqualified from voting for five years. This was likely to result in difficulties for such women in proving their entitlement to vote (98). (Other such disqualifications were dealt with in chapter 5, as were the problems encountered by women on trying to register). Chrystal Macmillan, an expert in such legal complexities, wrote early in 1922, when an Election was thought to be imminent:

"If we belong to the fortunate sex who have the right to register simply because we reside in a constituency for the necessary six months we do not need to exercise our brains much to know whether or not we have the right to be enrolled. But if we belong to the sex which can only aspire to the privilege of voting after attaining the age of thirty, by one of the eight or ten complicated methods provided to test our more mature intelligence, it is certainly time we set ourselves to the study." (99)

Many of the post-election reviews by women's groups, concentrated on the unrepresentative nature of the relationship between the votes polled and the seats gained. Proportional representation had long been a controversial issue in the Commons, and it was a part of the NUSEC's and the WFL's policy. Mrs Fawcett was an active supporter of the actual Proportional Representation Society, and the WFL insisted that:

"We must make no mistake about it; if we want women MPs, and we do, then we must get PR... We have only to look at those places where PR is used, to see the difference it has made in the composition of their Parliaments." (100)

In Germany, Holland and Ireland there was a higher percentage of women MPs because of PR. The WFL had computed that on the votes cast in the 1922 Election, Margaret Bondfield, Lady Cooper, Ray Strachey, Mrs Burnett Smith, Eleanor Rathbone and Dame Gwynne Vaughan would all have won seats under the PR system (101).

The frustration of the 1922 Election had been that although they had not won any new seats, the women's share of the vote had doubled since the 1918 Election. Considering the handicaps under which they campaigned, their results had been creditable, with only four women, compared to 38 men, losing their deposits. In total, the women had polled 230,356 votes and yet, they had only two MPs. As the NUSEC demonstrated (102), the narrowness of some of the women's defeats was a heartening outcome; with PR it could have been positively triumphant.

The General Elections of 1923 and 1924

Barely a year later, on December 6th 1923, an Election was called by Stanley Baldwin. Supposedly, as a response to mounting unemployment, Baldwin had decided to introduce trade protection as opposed to the traditional Liberal policy of free trade, and he was going to the country for support for his new policy. It was a surprise move and the suffrage societies swung into operation again, rather sooner than they had anticipated.

Perhaps as a result of the brief interlude between elections, the number of candidates was only increased by one, to 34. Twelve of them had stood in 1922, and there was an increase in the number of women standing for Labour (103). The ILP had recently given instructions to their divisional councils that more women should be encouraged to stand (104), and this had immediately resulted in three more Labour candidates. However, the old

complaint of the nature of the seats which the parties had allocated to women was still as relevant, and prompted the non-party groups to assert that women would only improve this state of affairs by working outside the political parties. The difficulty was how to break the chain of disadvantage. The SPG had no doubts as to the inadvisability of women accepting "party leavings":

"When the women get defeated...the parties who have thus used them are the first to turn round and say: 'There is no use putting up women candidates, they only get defeated.'... It should be remembered that there is no generosity in offering a woman the chance of fighting a hopeless seat on condition that she pays her own expenses." (105)

The campaign was waged in a similar fashion to that of 1922, with the NUSEC noting that on this occasion there was a demand for their speakers by male candidates also. They responded to these in a limited way by offering some help to those men who had exhibited a sound record of support for women's reforms. The WFL saw the women candidates chances as being increased in an accumulative way with each election, and waged their usually vigorous campaign, attempting to attract as many volunteer workers as possible. Questionnaires were once again liberally distributed by the NCW, the NUSEC, the WFL, the SPG and the St Joan's Social and Political Alliance (SJSIPA, previously the CWSS). The WFL suggested that as the questionnaires were so similar, it might be more productive and have greater impact, in the future, if a joint questionnaire was issued (106).

The Election result with only 258 Conservative seats, seemed to illustrate Baldwin's error of judgement. For although still the largest single Party in the Commons, it was outnumbered by the joint total of Labour and Liberal seats: which with 191 to Labour and 158 for the Liberals, totalled 349. Both Conservatives and Liberals came to a similar conclusion about an effective way in which they might utilize the situation to defuse the rising threat of Labour:

"a 'merely tactical' alliance to keep Labour out would only strengthen it for the future, whereas in office 'it would be too weak to do much harm but not too weak to get discredited'. " (107)

So Asquith supported Labour's claim, and in January 1924, the first Labour Government took office, with the Conservatives opportunely blaming the women's vote for the Election result and their fall (108).

The women's cause had seemed to profit by Labour's rise, with three Labour women taking seats for the first time: Margaret Bondfield, Susan Lawrence and Dorothy Jewson. However, it was the overall result for the women candidates which gave cause for rejoicing, with the return of eight women MPs. The other five were made up of three Conservatives: Lady Astor, the Duchess of Atholl and Mrs Hilton Phillipson; along with Mrs Wintringham and Lady Terrington, the two Liberals (109). Although, ironically, the Duchess of Atholl had been an anti-suffragist and Mrs Hilton Phillipson could hardly be classified as a feminist, nevertheless,

to have a body of eight women in the House after only three elections, was an important achievement. As a body of women in the House, they would serve to make an important political point in terms of women's right to become MPs.

It would now be very much a question of experience as to how best this group of women could work together in the House of Commons to achieve maximum benefits for women. Lady Astor aligned herself with the women's societies as:

"women who put reforms ahead of party." (110)

Whilst Mrs Wintringham's relief for Nancy Astor, herself and the future effectiveness of the women's cause was evident when she declared that:

"It is difficult for anyone except those two to realize how sorely we have needed more Women Members, whatever their party, and what a relief to us their coming will be." (111)

The non-party faction were not naive enough to believe, or even to try and dictate, that women should work together at all times on the basis of sex. On some occasions party would dominate, and at others, women's issues would unite them. Although the Duchess of Atholl, for example, believed that a Woman's Party would be far more divisive than class or party, she also believed in cross-party action:

"I tried to make clear to my women colleagues of all three parties that I was ready to co-operate with them wherever possible; on non-party questions of special interest to women." (112)

Helen Fraser, who had been a 1922 candidate and was a member of the NUSEC, believed that women should work within the parties, or rather, that it was possible to achieve a fusion of both. Otherwise, she believed, if women worked as Independents within Parliament, they would, in essence function as a Woman's Party, which was not a desirable goal. In time she anticipated that as:

"These points of view on national, international, financial, social, and industrial policies are neither masculine nor feminine - they are human, and will be modified and changed as we develop and women get into parties, just as men do, because they belong there by conviction and temperament." (113)

That really examined the issue of women's reasons for entering Parliament; their motivations were surely the key to how they would function once they had gained a seat. But ideology aside, it was necessary for them to establish themselves within an institution where they had, as yet, no recognized place.

But all debate and speculation came to an abrupt end less than ten months later with the fall of the Labour Government and the announcement of yet another General Election on October 29th 1924. The women's societies were distressed for it meant the probable end of the Government who had been their political allies and from whom they expected so much. It was also the end of a stable term of office in which the eight women MPs could consolidate their position and guide through legislative changes for women. Three elections in three years also meant that the

Movement's resources were at full stretch, not having had any sustained period of recovery from the war and the Reconstruction period. All this contributed to an emotional and physical exhaustion, when it was now necessary to instil enthusiasm into a contest that no-one was eager to fight.

The Women's Movement must also have been dismayed by the manifestos which the parties produced: Labour, under the heading, 'A Word to the Women', took two short paragraphs which were mainly in self-praise of all they had achieved during office; whilst the Conservatives' one paragraph, 'Women & Children', concentrated mainly on aspects of crime. The Liberals' manifesto did not contain one reference to women's reforms. After five years of being a part of the political scene, the response of the party politicians was this steady decline in the amount of space and attention accorded to women. Little wonder that the WFL responded with:

"A Plague on all Your Parties!" (114)

In 1924, there were 39 female candidates: 21 of them standing for Labour, with only 6 Liberals, 11 Unionists and 1 Independent, Mary Richardson. This was 'Slasher Richardson', who had been the WSPU woman who had attacked the painting, 'The Rokeby Venus' in 1914; previously she had stood for Labour. Of these 39 candidates, 22 had stood in previous elections. But despite their experience and another increase in the votes polled for women, up to 387,573, only four women were returned to Westminster. These were Nancy Astor, the Duchess of Atholl, Mrs Hilton Phillipson, and

a new MP, who had been an NUWSS organizer an ex-Communist, who was now standing for Labour, Ellen Wilkinson (115). There was great distress at the reverse of the women's fortunes, especially as Margaret Bondfield and Mrs Wintringham had failed to be re-elected.

The Zinoviev Letter (116) had sealed the fate of the LP and there was a Conservative landslide with 415 seats secured; whilst the Liberals were at their lowest ebb with 42 seats and Labour had also lost ground, with 152 (117). As the women's groups deduced, the female candidates had, to a great extent, reaped the reward of their parties. But Ellen Wilkinson was to prove an invaluable addition to the House, and kept up the women's spirits with her maiden speech on equal pay. As to cross-party co-operation, 'The Sunday Graphic' reported of Ellen Wilkinson and Nancy Astor:

"However, the fact that their parties are different is making no difference now. They are in the House as women, and they mean to stick together." (118)

The period from November 1922 to October 1924 was certainly a political baptism of fire for the Women's Movement. It was a demanding period for any party to withstand, but for a Movement so recently introduced to the political mainstream, it was more than challenging. Despite their erratic success in gaining parliamentary seats, their electoral showing over those three years was a positive one. The number of votes cast for women had risen from 58,976 in 1918 to 387,573 in 1924, over a sixfold increase in

six years. From 17 prospective parliamentary candidates in 1918, the number had risen to 39 with an average of nearly 10,000 votes cast per woman in 1924, compared to less than 3,500 in 1918. This had all been achieved with maximum support from the women's suffrage societies who had depleted resources, a very minimum of support from their political parties and positive discouragement from the press. Even male LP candidates who were working men and were also fighting to establish a parliamentary place, had the whole-hearted support of their Party, their Trade Unions and the male fraternity. It was opposition by omission, as far as women and the political parties were concerned.

For party political women, the disadvantages were that although they were tied to the fortunes of their party, it was not in direct proportion to any contribution which they might have made; their sphere of influence, as yet, being restricted. They were also tied to the male agenda and were not benefitting from the advantages which being allied to a large-scale party organization was supposed to bring. In some cases, even the reverse operated, as with the case of a Labour woman not being chosen to stand for a promising seat by her colleagues because she was a woman (119). For non-party women to operate successfully as Independent candidates could never bring any large-scale influence to bear on legislative change. Perhaps the best solution was as Helen Fraser suggested, a combination of the two: to be a member of a political party whilst sustaining the existence of separate women's organizations as all-party groups. That same idea of all-party groups within Parliament

had been difficult, as yet, for women MPs to experiment with, as there had been too few of them in Parliament, and they had had no sustained parliamentary period in which to establish any working procedures to facilitate it.

The whole process whereby women were entering political institutions, seeking to increase their power and efficacy, whilst attempting to sustain their feminist credentials, requires more detailed research. It would be fruitful, for example, to know how those eight women functioned during their brief parliamentary career in 1924, as individuals, party members and part of a group of women. How far they contributed to the proceedings of the House in terms of women's issues and the reaction they aroused from male MPs, are also important questions.

To some extent the next chapter will examine the major issues which the women's organizations brought to prominence in the House during the period from 1923 to 1925, and how the limited presence of more women MPs helped the Women's Movement progress along the slow path of franchise extension.

Notes

1. SMITH, 1990, p.65.
2. RUBINSTEIN, 1986, p.140.
3. Ibid, p.157.
See also the 'ISWN' February 1 1918, p.70.
4. 'The Labour Magazine', November 1922, p.308.
5. Ibid.
6. See, for example, the Women Unionist Organization's paper, "Home & Politics" which equated socialism with communism and was full of attacks on the LP as a party which was threatening the British Empire with its Bolshevism.
7. 'The Labour Woman', June 1 1922, p.85.
8. 'The Labour Magazine', December 1922, P.344.
9. 'Time & Tide', June 15 1923, p.608.
10. Minutes of Sittingbourne Women's Section, November 24 1922, LP Archive.
11. Ibid, January 7 and 14, 1925.
12. Minutes of Newark CLP Women's Section, December 1925.
13. Annie Huggett, born 1892, interviewed 9 November 1989 in Barking, Essex.
14. 'The Vote' July 4 1924, front page.
15. 'The Labour Magazine', January 1925, p.398.
16. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' 1921, p.74.
17. 'The Vote' July 4 1924, p.210.
18. See Lady Astor Collection, folders on Societies IV and V.
19. GRIGG, 1980, p.74.
20. SYKES, 1972, p.230.

21. SPENDER, 1984, p.147.
22. 'THE Labour Woman' March 1920, p.37.
23. 'The Woman's Leader' April 30 1920, p.290.
24. Ibid.
25. 'The Woman's Leader' March 2 1923, front page.
26. JENKINS, 1953, p.38.
27. 'The Woman's Leader' March 16 1923, p.55.
28. 'The Woman's Leader' August 1 1924, p.215.
29. 'The Woman's Leader' March 2 1923, p.34.
30. 'The Woman's Leader' March 9 1923, p.46.
31. See, for example, 'The Labour Woman' March 1 1922, p.40.
32. SJCIWO Minutes January 7 1919, pp 1 & 4.
33. SJCIWO Report 1921, p.2.
34. Ibid.
35. 'The Woman's Leader' March 2 1923, p.34.
36. 'Home & Politics' November 1924, p.5.
37. 'Home & Politics' May 1921.

It is interesting to note here and with reference to the domestic employment issue discussed in Chapter 7, that at the WUO's Annual Conference on April 27 1921, a Miss Bawden moved the following resolution, which was carried:

"That in view of the prevalence of unemployment among women and of the great difficulty in obtaining labour for domestic work, this conference is of the opinion that pressure should be put upon unemployed women to accept, under certain conditions, domestic work, or to forfeit all unemployment or out-of-work pay." 'Home & Politics' June 1921.

38. 'The Vote' September 12 1924, front page.
39. 'The Woman's Leader' January 4 1924, p.395.
40. Ibid, March 2 1923, p.34.
41. Ibid, June 15 1923, p.157.
42. 'The Vote' February 1 1924, p.35.
43. See 35.
44. 'Time & Tide' June 15 1923, p.608.
45. LSWS Annual Report 1921, pp7-8.
46. MOWAT, 1968, p.136.
47. MOWAT, 1968, p.136-142.
48. For example Mrs Wintringham, 'The Vote' September 23 1921, front page.
49. 'Questions to Parliamentary Candidates, General Election 1922', NUSEC, TUC Library.
50. 'The Vote' November 3 1922, p.349.
51. 'Professional and Clerical Women's Election Questionnaire' AWCS, J.S.Middleton Collection, LP Archive.
52. 'The Vote' December 15 1922, p.397.
53. NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.8.
54. LSWS Annual Report 1922, p.7.
55. NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.9.
56. 'The Vote' November 3 1922, p.349.
57. Ibid, November 10 1922, p.357.
58. 'The Vote' November 10 1922, p.357.
59. 'Time & Tide' November 8 1922, as quoted in SPENDER, 1984, p.136.
60. 'The Labour Woman' December 1 1922, p.183.

61. 'How to Conduct a Non-Party Election Campaign' NUSEC, October 1922, p.3., IUC Library.
62. 'The Vote' November 10 1922, front page.
63. 'Manifesto to the Women Voters of Great Britain' NUSEC, 1922, p.2.
64. 'How to Conduct a Non-Party Election Campaign' NUSEC, October 1922, p.3.
65. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' December 1922, p.43.
66. NUSEC Annual Report 1922, p.8.
67. 'The Woman's Leader' November 23 1923, p.338.
68. STOCKS, 1970, p.145.
69. 'The Woman's Leader' November 10 1922, p.324.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid, p.325.
72. Smith Papers, 1922.
73. 'How to Conduct a Non-Party Election Campaign' NUSEC, October 1922, p.1.
74. Ibid, p.2.
75. Folder II, December 1922, p.25,Smith Papers, Oxford.
76. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' November 1922, p.26.
77. MOWAT, 1968, p.145.
78. Ibid, December 1922, p.43.
79. COLLIS, 1960, p.107.
80. 'Why Women Candidates Were Defeated at the General Election of 1922' NUSEC, 1923, p.1.
81. 'The Vote' November 10 1922, front page.
82. NEVINSON, 1926, p.284.

83. 'Time & Tide' July 6 1923, p.697.
84. Ibid.
85. STRACHEY, 1936, p.32.
86. 'The Woman's Leader' November 30 1923, p.347.
87. 'The International Woman Suffrage News' December 1922, p.43.
88. See Notes 2 & 3. Also 'The Vote' January 11 1924, p.12.
89. STRACHEY, 1936, p.31.
90. BONDFIELD, 1950, p.245.
91. PICTON-TURBERVILL, 1939, pp.160-161.
92. 'Time & Tide' March 2 1923, p.253.
93. 'Time & Tide' October 17 1922, as quoted in SPENDER, 1984, p.135.
94. 'The Vote' December 15 1922, p.397.
95. Folder I 1922, p.19, Smith Papers, Oxford.
96. 'The Labour Woman' May 1918, p.9; MACMILLAN, 1918, pp 6-7; 'Home & Politics' July 1922, p.13.
97. 'The Vote' May 27 1921, p.485.
98. 'The Labour Woman' May 1918, p.9.
99. 'The Woman's Leader' February 3 1922, p.3.
100. 'The Vote' November 24 1922, front page.
101. Ibid.
102. 'Why Women Candidates Were Defeated at the General Election of 1922' NUSEC, 1923.
103. 'The Labour Woman' December 1 1923, p.188.
104. 'The Woman's Leader' August 24 1923, front page.
105. 'Time & Tide' November 16 1923, as quoted in SPENDER, 1984, p.146.

106. 'The Woman's Leader' November 23 1923, p.338.
107. MOWAT, 1968, p.169.
108. 'The Labour Magazine' January 1924, p.400.
109. 'The Vote' December 14 1923, p.395.
110. 'The Woman's Leader' December 14 1923, p.369.
111. Ibid.
112. ATHOLL, 1958, p.138.
113. 'The Woman's Leader' June 15 1923, p.156.
114. 'The Vote' October 17 1924, p.333.
115. 'The Woman's Leader' November 7 1924, p.326.
116. The Zinoviev or Red Letter: a 'fake' letter, which implicated the LP in plans for the mobilisation of the proletariat for a future revolution. The letter made its appearance four days before the Election.
117. MOWAT, 1968, p.190; 'The Labour Woman' December 1 1924, p.192; Mowat gives Labour 152, 'Labour Woman' 151.
118. 'The Sunday Graphic' November 13 1924, Ellen Wilkinson Collection.
119. 'The Vote' April 27 1923, p.132.

Chapter 8

Old and New Feminism

"It is not easy as one pushes through the day to day cross-currents of the women's movement, to sense clearly and unmistakably the drift of the tide - or even to proportion the significance of events as they emerge haphazard, and with the ink still wet..from the time machine. From time to time legislative milestones set up to mark the completion of one chapter and the beginning of another; but such milestones, though easily recognizable, are few and far between." (1)

In the period from the end of 1922 to the achievement of the vote for all women in 1928, the Women's Movement agenda became increasingly complex as political and economic philosophies evolved, informing the campaigns which reflected the issues which had been mapped out after the War. As the Movement continued to develop along new post-War lines, its theoretical base became more sophisticated, and the achievement of its aims was analysed with reference to future implications, not simply as isolated attainments.

Two distinct ideologies, whose origins were touched on in Chapter 3, now gained prominence: the new or welfare feminism and the old or equalitarian feminism. This chapter attempts to clarify the basic tenets of each brand of feminism; how they developed,

what effect they had on the campaigns in hand, and continuing a central theme of this thesis, how the theories related in practice to the organizations and their membership which made up the Women's Movement.

It became evident that since women had attained the partial franchise, as well as Nancy Astor's pioneering persistence in the Commons and the increasing support of the Women's Movement and other women's organizations, welfare issues relating to women and children were given more serious consideration in Parliament. Progress was often slow, even after 1923 with more women MPs in the House. Bills had to be presented repeatedly before reaching the statute book. Successes varied with the years: 1923 saw the passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act, equalising divorce; Astor's Intoxicating Liquors (Sales to Young Persons Under 18) Act and the NCUMC's Bastardy Act. But 1923 contrasted sharply with the following year of the Labour Government, where nothing specific to the Movement became law (2). During such lean years, however, there was always progress of some kind as Bills sponsored by the women's societies were either considered for inclusion as Government policy, or won more adherents in the House.

As ever, the tenacity and hard work of the women's organizations added to their achievements; such as the passing of the Guardianship of Infants Act in 1925 after six years' work by the NUSEC and its supporters. In the same year the Summary Jurisdiction (Separation and Maintenance) Act became law, along

with the Widows', Orphans' and Old Age (Contributory Pensions) Act. The continuous work which addressed the many instances of injustice or potential for harm, such as Mrs Hilton Phillipson's Nursing Homes (Registration) Act of 1927, were powerful evidence of the accumulative influence of the Movement as a catalyst for the growth of social justice and welfare provision (3).

The ideological divide became clear between the welfare and equalitarian feminists in the middle of the 1920s. The emergence of this polarization was a gradual formal acknowledgement of a divergence of interest between women which, before the War, had been ameliorated to some extent by the unity of the franchise struggle. However, adherence to the different philosophies was neither confined rigidly to distinct organizations, nor operated as consistent policy. The major issues around which the debate on old and new feminism revolved were those of family endowment, restrictive or protective legislation and birth control. The first two issues as the most prominent involved women's economic emancipation and included issues such as unemployment, the status of single and married women workers, equal pay and the industrial organization of women.

Family Endowment.

The trigger for this dual definition of feminism lay with the family endowment or family allowance movement begun by Eleanor Rathbone. Rathbone's experience during the War as the administrator

of separation allowances through the Liverpool branch of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association made her realize that:

"Of course family allowances were the answer to the "equal pay" impasse: to the anti-feminist conception of motherhood as an occupation without independent economic status: to the anxiety of the overdriven mother and the malnutrition of the neglected ex-baby when a new mouth claimed its share of an inelastic unresponsive family income." (4)

With the optimism and fervour born of the suffrage cause, and believing that she had found an economic key to many women's problems, she set up the Family Endowment Committee (FEC) in 1917. Three fellow NUWSS colleagues, Kathleen Courtney, Maude Royden and Mary Stocks, were members of the Committee together with a number of socialist colleagues (5). The report produced by them in September 1918, "Equal Pay and the Family: A Proposal for the National Endowment of Motherhood" recognized that:

"There can be no real independence, whether for man or woman, without economic independence." (6)

The focus of the argument concentrated on one of the main planks of feminist emancipation to establish equal pay where men and women were doing the same work. This attempt was continually being rebuffed by the claim that as a man's wage was intended to keep a family, equal pay was an impossibility. This ignored the reality of women forced to enter the labour market because of their husband's low wages, sickness, disability, or death. Women forced,

in such circumstances, to accept sweated wages, had the further effect of depressing all women's wage levels.

The FEC maintained that a family allowance would provide multiple benefits to married women with families, by giving them economic independence with their own 'wage'. It would also be a recognition of the value of women's work as wives and mothers, thus according them status; would remove them from the labour market and from depressed women's wages, thus facilitating equal pay; and end poverty and the neglect of children in those families where women were forced to go out to work. They concluded that:

"It means, in short, an approach to the humane maxim, "To each according to his need"; the abolition of hunger for the child, the economic and social emancipation of women, the safeguarding of men from the perils of low-paid competition, and such levelling up of opportunities as our race has never known in all its history." (7)

Despite a detailed and learned economic exposition in her 1924 work, 'The Disinherited Family', (claimed by many to rank alongside some of the economic 'greats'); the extent of the opposition from all political parties which ensued, evidenced the controversial nature of the subject.

Opposition to the scheme was not just to come from political parties and male-dominated trade unions, but also from inside the Women's Movement. On the publication of its report, the FEC became the Family Endowment Council (FEC1), which published a

number of explanatory pamphlets from its Oxford Street offices. One, written by Rathbone and Stocks, which was specifically aimed at encouraging women's organizations to adopt the scheme, also attempted to answer the catalogue of objections which had been voiced, and explain how the scheme might be financed (8).

Conflict surrounding family endowment was also emerging within the NUSEC, of which Rathbone was President. At the 1925 Annual Council meeting she moved a resolution for the Union to adopt family endowment as part of its policy. After an impassioned speech, the vote went in Rathbone's favour, but, as a result Millicent Fawcett, a fierce opponent of family endowment, resigned from the editorial board of 'The Woman's Leader'. In January of that year, two months prior to the Council Meeting, 'The Woman's Leader' had published a long article by Fawcett on 'The Case Against Family Endowment'. Fawcett's objections, unlike those of other feminists, did not rest on feminist theory, but were in line with some political protesters who believed, as she voiced more bluntly in 'The Voice' in June 1925 that:

"It is also probable that if parents are relieved of the obligation to support their children, one of the very strongest inducements to submit to the drudgery of daily toil would be withdrawn." (9)

Fawcett believed the concept of family endowment to be nothing less than a declaration of socialism, and her Liberal heritage of personal responsibility was unmoved by the plight of near destitution of many women and children, which motivated Rathbone.

In a written response to Mrs Fawcett's 'Woman's Leader' article, Rathbone admitted that the implementation of her scheme:

"is not at present, nor probably will be for many years, within the sphere of practical politics." (10)

However, she was anxious to elicit a commitment to the principle of family allowances by political parties and women's organizations, rather than an outright rejection on the basis that a perfect scheme had not yet been devised. The reservations by the Labour movement were many and complex, and the 1923 Labour Women's Conference followed the party line by rejecting it.

However, Rathbone's insistent campaigning over the years brought results, and by 1926 the NUSEC could report that the WMLF, the NCW, the IWSA and the ILP had all passed resolutions concerning family allowances (11). By March 1926 'The Woman's Leader' reported that over half a dozen regional Labour women's conferences had accepted the importance of the principle of family allowances as an ingredient in women's economic emancipation (12). By 1927, the Family Endowment Conference was reported as:

"a successful affair which at least demonstrated the life and vigour of the movement. A large and heterogeneous selection of societies was represented - Liberal and Labour bodies, professional organizations..., Women Citizen Associations, and Equal Citizenship Societies, Co-operative Guilds.. and numerous bodies interested in economics and social research." (13)

The SJCIWO also reported its approval of the adoption of the principle in a long and detailed report at the 1927 Labour Women's Conference, and welcomed its adoption by the LP's Annual Conference (14).

Rathbone's solution for addressing the problem of family poverty, which she believed had been vindicated by the improvement in women and children's health during the War through separation allowances (15), also brought with it a radical shift in feminist perspective. Stocks later revealed that Rathbone had felt that the equalitarian interpretation of feminist demands was too narrow for the post-War world, and that a different emphasis was needed in a fresh approach (16).

Women's organizations had already revised their constitutions and aims, but this next step was to result in a major reappraisal of their philosophy. The essence of that new philosophy for Rathbone, emerged in her speech to the 1925 NUSEC Annual Council:

"At last we have done with the boring business of measuring everything that women want, or that is offered them by men's standards, to see if it is exactly up to sample. At last we can stop looking at all our problems through men's eyes and discussing them in men's phraseology. We can demand what we want for women, not because it is what men have got but because it is what women need to fulfil the potentialities of their own natures and to adjust themselves to the circumstances

of their own lives." (17)

This statement reflected a new confidence from women who had had the vote and been citizens for seven years. Welfare feminism was a recognition of the importance of the function of the wife and mother, of the distinctions between the sexes. It was an attempt to gain recognition and status for this essential role and its implications for the economy and the health of the nation.

What was most readily identified in Rathbone's policy was the improvement in the lives of working-class women and children, which was interpreted in terms of welfare provision. But, more importantly taking the larger view, her scheme was an attempt at an economic reappraisal which embraced all women in its recognition of the economic interdependence of women in the family, professional women and equal pay. The ensuing debate between welfare and equalitarian feminists uncovered a range of interpretations which produced many new dimensions in the theoretical analysis of women's lives.

'The Woman's Leader' in its review of 1926 remarked on the introduction in that year of the expression, 'New Feminism', and gave its definition of the combatants' respective positions:

"There is the feminism of pure equality, and the feminism of equivalent opportunity. There is the feminism which says: lo here, and lo there is a concrete inequality of law or social practice as between men and women. Let us smite it on the head. And there is the feminism which says: women

have a certain specialized part to play in the world, let us see that they play it with the same measure of consideration which men regard as necessary when they have a specialized part to play. The programmes are not mutually exclusive. They are not necessarily antagonistic. But they do involve ...a difference of emphasis...new feminism..accuses old feminismof a slavish acceptance of masculine standards, while the old feminists cherish the conviction that the new feminists are at heart mere "social reformers". " (18)

This emerging duality of approach promoted questions concerning a re-appraisal of the nature of equality, whatthe necessary conditions were for the practice of equality and what effect the two interpretations would have on the feminist agenda in hand.

The most contentious point lay in the acceptance by the New Feminists of the 'special' role of women. And within that role, welfare feminists wanted reform, not revolution. They maintained that although all issues were of concern to both men and women, there were some which were of greater interest to women:

"It follows inevitably that questions such as birth control, family allowances, housing, smoke abatement, though they affect both sexes, do not affect both sexes equally...There is probably scarcely a department of human activity in which the physiological differences...have not some effect...upon the outlook of the two sexes. To those who hold this view, "equal citizenship" means something more than a knocking down of barriers and a removal of

disabilities." (19)

Equalitarians perceived this position as playing into the hands of the opposition. Suffragists had struggled to escape from the confinements of the 'woman's sphere' and establish that the interests of men and women were identical, in order to accord women the right to an equal place in the world. This had been the purpose of the feminists' insistence on their designation as 'human beings' in order to claim their rights. And now welfare feminists were qualifying and compromising that position by claiming special interests for women in which it was men who would be marginalised.

The lines along which this conflict were drawn existed not only between organizations, but within them. Rathbone's definition of equality was countered by Elizabeth Abbott, who was also a member of the NUSEC. Abbott accused the welfare feminists of spawning arguments which were little more than a linguistic distraction which constituted a betrayal of feminism:

"Theoretical discussions on "what is equality" are valueless- another red herring across the equalitarian track. The issue is not between "old" and "new" feminism. (There is no such thing as "new" feminism, just as there is no such thing as "new" freedom. There is freedom and there is tyrrany.) The issue is between feminism - equalitarianism - and that which is not feminism." (20)

But the New Feminists claimed that they were putting female values

on the agenda:

"It is a poor kind of feminism which adopts unquestioningly the standards of a man-made social philosophy." (21)

They accused the Equalitarians of aping male values and thus restricting feminism to an unimaginative duplication of the male position, which would never be able to fulfil the needs of women's lives.

The conflict was heightened when Kathleen Courtney, another Executive member of the NUSEC, branded the equalitarian school of thought as the "Me too" feminists. Likening them to a little girl chasing her older brother and continually crying, "Me, too?", Rathbone contested that the need for such tactics was over. It was no longer necessary to make such demands for:

"All this has been won. There are still a few analagous rights not yet secured...To the new school, the habit of continually measuring women's rights by men's achievements seems out of date, ignominious and boring... Now that we have secured possession of the tools of citizenship, we intend to use them not to copy men's models but to produce our own." (22)

Understandably, the equalitarians bridled at the "Me, too" trivialisation of their theory, calling it a "cheap jibe" (23). In counteracting it, Abbott emphasised the universal nature of the Equalitarians' stance, which made it seem as if it was the Welfare

Feminists' theory which was the narrow one:

"The demand for equality has been a demand that such rights, liberties, and opportunities as the State allows to its citizens shall not be withheld from women; a demand that wherever and whenever the State sets a value upon its citizens, it shall not set an inferior value upon women; a demand for the removal of every arbitrary impediment that hinders the progress, in any realm of life and work, of women. That is equality." (24)

The equalitarian SPG, which prided itself on its practical grasp of politics, had previously criticised the NUSEC for continually expanding its agenda to include issues, such as smoke abatement, which the SPG felt had nothing to do with the Cause (25). It felt that such activity only served to weaken their case for the equality issues and squander resources which should be concentrated on what was within practical reach of success. With the advent of welfare feminism, the SPG clung more adamantly than ever to its belief that feminism's prime aim was the complete political emancipation of women.

When the NUSEC espoused family allowances as part of its New Feminism, 'Time & Tide' roundly attacked them for displaying a lack of seriousness towards the current franchise campaign. SPG members, such as Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby wrote of their adherence to equalitarian values. Holtby's explanation seemed to

undermine Rathbone's contention that the equalitarian approach was outdated:

"while the inequality exists, while injustice is done and opportunity denied to the great majority of women, I shall have to be a feminist, and an Old Feminist, with the motto Equality First. And I shan't be happy till I get it ." (26)

And in a 1927 SPG pamphlet, Brittain explained that:

"Feminism still lives in England today because the incompleteness of the English franchise represents but one symbol among many others of the incomplete recognition of women as human beings....'Recognize our full humanity and we will trouble you no more.' " (27)

By the mid-1920s it was evident that to the three vital questions of: 'To what end is the Women's Movement working?', 'How is that end to be achieved?' and 'How is the Movement's feminism to be defined?', the welfare and equalitarian feminists had formulated separate responses. And there lay many different shades of opinion between their two sets of answers which reflected the varied experiences of individual women. If Rathbone's family endowment scheme had engendered the initial divide within the Movement, this was rapidly followed by two other issues which served to entrench these positions. These were birth control and restrictive or protective legislation.

Birth Control

Birth control was one of the considerations which Rathbone designated as of particular concern to women and part of the welfare package which could improve women's lives. Dealing, as it did, with the economic position of women, family endowment logically embraced birth control as an indirect means of addressing the acute poverty of the working-class women. In the light of this debate, the article in 'The Woman's Leader' of October 1925 tackled the nub of the matter when it posed the question, "Is Birth Control a Feminist Reform?" It began by defining its feminism as being:

"The demand of women that the whole structure and movement of society shall reflect in a proportionate degree their experiences, their needs, and their aspirations." (28)

It was then able to apply such a definition to the activity which occupied the majority of women, that of motherhood.

In 1924, Dora Russell and Leah L'Estrange Malone, of the LP, were two of the founders of the Workers' Birth Control Group (WBCG) who devised the campaign slogan:

"It is four times as dangerous to bear a child as to work in a mine, and mining is men's most dangerous trade." (29)

This theme was taken up by 'The Woman's Leader' as they demanded that the 'occupation' of motherhood should have the same stringent regulatory standards applied to it as the most dangerous male employment, such as mining, and that:

"Like her economically occupied husband, (she) shall be placed in a position of maximum freedom to determine under

what conditions she will or will not perform her function, and how far by reasonable "limitation of output" she may improve the standard of her "product"." (30)

Viewing the population policy of a high birth rate balanced by a high death rate as a degradation to women and the society which permitted it, they insisted that the provision of birth control information to married women was an essential feminist reform. In the light of the controversial nature of the subject, it qualified its statements by maintaining that this was not, however, a demand for the general provision of birth control. The NUSEC had worded the resolution which it had passed earlier in the year very carefully:

"That this Council calls upon the Ministry of Health to allow information with respect to methods of Birth Control to be given by medical officers at Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics in receipt of Government grants, in cases in which either a mother asks for such information or in which, in the opinion of the Medical Officer, the health of the parents renders it desirable." (31)

This was not over-caution, but a realistic anticipation of the attacks that could follow at a time when it was illegal for Government-funded clinics and centres to give birth control advice, and where doctors and nurses who had done so, had been dismissed (32). To openly discuss women's sexual behaviour and ^{to} campaign for choice in working women's lives, despite the advent of Marie Stopes, was still little short of revolutionary.

The controversy engendered by the subject was one of the reasons given by the SPG for shunning the subject and insisting that it was not a feminist issue. That a reform which could enable women to have greater control over their lives and finances, as well as improving their health should not be regarded as a feminist goal, seems a strange judgement. However, it was made in the light of the two societies' differing interpretations of the feminist ideal, and the SPG's fierce adherence to the primacy of equal political rights as the cornerstone of female emancipation. 'Time & Tide' in March 1926 claimed that:

"They (family endowment and birth control) may of course be valuable social reforms for quite other reasons...but they are not, except for this reason, feminist reforms." (33)

However, opposition from other feminist or women's groups, or from individual women, to the birth control campaign did not necessarily place them in the equalitarians' camp. The SJSPA objected on religious grounds, many feminist doctors such as Letitia Fairfield of the NUSEC and Mary Scharlieb of the SPG protested on grounds of health or morality (34). But the SPG's main concern was that the NUSEC was diverting attention from the powerful public agitation for the final, concerted effort for the franchise, which was launched in 1926. (See next chapter)

One interesting feature of this debate, was the low profile which the WFL took. There was no mention of the rival philosophies in its Annual Reports, and references to the key

issues of family endowment and birth control in its paper, 'The Vote', were largely limited to accounts of conferences. The main tenor of the WFL's ardent campaigning at this time was a focused attack on the attainment of equal political rights. Considering its equalitarian stance, it is notable that it avoided becoming embroiled in what became, at least in the correspondence pages of 'Time & Tide', a very acerbic conflict (35).

However, Rathbone and her supporters, were correct in their belief that this was a campaign which would have a strong appeal for working women. Indeed, Rathbone must have felt that her welfare stance was vindicated when a meeting she chaired on April 23 1926, which concerned information on birth control methods, was filled to capacity. There were nearly 40 women's organizations represented, as well as associated interest groups and individuals (36).

It has already been noted how, after initially rejecting the concept of family allowances, the women of the Labour movement gradually came to approve the scheme; similarly with birth control, they were cautious in their initial response. This stance was probably a result of the subject's controversial nature, for there was no doubt of working women's desperate need for the kind of relief which had been available to middle-class women for many years. There were several concerns specifically relating to the position of Labour women within the Party, which made their reserve

understandable and which demonstrated the negative aspect of being part of a political party.

Early in 1924, seven LP women interested in the promotion of birth control, including Dora Russell and Leah L'Estrange Mallone, wrote to 'The Labour Woman' reminding the Party that the 1923 Labour Women's Conference had promised a Sub-Committee to discuss the issue. The letter was asking for renewed support and activity throughout women's branches (37). In the same issue, an article, "Birth Control: A Plea for Careful Consideration", dealt with some of the Party's major reservations. Dora Russell pointed out (38) that the LP had always relied a good deal on the Catholic vote and a young party building up its support could not afford to alienate a large section of the electorate. 'The Labour Woman' explained that:

"The LP is a political body, and includes among its members women of all religions and women who have varying points of view on other than political questions... There are many thousands of women to whom moral considerations dictate a certain view against even the discussion of the subject." (39)

There was also considerable resistance within the Party to the idea that birth control was a solution for working-class poverty. It ran counter to their plan to improve working-class prosperity by reorganizing society on socialist lines, and endorsing this supposed economic link was a betrayal of their

policies:

"The limitation of families is fast becoming an economic doctrine of Liberalism, because the Liberals do not want to make any drastic changes in the distribution of wealth." (40)

Three years later, when birth control had been accepted by the Party, a Miss Quinn of the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union at the 1927 Labour Women's Conference:

"protested against Birth Control as the most reactionary measure on the Agenda. She declared that it was a complete capitulation to capitalism, a philosophy of cowardice and a policy of despair." (41)

The 1923 Report of the SJCIWO detailed how a birth control resolution had been deferred and that the SJCIWO had formed a committee to investigate the issue. Its members were Mrs Harrison Bell, Dr Ethel Bentham, Mrs Hood, Mrs Rackham and Mrs Lowe (42). But it was in 1924 that the issue really began to gain favour; perhaps because it was the year of the Labour Government and women both inside and outside the Party had great expectations for the implementation of women's reforms. At that year's Labour Women's Conference, there were 8 resolutions on the necessity for birth control information (43).

At this 1924 Conference, the Chelsea Women's Section's resolution moved by Dora Russeel was carried and the WBCG was launched with Dorothy Jewson, the Labour MP and WFL member, as its

President. And in 1925, the SJCIWO put forward a strong recommendation to the LP Executive that doctors and poor law services should be allowed by the Government to supply information to those people who requested it. The SJC had abandoned their initial cautious approach because:

"The question has now been before three Women's Conferences and while there might have been reason to fear that any hasty adoption of this proposal would have caused a division amongst our members, now that the matter has been discussed during the last two years there seems no doubt at all that the great mass of the women are strongly in favour of the view taken by the Conference." (44)

Labour Party women might have reconsidered their position, but LP men were not yet ready to risk adopting such a controversial issue. However, with the massive weight of support from the Women's Sections, there was some pressure on LP men to reach a compromise, and it resolved the following format at the 1925 Party Conference:

"That the subject of Birth Control is in its nature not one which should be made a political Party issue, but should remain a matter upon which members of the party should be free to hold and promote their individual convictions." (45)

The Executive resolution might have been construed as a skilful evasion of a Party commitment to the needs of working women, or it might have been said to imply that birth control was an all-party

issue, which was the line which Ellen Wilkinson chose to support (46).

The Challenge of the "Single" Woman.

Having considered the New Feminists' response to birth control, at this point it is appropriate to review the position of those women who chose an alternative course to that of marriage.

Sheila Jeffreys has claimed that after the First World War the Women's Movement seemed to have abandoned its challenge to male sexual behaviour (47). In her article, "Free From All Uninvited Touch of Man", Jeffreys describes the pre-war position of the:

"increasingly militant stance taken by some pre-war feminists who refused to relate sexually to men, in the context of the developing feminist analysis of sexuality." (48) This position had evolved out of the social purity movement at the end of the nineteenth century which concerned the sexual double standard, and what the Women's Movement subsequently analysed as being "the foundation of women's oppression, the sex slavery of women" (49). Christabel Pankhurst:

"stated categorically that spinsterhood was a political decision, a deliberate choice made in response to the conditions of sex slavery." (50)

After the war the welfare feminists, although challenging the Government on the issue of reproductive planning, were

nevertheless more concerned to improve women's position within the traditional bounds of the heterosexual norm. As has been shown in Chapter 4, the issue of the sexual double standard and related concerns were still being tackled by the AMSH and other groups. However, the insistence on a withdrawal from sexual compliance did not appear to feature as prominently in feminist politics as it had previously done.

But inside and outside the Movement there were still large numbers of women who were single and stigmatised as "surplus women". This term indicated how widely they were regarded as being a problem for a society where women's primary function was as housewife and mother. There had been an "imbalance" in the numbers of women in relation to men since the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain, as revealed in the 1851 Census. After the war, when the need to regenerate a lost generation and put men back to work to stimulate the economy were considered of primary importance to the survival of Britain and its Empire, the "problem" of too many women became more acute and visible.

A solution to the problem of unmarried, militant women had been put forward before the War by Sir Almoth Wright in 1913, when he suggested shipping them off to the colonies to find husbands (51). This same idea was revived in 1920 when the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women was founded, which provided a service for settling women abroad in such places as South Africa and Australia (52)

Single women fell into three broad categories: those women who might have wanted to marry, but whom the War had deprived of the opportunity of finding a suitable husband; those women who in the face of the marriage bar in most professions chose their career, in preference to marriage; and those women whose relationships were with other women, or who had decided to be celibate. Increasingly, single women became a target for hostility, scorn and derision. Magazines and newspapers were full of articles which alternately ridiculed or patronised them:

"Yes, there are a number of middle-aged women who show a pride that they are not married. They do not belong to the type of unmarried woman who talks as though man was her enemy, man who has schemed through the ages to keep women in subjection.....All women are not spinsters from choice. To put it bluntly many of them "never had the chance". There are tens of thousands of such women.... Sometimes it strikes me there has grown into the countenances of these spinsters a look of resentmentbecause they have never known the warm love of a man." (53)

During the course of interviewing women for this research other relevant factors emerged which governed women's relationships. Many of the middle class women interviewed said that, in most cases, being among the first female generation of their family to have a career, they had married later and with certain reservations:

"I think a whole lot of us had in mind careers, but not ruling out marriage and I'll tell you one thing that I remember talking over with a friend, was we felt what an excellent thing it was to have a career you liked because you wouldn't then tear into marriage with someone just because you wanted to be married. The career was a competitor. The question was, do I like this person well enough to give up work, or to do it less, or whatever..." (54)

It also became apparent that women could subvert the system to a certain extent by claiming to be single. Molly Musson (LPW/WCG) managed to remain at her job for two years after her marriage simply by keeping it a secret and not telling her boss. She claimed that among the working class women she knew this was common practice:

"Oh, yes, a lot of us did it. If you wanted to keep your job, you kept your big mouth shut, there was nothing else to do..." (55)

Stealth and secrecy also played a part for those women who wanted to sustain their careers but saw no reason why they should forfeit long-standing relationships with men. The "open secret" of a Miss Bryant, the Headteacher of the Dyffryn Cellwyn school in South Wales whose "gentleman friend" visited her every evening at her large house and did not go home, must have had its counterpart in many places (56). Social policy and legislation do not tell the whole truth.

But perhaps the largest number of women forced to adopt subterfuge and secrecy were those who endured the greatest calumny, women who loved other women. What Vera Brittain (SPG) called "the repressive spirit of this era, arising from the moral exhaustion produced by the War" (57), directed its worst hostility towards "the invert". The necessity for secrecy then, makes it doubly difficult now, so many years later, to detect the extent of lesbianism amongst the female population in general and among the Women's Movement in particular. Alison Oram suggests why the hostility which lesbians faced also encompassed all single women:

"If heterosexuality is one of the ways in which men's power over women is maintained, then lesbianism is or can be a threat to that power. This aspect of resistance involves all women outside heterosexuality, including celibate or unmarried women. Like lesbians, they are all women who are not subject to men's social and sexual power through a personal relationship. Thus although attacks were made on unmarried women teachers primarily as spinsters, rather than as lesbians, it is probable that they were maligned for being outside heterosexuality." (58)

This provides further justification for Jeffrey's criticism of the Women's Movement, which analysed attacks on single women solely on economic grounds and not in terms of issues relating to sexuality.

It was in the period directly following the War that the issue of lesbianism emerged into the public arena to some extent, through a series of scandals and novels (59). In "Coming

Out", Jeffrey Weeks details these scandals, which began in 1918 when Maud Allan, variously described as an exotic or classical dancer, sued an MP for criminal libel. Pemberton Billing, MP claimed to have discovered a German Secret Service book listing 47,000 Englishmen and women who were "sexual perverts"; Maud Allen was said to be among them. She lost her case; but two years later Radclyffe Hall was more successful when she sued Sir George Fox-Pitt for libel. He had accused Hall of immorality and of being responsible for the break-up of Admiral, Sir Ernest Troubridge's marriage to Lady Una Troubridge who now lived with Hall in a lesbian relationship. At first the court found in Hall's favour, although later deciding on a retrial (60).

Feminists had always been popularly characterised as man-haters. In the distressed post-war world which sought to re-establish the order and security associated with the family, women who consorted together were bound to be viewed as a threat to the re-establishment of such moral order. It is interesting to speculate how far those libel cases, with women challenging male opinion by taking them to court, influenced Parliament's attempt in 1921 to criminalise lesbianism as a sexual practice.

The new Criminal Law Amendment Act was at the report stage, when a Conservative MP introduced a new clause concerning 'Acts of Gross Indecency by Females'. This would have meant that sexual acts between women would be classed as "misdemeanours" and would be punishable by two years hard labour. Macquisten supported

his motion with reference to the recent decline in female morality. Weeks suggests that other relevant factors were the post-war backlash against feminism, which was thought to be 'masculinising' women and threatening the natural function of childbirth (61). This played on Establishment insecurity about a consequent decline in the nation and the Empire if women refused to have children (62); and Ellis' concept of the 'invert', the masculine woman, also tied in here. Beliefs that lesbianism promoted debauchery and was both a result of and contributed to insanity among women, ensured that the motion was passed by the Commons (63).

However, the House of Lords felt that such a measure would only publicise a practice that most decent women were ignorant of. Falling back on the conviction that women were weak and morally dubious creatures, introducing them to "this noxious and horrible suspicion" would be a "very great mischief" (64); the motion fell and was not pursued by the Commons. The notion expressed in the Lords of keeping 'dangerous' ideas from women, gives added credence to Rosemary Auchmuty's theory that:

"...women without men are invisible, or must be made invisible. There is always the fear that other women might be tempted to follow their example - an intolerable threat to male supremacy." (65)

But it was not only men who were vocal in their condemnation about lesbianism. Marie Stopes, whose work was heralded and promoted by many feminists and their organisations,

denounced lesbian practices in her published work and in correspondence with clients and colleagues (66). In "Enduring Passion", the sequel to "Married Love", she upheld patriarchal ideals:

"I am convinced that the more happy, child-bearing and enduringly passionate marriages there are in a State, the more firmly established is that State." (67)

In the same book, she attempted to justify her condemnation on pseudo-scientific grounds:

"...a woman's need and hunger for nourishment in sex union is a true physiological hunger to be satisfied only by the supplying of the actual molecular substances lacked by her system. Lesbian love, as the alternative, is NOT a real equivalent..." (68)

Echoing the argument of moral degeneration, she pronounced that:

"most of those now indulging in this vice drifted into it lazily or out of curiosity and allowed themselves to be corrupted. This corruption spreads as an underground fire spreads in the peaty soil of a dry moorland." (69)

As to the visibility of lesbians in the Women's Movement during this period, despite the virulence of public condemnation there were women in the Movement and sympathisers of the women's rights campaign who did not disguise their sexual preference. Albeit the few women discussed here were all safeguarded by the privileged circumstances of their social position. Not only middle

or upper class, with private incomes, they were also all in a position to earn their own living in the more tolerant, Bohemian world of the Arts.

Edith (Edy) Craig, member of the WFL and AFL, lived in a *menage-à-trois* with Christopher St. John (Christabel Marshall) and Tony (Clare) Atwood (70). St. John who prior to the war had collaborated on plays with Cicely Hamilton (author of "Marriage as a Trade", who was on the AFL Committee with Edy, and a founder of the WWSL) for the AFL (71), wrote for "Time & Tide" and "The Women's Leader" during the 1920s. Ethel Smyth, the composer and suffragette, who as a WSPU member had been imprisoned with and was a close friend of Mrs Pankhurst, was also a great friend of Edy and St. John, the latter writing a biography of Smyth. Smyth was a Committee member, in the 1920s of the SPG, which was closely connected with the paper "Time & Tide".

Ethel Smyth introduced Radclyffe Hall and her previous lover, Mabel Batten, to a small degree of participation and support for the women's cause before the war (72). Smyth's "terrific romantic passions" (73) with other women were legion, and she was not known for her discretion. Dr Edith Somerville (IWSF) recalled of her relationship with Ethel that:

"we both gave ourselves away in our letters to a rather deplorable extent." (74)

Virginia Woolf (LPW and WCG) who recorded in her diary in 1919 that "friendships with women interest me", also wrote of Smyth's infatuation for Woolf and commented that:

"I daresay the old fires of Sapphism are blazing for the last time." (75)

Woolf had several well-known lesbian relationships, and also knew Edy Craig and Christopher St. John (76).

But it was the work of one of the most flamboyant lesbians of this period which heightened public awareness of lesbianism in the 1920s. Questioned for this research as to whether, in her experience, lesbianism was a general topic of discussion in the 1920s, Naomi Mitchison said not until Radclyffe Hall's book, "The Well of Loneliness" was published in 1928 and was charged with obscenity, and then:

"We felt very strongly that although it wasn't a good book, we must show that people could write about lesbianism." (77)

Taking up the sexologist, Havelock Ellis's theory that lesbianism was a congenital condition, Hall sought to reveal the truth of the desperate unhappiness which society forced on the "invert" and hoped that her book had:

"smashed the conspiracy of silence." (78)

The initial calm which greeted the book's publication in July 1928 was soon disrupted in August as "The Sunday Express" led the attack

along familiar lines, with the now famous remark that:

"I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul." (79)

In November, the Court found the book to be obscene, and liable to corrupt those who read it; all copies were to be destroyed.

In the six months following the book's publication, Radcliffe Hall received over 5,000 letters, only five of which were abusive. For many months after the trial she continued to receive many letters from lesbians thanking her for the book and the comfort which it had provided (80). Some support had been forthcoming from literary feminists; Vera Brittain had given the book a positive review in 'Time & Tide', Virginia Woolf and Dr Stella Churchill (WSIHVA) had both stood surety for the appeal, as well as being defence witnesses, as were the writers Storm Jameson, Rose Macaulay, Naomi Royde-Smith and Sheila Kaye-Smith (81). But solidarity from her own friends was patchy. There were:

"lesbians, who had displayed a conspicuous lack of support during the case or who favoured a traditional reticence in matters of homosexuality..." (82)

Apart from the self-declared lesbians within and on the periphery of the Movement during this period, the nature of the numerous women-only households and deep friendships which were still common within the Movement after the war also deserve further research. So many of the most prominent feminists working within

the suffrage and labour organisations were single, and living with other women (83).

There were also women such as Ray Strachey (LSWS), who though married, spent much of her time with other women; as her daughter Barbara Strachey said:

"She liked men, but she liked women better. All her friends were women. With very rare exceptions, she got on easier and better with women." (84)

This included her working partnership with her sister-in-law, Pippa Strachey of whom she was "devotedly fond" (85). Perhaps this was Ray's inheritance from the family's powerful and intelligent matriarchy, with a grandmother who:

"thought women were infinitely more important than men. ...thought men were absolutely useless, except as fathers. Biological, that's all. And she thought they were weak, they were unreliable and really, they were not much good." (86)

The differentiation between the sexual practice of lesbianism and the passionate friendships engendered through political sisterhood, and fostered in working relationships, has been discussed in the Lesbian History Group's collection, "Not a Passing Phase" (87). There is insufficient space here to consider fully the importance and extent of such relationships in the post-war Movement. However, it can be recognised that at a time of increased pressure on women to conform to the heterosexual model,

even one which had been repackaged by the sex reform movement, choosing to remain single was a defiant act.

Identifying single women is acknowledging the existence and practice of an alternative interpretation of sexuality and its contribution to the feminist theory and practice of the post-war Women's Movement. For as the Lesbian History Group contends:

"We don't believe that all women can be placed on a lesbian continuum; however, we do believe that a lesbian perspective can illuminate the history of women and of male power." (88)

Restrictive/Protective Legislation

Once again the NUSEC's working relationship with the LP and Rathbone's adoption of welfare concerns, saw Labour women and a section of the women's societies eventually drawn up on the same side on the issue of birth control. But, the third issue which comprised the debate between welfare and equalitarian feminists, was one in which Labour women had been involved for many years, and one which was largely the provenance of industrial, rather than suffrage women. However, the issue of restrictive or protective legislation, was to cause considerable factional conflict involving organized women in a confusion of allegiances.

Non-party women saw the implementation of restrictive legislation, as they termed it, which governed the working

conditions of women in industry, as being used by Trade Unions and employers to limit women's employment opportunities, a method of retaining the well-paid work for men, whilst hiving women off to the unskilled, low-paid sector of industry. The main platform of the feminists' resistance claimed that legislation governing health and safety conditions, should be determined on the basis of the work involved, not on the sex of the worker (89).

Industrial women insisted that such protective legislation was an additional weapon in their arsenal to guard women employees from industrial exploitation. They argued that only by instituting such protection initially for women workers, would protection, in time, be applied to men also. But non-party women regarded such male 'protection' as a cynical manipulation of sentiment engendered by strictly economic motives. They contested that if such legislation was necessary, then it was necessary for all workers, both male and female (90).

The advent of proposed additions to the Factories Acts in 1924 revived what had been an issue since the 1842 Coal Mines Act. Before the non-party organizations could mount any opposition, the General Election campaign intervened. However, publications such as 'The Vote' and 'The Woman's Leader' seized the opportunity to air their case against such restrictions, and 'The Labour Woman' put the alternative view. Barbara Drake did not spare her sisters' feelings when she wrote that:

"Industrial women are as sound as middle-class feminists

on the question of "equal laws", but, unlike these arm-chair philosophers, they are far more concerned for the practical results of legislation than for its mere conformity with the abstract principle of sex equality." (91)

Drake had perhaps put her finger on the exact reason why, as the SJCIWO had resolved, it was only possible for suffrage women and industrial women to work together on isolated campaigns of joint interest, but impossible to be a unified force.

The opposition of Labour women MPs in Parliament served to emphasise the divide, as when the NUSEC organized a deputation to the Labour MP, Susan Lawrence in April 1926, which:

"urged her to support in Parliament...the demand that all regulations and restrictions should be based upon the nature of the work and not upon the sex of the worker." (92)

There were speakers representing a variety of women's organizations, such as Dr Winifred Cullis of the NWLF, the SPG and the WEC; Miss Barry of the SJSPA, Chrystal Macmillan from the NUSEC, Phillipa Strachey of the LSWS, Anna Munro of the WFL and Mrs Archdale, editor of 'Time & Tide'. However, although Miss Lawrence was now a member of the WFL and supported equality between men and women:

"she felt unable to give practical support to the immediate demand." (93)

Diametric opposition between Labour women and non-party women was supplemented by internal divisions in the women's

societies which reflected the welfare and equalitarian debate. The most significant interpretive difference arose at the NUSEC's Annual Council Meeting on March 5th 1927. The Union had been engaged in three years of active campaigning against restrictive legislation issues and a resolution on the topic was tabled. It reflected a development from the Union's original theory to a consideration of the most effective ways in which to implement such theory. The initial resolution read:

"That this Council reaffirms its conviction that legislation for the protection of the workers should be based, not upon sex, but on the nature of the occupation, and directs the Executive Committee when any protective or restrictive regulation affects or is proposed to affect, one sex only, to consider and decide according to the merits of each case whether to work for the extension of the regulation to both sexes or to oppose it for both sexes." (94)

However, this was not enough for Eleanor Rathbone, who proposed an amendment which distinctly embodied a flavour of the New Feminism. Speaking to this amendment she told the membership that:

"If you get yourselves to work for pure equality between the sexes and nothing else, you are following an arid, barren, and obsessing idea which will lead you nowhere but the desert." (95)

She then introduced her amendment which proposed that:

"In considering the merits of each case the Executive

Committee shall take the following factors into account:

- a) Whether the proposed regulation will promote the well-being of the community and of the workers affected.
- b) Whether the workers affected desire the regulation, and are promoting it through their organizations.
- c) Whether the policy of securing equality through extension or through opposition is more likely to meet with a rapid and permanent success." (96)

These three clauses changed the NUSEC's position from a purist to an interpretive stance, which introduced considerations likely to compromise their doctrine of equality. The amendment was carried by one vote. Chrystal Macmillan then moved that the Resolution should stand as far as the word "occupation" in line three; this fell by four votes and the original Resolution with its amendment was then carried. The opposition put their case and stated their objection to the three clauses of the amendment:

"Since equality is our object, the merits on which the Union is bound to consider any proposal are whether or not that proposal does or does not promote this object." (97)

The majority of those present felt that there were additional factors other than that of equality which needed to be addressed. There was a second Resolution which was complementary to the spirit of the first and in a summary it was stated that:

"while emphasising that the primary function of the Union concerns equality, it refused to declare that those

reforms on the immediate programme which concern Family Allowances, Information on Methods of Birth Control...are an inferior brand of equality." (98)

The New Feminism was thus enshrined in the Union's programme.

But this was not to be without considerable cost to the Union as eleven long-serving members of the Executive expressed their opposition to the abandonment of the equalitarian purism of the primacy of Equality. Consequently, they resigned as a body on completion of the voting and left the platform. A Resolution was immediately moved asking them to reconsider, but they remained adamant:

"We cannot remain members of an Executive whose duty it is to carry out the new policy, which we consider to be inconsistent with the Object of the Union." (99)

The eleven women (100) did, however, remain as ordinary members of the NUSEC, so that they might work within it to return it to its original policy.

The press succeeded in conveying a totally erroneous version of these events, so that the group of eleven issued a press statement on March 6th with the correct details. This was followed on March 12th by their analysis of the NUSEC's new policy in the form of an open letter to the Union's Executive. The press statement, which corrected the idea that the rift had been caused by disagreements over the equal franchise campaign, ended with a

statement demonstrating the conviction of this equalitarian group of members that:

"To acquiesce in this change of fundamental principles would have been a betrayal of the women's movement for which we have been working, some of us for more than thirty years." (101)

The open letter made it clear that this was no petty divergence of opinion and method, but a fundamental philosophical divide by which the NUSEC had radically altered its priorities. The eleven asserted that:

"We find it almost incredible that the Council should not have taken for granted that the primary equality reforms should come first. Equal political rights, equal pay and opportunity, equal moral standard, and the removal of the disabilities of married women should be the first considerations of a really feminist organization." (102)

Just as the SPG had done years before, they asked if the Union's object was equal citizenship or social reform; and they reminded the Executive that it was largely the pursuit of this principle of equality which:

"has for so long united those whose opinions on other matters social and political are utterly diverse." (103)

This group of women now became involved with a recently formed organization which had its first Annual Meeting at the beginning of April 1927. The Open Door Council (ODC) very largely

concerned itself with the position of industrial women; and adopting the equalitarian feminists' stance of the SPG, it concentrated on removing legislative restrictions from industrial women's work. Regarded as progressive by the militant equalitarians, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was also an Executive Committee member. As part of their educative campaign, the ODC undertook a mass distribution of their literature amongst LP Women's Sections and trade unions:

"...since April the ODC has sent speakers to 66 meetings; 95 Trade Unions have been visited, and three deputations received by Trade Unions. They find the working women by no means unanimous for "protective" legislation." (104)

But despite this optimistic note, the ODC was to be in conflict for several years to come with industrial women's views as represented by the SJCIWO.

In 1927 the SJCIWO published a pamphlet on 'Protective Legislation and Women Workers' in its capacity as spokesman for over one million working women, as although:

"These views are not new; they have been the views of the Labour Movement and the women within it ever since there has been organisation to express their opinions, but it has become necessary to restate the position because of the attempts of certain groups of feminist organizations to oppose Protective Legislation for women on the ground that it is restrictive and injurious." (105)

One of the signatories to the pamphlet was Susan Lawrence, the MP to whom the NUSEC had taken the unsuccessful deputation in 1926. The "groups of feminists" were the equalitarians, chief amongst them being the ODC. They now countered the SJCIWO's arguments in February 1928 in 'Restrictive Legislation and the Industrial Woman Worker: A Reply'. In this pamphlet, the ODC put forward one of its main claims that restrictive legislation denied women adult status (106).

The reality, as the SJCIWO and many women workers perceived it, was that these middle-class feminists were assisting the employers in their exploitation of the working woman. As the SJCIWO asked:

"Would they prefer that the employer maintain his right to sweat his workers in the name of equality?" (107)

But all was not discord and it was the subject of maternity that brought the SJC and Eleanor Rathbone together in agreement on protective legislation. International Women's Labour Conference resolutions on maternity leave had been adopted by the Labour Women's Conference of 1920 (108). But it was not until the mid-1920s that Rathbone ridiculed the "Me Too" feminists who:

"because no men have babies in the sense that women have them, (they) would reject every provision which applies exclusively to the pre and post-confinement period." (109)

This was exactly where Rathbone's perception of 'special needs' was strongest and the necessity for such measures as family allowances could be seen to be of greatest value. It was also the point at which the welfare feminists' ideas and the SJC's concern for the welfare of their membership coincided.

It was not surprising that such polarization of concern should exacerbate the divide along class and gender lines which indicated a blindness, or a lack of awareness, on the part of some middle-class feminists who were too caught up with ideological purity. They failed to appreciate the grim reality of many working women's lives, and the absolute necessity for immediate relief from industrial oppression. Vera Brittain made an accurate analysis of the two positions:

"one is concerned with the immediate practical advantages of a class, and the other with the completed future triumph of a sex." (110)

The failure of the equalitarians was in making the incorrect assumption that all women were starting from the same point, that they were in a way equal in their oppression, which they were not. It was an example of the problem which emanates from applying one analysis to all women; in using the term 'women' without the necessary qualifications which differentiate their varying class positions. And at this point in the 1920s, those class divisions were extremely wide (111).

The equalitarians' need for the single interpretation and the final solution which refused to entertain any deviation or adjustment to its theory, led inevitably to this three-way split, which might have been avoided. The SJC did attempt to demonstrate that although there was a marked difference in the position of industrial and professional workers, and that the SJC had to work for the best interests of their members, this did not disqualify them from a commitment to the same ideals as other women's organizations. Indeed it was because of their commitment to those same ideals that they were engaged in this struggle on behalf of the working woman:

"It is because we believe in the emancipation of women, economic, social, and political, that we stand for the protection of industrial women workers against the ruthless exploitation which has marred their history in industry." (112)

It is not necessary to interpret the development of these factions as marking the deterioration of the Women's Movement; rather, it indicated a Movement marked by a spirit of growth and development. Whether the direction of that growth ought to be regarded as having been self-defeating by virtue of its expending time, energy and resources on internal conflict, rather than on the campaigns in hand, is a different question. This wrestling with theoretical and ideological considerations demonstrated that there was nothing moribund about the Movement, although there was frustration felt in some quarters at these developments was evident:

"The crying need of the moment is co-operation: the League of Nations has shown us an example of how co-operation instead of competition may be the keynote of a better and happier world.....some of us believe there are too many, (organizations) and pine for a superorganization which shall decree the felo de se of the superfluous ones." (113)

However, there were mitigating factors for the advent of this rivalry, as well as a sense of inevitability at its occurrence. Women in the Movement were fighting on all fronts - social, economic and political, and that there should be disagreements as to tactical and campaign priorities does not seem unusual in the face of the sustained opposition with which they had to contend. The commitment of women, whether in party or non-party groups, who had given their lives to the Cause was bound to induce a certain volatility. The heart-felt statement of the resigning NUSEC members who refused to betray beliefs sustained over 30 years, could be echoed by thousands in the Movement (see page 27). The long and tenacious struggle waged by all these women meant that they had a lot to lose.

Whilst there had been alliances and affiliations, the widening of objectives and the steady development of new issues, such as birth control, brought with them a need to re-examine and refurbish philosophies to accommodate these new ideas; philosophies which had, for several years after the War, become engulfed by the weight of practical considerations of survival.

Such periods of readjustment can all too easily result in losing sight of clear objectives. Such considerations cannot excuse the many destructive exchanges engendered in this conflict (114), but they were considerations which assisted and extended understanding of the intricacies of the issues.

Finally, it is important to remember that the debate and campaigns surrounding New and Old Feminism only represented part of the Movement's activities. Simultaneously, the Women's Movement was engaged in unified action on the enduring campaign for the achievement of franchise equality, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. 'The Woman's Leader' January 2 1925, front page.
2. GATES, 1924, pp.38-39.
3. See FAWCETT, Millicent, October 1927, What The Vote Has Done, NUSEC, for a list of legislation from 1918.
4. STOCKS, 1949, p.77.
5. STOCKS, 1949, p.84.
6. FEC, 1918, p.10.
7. Ibid, p.12.
8. RATHBONE & STOCKS, n.d., approximately between 1918-24, p.1.
9. 'The Vote' June 12 1925, p.189.
10. 'The Woman's Leader' February 6 1925, p.12.
11. NUSEC Annual Report 1926, p.13.
12. 'The Woman's Leader' March 26th 1926, p.70.
13. 'The Woman's Leader' October 21 1927, p.296.
14. LP Women's Conference Report: Report on Work in Women's Interests at Home and Abroad, May 1925 to April 1927, p.42.
Report by the Chief Woman Officer, May 1927-May 1928, p.18 & 30.
15. STOCKS, 1949, p.77.
16. STOCKS, 1949, p.117.
17. Ibid, p.116.
18. 'The Woman's Leader' December 31 1926, front page.
19. Ibid, February 11 1927, p.3.
20. Ibid, p.4.
21. STOCKS, 1927, p.38.
22. STRACHEY, 1936, p.58.
23. 'The Woman's Leader' February 11 1927, p.4.

24. Ibid.
25. 'Time & Tide' November 5 1926, p.998.
26. BRITAIN & HOLBY, 1985, p.48.
27. Ibid, pp.98-99.
28. 'The Woman's Leader' October 2 1925, p.283.
29. RUSSELL, 1977, p.171.
30. 'The Woman's Leader' October 2 1925, p.283.
31. NUSEC Annual Report 1926, p.66, 'Select Resolutions Passed at the Annual Council Meetings 1920-27.
32. Nurse Daniels, a health visitor for Edmonton Urban Council was sacked in December 1922 for giving women the address of a Marie Stopes clinic. The decision was endorsed by the Minister of Health. See LIDDINGTON, 1984, p.324.
33. 'Time & Tide' March 12 1926, p.243.
34. 'The Woman's Leader' April 21 1926, front page.
35. The issue caused great controversy which was voiced, for example, in the correspondence columns of 'Time & Tide'. See November 26 1927, p.1083.
36. 'The Woman's Leader' April 30 1926, p.114-115.
37. 'The Labour Woman' March 1 1924, p.46.
38. RUSSELL, 1977, p.171.
39. 'The Labour Woman' March 1 1924, p.34.
40. Ibid.
41. LP Women's Conference Report 1927, p.40.
Miss Quinn had also caused a stir at the 1925 Labour Women's Conference with her accusation that birth control was "filth". See 'The Labour Woman' July 1 1925, p.123.

Miss Quinn had been a WSPU member, imprisoned five times, as well as working in the Labour movement for many years. She was, in addition, a Catholic.

42. SJCIWO Report January-October 1923, p.4.

Mrs F.N. Harrison Bell, LP; Dr Ethel Bentham, NUWSS, LP; Mrs Eleanor Hood, WCG; Mrs C.D. Rackham, NUWSS, LP; Mrs Lowe, NFWW.

43. 'The Vote' March 28 1924, p.101.

44. SJCIWO Report January-November 1925, p.4.

45. Ibid.

It is interesting to note that a similar pronouncement on "individual conscience" was made in 1990 by the LP in the Commons on recommended voting in an abortion debate.

46. Labour Party Women's Report May 1927-April 1928, p.27.

47. JEFFREYS 1985, p.147.

48. JEFFREYS, 1982, p.629.

49. Ibid. p.630.

50. Ibid. p.641.

51. HAMILTON, 1981, p.7.

52. Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women, Annual Reports 1921-1930.

53. FOSTER-FRASER, Sir John, June & July 1926, "The Spinster" in Woman Magazine, p.279 & p.316.

Sir John was a special Parliamentary Correspondent.

54. Interview with Janet Carlton, February 2 1989, London.

55. Interview with Molly Musson, February 23 1989, Didcot, Oxon.

56. Interview with Irene Law, July 6 1989, Wantage, Oxon.

Mrs Law recalled that in 1936 she had come home from night-school and relayed this piece of "gossip" concerning Miss Bryant to her mother. Her mother told Irene that she had known about Miss Bryant for some years, and that Irene was not to tell anyone else in case Miss Bryant got into trouble. Irene was surprised that her mother did not disapprove, to which her mother said what alternative was there for Miss Bryant? Why should she give up her career if she wanted to marry? She believed the situation to be quite unfair; after all, men did not have to give up their careers on marriage and neither should women.

57. BRITAIN, 1929, p.17.
58. ORAM, 1989, p.101.
59. D.H. LAWRENCE, The Rainbow, 1915.
 A.T. FITZROY, Despised and Rejected, 1918.
 CLEMENCE DANE, A Regiment of Women, 1919.
 ROSAMOND LEHMANN, Dusty Answer, early 1920s.
 COMPTON MACKENZIE, Extraordinary Women, 1928.
60. WEEKS, 1990, p.105.
61. Ibid. p.106.
62. WEEKS, 1981, p.107.
63. WEEKS, 1990, p.106.
64. Ibid. p.107.
65. AUCHMUTY, 1989, p.98.
66. HALL, 1977, p.187.
67. STOPES, 1945, p.xii-xiii.
68. Ibid. p.43 & n.
69. Ibid. p.41.

- 70. KAYE-SMITH, 1949, p.126.
- 71. HAMILTON, 1949, p.39.
- 72. BAKER, 1985, pp.48-49.
- 73. COLLIS, 1984. p.203.
- 74. ST. JOHN, 1959, p.197.
- 75. WOOLF, 1982, p.306.
- 76. WOOLF, 1981, p.127.
- BAKER, 1985, p.264.
- 77. Interview with Naomi Mitchison, January 27 1989, London.
- 78. BAKER, 1985, p.222.
- 79. Ibid. p.223.

Society's and the establishment's hypocrisy at the ban imposed on Hall's book was commented on by Vera Brittain in the year after the trial:

"a society which treated with genial complacency the seducers of girls and the corrupters of boys, and which included amongst its most respected citizens many men responsible for infecting both their wives and children with venereal disease, a terrific outburst of pious wrath resulted.....(the book) was savagely suppressed by the joint efforts of a child-like Home Secretary, an ingenious Sunday-paper editor anxious to increase his circulation in the silly season, and a now forgotten magistrate belonging to the Victorian school of obscurantist morality." BRITAIN, 1929, p.23.

- 80. Ibid. p.250.
- 81. Ibid. p.235.
- 82. Ibid. p.247.

83. See ALBERTI, 1989, pp.112-116 for some examples of prominent women's friendships in the 1920s period of the Movement.
84. Interview with Barbara Strachey, 12 June & 10 July 1989, Oxford.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid. See also STRACHEY, Barbara, 1980.
87. LESBIAN HISTORY GROUP, 1989.
88. Ibid. p.230.
89. NUSEC Annual Report Resolutions 21 & 22, p.00.
90. 'The Labour Woman' January 1 1925, p.2.
91. 'The Labour Woman' August 1 1924, p.124.
92. 'The Woman's Leader' April 30 1926, p.114.
93. Ibid.
94. NUSEC Annual Report 1927, p.4.
95. 'Time & Tide' March 11 1927, p.229.
96. NUSEC Annual Report 1927, p.4 & 5.
97. Ibid, p.5.
98. Ibid, p.7.
99. Ibid, p.7.
100. The eleven women were: Dorothy Balfour of Burleigh, Winifred Soddy, Elizabeth Abbott, Florence M. Beaumont, E. Bethune Baker, Helen Fraser, Chrystal Macmillan, F. de G. Merrifield, J.M.Phillips, J.Robie Uniacke, and Monica Whately.
101. "Statement to the Press by the Eleven Resigning Officers & Members of the NUSEC Executive Committee, March 6 1927." Lady Astor Collection.

102. "Letter From the Eleven Resigning Members of the NUSEC March 12 1927," p.3. Lady Astor Collection.
103. Ibid.
104. 'The Woman's Leader' December 16 1927, p.361.49.
105. SJCIWO, October 1927, 'Protective Legislation and Women Workers', p.3.
106. ODC 'Restrictive Legislation & the Industrial Woman Worker: A Reply', 1928, p.2.
107. SJCIWO 'Protective Legislation and Women Workers' October 1927, p.8.
108. Report of the National Conference of Labour Women, 1920, Resolution 1, p.1.
109. STRACHEY, 1936, p.60.
110. BRITAIN, 1985, p.110.
111. An illustration of the class divide of the times was that the feminist, Ray Strachey, used to tell her daughter that it was not a good idea to mix with the servants and become friendly with them. Interview with Barbara Strachey, b.1912, on 12 June & 10 July 1989 in Oxford.
112. SJCIWO, October 1927, 'Protective Legislation and Women Workers', p.8.
113. Ms of a talk for BBC Radio October 12 1926 by the Hon. Mrs Franklin, President of the NCW, p.1. BBC Written Sound Archives.
114. The correspondence columns of 'Time & Tide' during 1926 and 1927 contained letters which grew increasingly vituperative, as members of the NUSEC and the SPG defended their respective ideological positions.

Chapter 9

Victory! The End of the Equal Franchise Struggle

"It was said if the vote were given to young women they would invariably vote for the best looking candidate. "Looking around this House," said the Society's only woman MP, amid a burst of laughter, "I cannot see that there is any need for honourable members to be worried." (1)

The account of how women under thirty finally won the vote in July 1928 has often been presented as a legislative matter of course, with the ten year interim being regarded as an agreed sensible waiting period. Just as the perception of the 1918 franchise as a graciously allocated Governmental reward for war services was seen in an earlier chapter not to convey the whole truth, the above understanding again belies the enduring work of the Women's Movement in pursuit of their political rights.

This chapter will outline the continued opposition to the women's primary goal of obtaining the vote on the same terms as men. It also examines the nature of the Women's Movement in terms of its unified response, composition and methods during this struggle and gives an account of the main events of the campaign from 1923 to its success in July 1928.

The Representation of the People Act of February 1918 meant that 6 million women could now vote, and 5 million were added

to the local government electorate. The rough guide to qualification meant that:

"the Parliamentary franchise is given to women of 30 or more who themselves have, or whose husbands have, a local government qualification; while the local government franchise is given to women of 21 or more who themselves have such qualification, and to women of 30 or more whose husbands have such qualification, where both reside together in qualifying premises." (2)

Married or single women over 30 could both qualify in their own right by virtue of their occupation of qualifying premises. This franchise applied in any one of five ways: ownership, tenancy, lodger, service or University graduate. The emphasis, in some cases, of the supply or ownership of furniture for qualification, led to a popular taunt by the women in the Movement that as far as women were concerned the vote had been reduced to the price of a husband or a van load of furniture!

Such limitations, and many other restrictive technicalities, (see chapters 5 and 8) prevented over three million women over thirty from voting (3). Such limitations were a way of ensuring that the male electorate was not 'swamped' by women voters; the prevalent fear being that if all women over 21 had the vote, they would outnumber the men by over two million and institute some kind of female rule. Anti-suffrage terms such as 'Petticoat Government' and the even older 'Monstrous Regiment', were frequently employed.

The other justification for the limitation was that 'girls' of twenty-one were not responsible enough for the exacting task of citizenship. It was hoped, in some quarters, that by making marriage one of the methods of entitlement, control of the women's vote would be achieved via their more stable partners. In this way erratic female behaviour might be minimized at the ballot box. It was also possible that linking marriage and the vote was an inducement to women to return to their domestic role after the war.

As discussed in previous chapters, none of the continuing suffrage societies nor the women's political groups relinquished the prime target of the struggle for the vote after the partial victory of 1918. There were women who having achieved the vote in 1918, left the mainstream of the struggle, and there were some societies who wound up their operations in the years immediately after 1918; but a large corpus of the Movement remained to continue the fight using its new power.

It has been seen how demanding the four-year reconstruction period was for the Women's Movement in terms of coping with the problems caused by the War. The preceding chapters have also demonstrated the enormous scope of the Movement's concerns, as its presence began to permeate all sectors of public life. The resultant groupings and affiliations between interested organizations formed a multi-layered network which operated along parallel and inter-connecting lines. There were factional interests and ideological rifts, but however loose those links sometimes

became, or however contentious the differences, the major structure was underpinned by common concerns. The theoretical analysis, solutions and strategies might differ, but issues such as equal pay, the equal moral standard and the rights of married women, comprised a common agenda. Most dominant of all, however, was the campaign for franchise extension.

The solidarity engendered by so many years of collective action on this issue, was not to be lightly dismissed despite the developments and vicissitudes of the post-War world. Unity derived from their awareness that:

"The status of all women is lowered so long as the fact of being a woman entails the coming under different franchise laws to the fact of being a man...The fact that women are not fully enfranchised and that they are not considered fit to sit and legislate in one of our Houses of Parliament affects all women in all their comings and goings, affects the likelihood of their being elected to the House of Commons, affects the likelihood of their being elected to any seat on any local authority, affects their value in the labour market and in the home...." (4)

It was this recognition of the interdependent nature of women's struggle which activated all parts of the Movement to work together for women under thirty who did not have the vote, which largely meant working-class women. The WFL

acknowledged that:

"Women in the industrial world are more heavily handicapped than professional women by want of political power. The very great majority of women in industry are under 30 years of age and voteless." (5)

Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour MP, emphasised this point at a WFL meeting, when she said that it was a class under thirty who were powerless. But she also admitted that professional women over thirty also suffered, disenfranchised as they were through technicalities. Speaking of the lobbying which she planned to carry out in the Commons, she was aware that:

"Her demand, however, could only become effective if she knew that she had behind her the whole of the Woman's Movement." (6)

Throughout the years of the dispute on protective legislation (see previous chapter) between industrial and suffrage women, Ellen Wilkinson, Margaret Bondfield and other Labour women were still working with the suffrage societies and the co-ordinating body of the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee (EPRCC), on a vigorous franchise campaign. Running parallel with the protective legislation dispute, Labour women were to be found at meetings and demonstrations organized by the NUSEC, the WFL, the SJSIPA and the SPG. As Dr Ethel Bentham, LP member and Executive member of the SJCWIO said at an EPRCC meeting organized by the SPG in December 1926 and chaired by Lady Rhondda:

"This was a question above party politics." (7)

Margaret Bondfield, who upon becoming an MP, 'The Daily Herald' did not think could be called:

"a feminist of the deepest dye" (8)

while 'Time & Tide' lamented:

"If only Margaret Bondfield were a feminist how unreservedly one could rejoice over her return to Parliament. Perhaps she will learn wisdom." (9)

However, she joined the NUSEC's equal franchise demonstration in March 1923 and spoke in favour of the resolution demanding equal franchise. She also wrote to 'The Woman's Leader' at the end of the same year that:

"I would urge all suffrage women to rekindle their enthusiasm for the last effort to remove the present franchise anomalies and to win for women at 21 and over the full rights of citizenship on the residential qualification." (10)

The issue of all women having the right to determine who governed was still perceived as the key to their full emancipation, whether they be working or middle class.

Despite the partial success of February 1918, there was a recurrence of suffrage agitation in the run-up to the Election of Autumn 1918; and between 1918 and 1923 there was one major joint protest meeting, deputations to Ministers and MPs and a reaffirmation of suffrage policy at all annual conferences. Additionally, except for 1921, there was a Private Member's Bill in Parliament promoted or supported by the Women's Movement every year (11). However, after four years with no sign of success, and the

1922 General Election having underlined the inequality, with only two women returned to Parliament, 1923 brought the start of a vigorous campaign which was to gather momentum during the middle years of the decade.

The policy of procrastination as a strategy employed by politicians was of particular note during this period. The tactics of Lloyd George and the Coalition have been explored in chapter 7; but it seemed likely that the same pattern of the introduction of a Private Member's Franchise Bill, boosted by lobbying, attempted deputations and modest publicity, could have continued for many years, as it had since 1918 with no further success. As the NUSEC later noted in a 1927 pamphlet:

"The history of 1923 reads almost like a repetition of that of 1922. A Woman's Enfranchisement Bill, again drafted by the National Union, was again introduced successfully under the Ten Minute Rule - this time by a Liberal, Mr Isaac Foot." (12)

And again, no time was given to it to proceed.

Prior to the introduction of Foot's Bill at the end of April 1923, the programme of events had again repeated itself when the NUSEC and other organizations urged the Prime Minister, Bonar Law, to make a commitment to equal franchise. Yet again, the subject was not included in the King's Speech as proposed Government policy, which left the only recourse open that of Foot's Private Member's Bill. But the SPG made an astute analysis of the

utility of pursuing Private Members' Bills:

"When the demand for a reform has passed a certain stage there is a serious danger that Private Bills may actually retard rather than advance its chances of success, since unless their limitations are fully understood and borne in mind, Private Bills are apt to absorb the energies of ardent reformers, to keep them happy and quiet and to distract them from what should be the main business of their lives....making themselves apparent, and if need be so unpleasant, to the powers that be that they decide to give them what they ask." (13)

There was evidently an implied criticism here of the NUSEC's seemingly endless patient perseverance with regard to Parliament, compared to the SPG's more urgent style born out of its largely ex-WSPU membership. However, in the context of this campaign, the SPG had made a valid observation concerning the self-perpetuating nature of such Bills and the Government's planned procrastination. The SPG believed that the only path likely to ensure success was to force the introduction of a Government Bill. Traditionally, the strategy was to hope that publicity and pressure from within the House from supportive MPs, would persuade the Government to adopt a private Member's Bill. These Bills did, of course, have other functions, as shown in Chapter 7, not the least of which was their publicity value.

Despite the repetition of this well-known formula, 1923 seemed to mark a turning point, in that several factors combined to function as a preparation for the final assault. A demonstration, planned for the previous Autumn, but postponed because of the Election campaign, finally took place on March 7th at the Central Hall, Westminster. Organized by the NUSEC, it was attended by over 50 women's organizations, with the two women MPs, Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham as speakers, along with Eleanor Rathbone from the NUSEC, Margaret Bondfield representing Labour women, and Helen Fraser, the former WSPU Scottish organizer and PPC in 1922, who gave the international perspective (14).

Fraser revealed a piece of Governmental hypocrisy when she told the meeting that women in all the countries of the British Empire now had equal enfranchisement, whereas British women still did not. Margaret Bondfield emphasised the importance of not allowing Parliament to foster the delusion that everyone was reconciled to the notion of this inequality, and Rathbone significantly noted that:

"Every women's society was now concentrating on full enfranchisement for women, and all were thoroughly united on the point." (15)

Ten days later, at the NUSEC's Annual Council Meeting, another rally was attended by men's and women's organizations, at which:

"Not the least successful feature of this meeting was its national, as well as its representative character... it was good to see the familiar banners of pre-war days,

adapted to modern use, side by side with the banners of sister organizations of women." (16)

Another General Election in December 1923 served to emphasise the injustice of the women's franchise position. But the success of eight women candidates, together with the advent of the first Labour Government, gave the Women's Movement high hopes that 1924 would see the fruition of their franchise claims. The LP had, after all, promoted equal franchise for men and women as party policy for several past elections, and Florence Underwood, Secretary of the WFL expressed the anticipation of many when she ventured that:

"The chances of the women of this country to secure equal enfranchisement with men have never been greater than at the present time." (17)

Labour women were confident that their party would fulfil its past promise, as was the NUSEC, whose close working relationships with the LP since the pre-War days gave them confidence in such an outcome. It also seemed in line with Labour's policy of using the Women's Sections to capture women's allegiance to the Party; what could be more effective than being the Party to give them the vote?

Barely two weeks after Labour were asked to form a Government, in the early months of 1924, the WFL began to exert pressure in the first of three major rallies of the year. The first meeting on February 6th astutely doubled as a celebration of the Sixth Anniversary of the 1918 RP Act. Two Labour MPs, Susan

Lawrence and Dorothy Jewson, were billed as the major speakers. Lawrence had always been a staunch party woman, but she declared that the franchise extension:

"was a self-evident proposition. There was no real logic or argument against the present position." (18)

Dorothy Jewson, a WFL member, referred to her WSPU past and emphasised the plight of industrial women and the need for economic recognition. Women from the NWLF, the NUWT, the WES and the SAU spoke before the following resolution was passed:

"That this meeting of representative women calls upon the new Government to introduce, and pass through all its stages into law without delay, a Bill which will enfranchise women equally with men at the same age and on a short residential qualification." (19)

Although the principle of equal franchise had been on the Party agenda since the early days of the ILP, the Women's Movement still prepared to put into action their strategies of lobbying and writing to MPs and the press, and rousing their membership by holding meetings, demonstrations and rallies to keep the issue in the forefront of events. However, only nine days after their initial rally, the WFL was relaying its misgivings about the Labour Government's intentions, in its usual caustic style:

"We have no wish to appear as alarmists, but if there is any great enthusiasm in the present Government for the equal enfranchisement of women and men, the WFL has, so far, failed to discover it...." (20)

This revelation came as the result of correspondence between the WFL, the Prime Minister and several of his Ministers. A correspondence requesting information concerning the Government's intentions with regard to the franchise issue which yielded nothing but formal acknowledgements.

But events were moving rapidly; by February 29th the time-honoured Private Member's Bill, proposed by Labour MP, W.M. Adamson, and seconded by Dorothy Jewson, who was making her maiden speech, had passed its Second Reading. During her speech she had referred to the disappointment which the Prime Minister's recent comments had caused when he declared that the Government did not have time to consider franchise extension (21). This Second Reading dealt with several matters which complicated the proceedings. That was why the suffrage societies were aware of the necessity of keeping the proposed franchise Bills as simple as possible, confining them to the women's franchise only to limit any possible opposition to them.

However, it was the Duchess of Atholl, who had been a leading Anti-Suffragist, who pointed out the larger implications of Adamson's Bill which also dealt with parliamentary franchise for men (there were still approximately 313,000 men with no vote) and the Local Government franchise. She believed that this meant that:

"It is not, therefore, too much to say that this Bill proposes to deal, and deal drastically and radically, with the whole electoral basis upon which the Government

of this country rests, both national and local." (22)

Sir William Bull also maintained that there had been an undertaking by the leading women's societies in 1918 to accept the Speaker's Conference measure and to agree to no further agitation for a ten year period, and that the House, was, consequently, bound by this undertaking (23).

Most significantly, this was the first debate in which the age limit for women of 25 was put forward as being the most practical. The speech by Sir Martin Conway proposing this limit, is worth quoting at length, because it illustrated so well the Victorian legacy of paternalistic chivalry against which women were still fighting:

"A woman between 21 and 25 years of age arrives at her flowering time....I suggest that the young woman of that age ought to be paying attention to other matters than voting. She ought to have her eye upon...the prospects of family, of man's devotion....I must say that the older I get, the more wonderfully, the more beautiful, and the more admirable to me is that glorious flowering time of the young woman between the ages of 21 and 25." (24)

This suggestion of yet another age limit, other than that of 21, introduced a fresh complication for the women's societies to tackle.

The Duchess of Atholl roused the House and women's groups to indignation with her objection that under this Bill women

tinkers would be entitled to the vote (25)! And she proposed that another all-party conference should discuss all the Bill's complexities; while the Government's spokesman, Mr Rhys Davies, worried over domestic servants having the vote, also blamed the urgent demands on Parliamentary time which were likely to prevent the Government from keeping its promise on women's franchise. Lady Astor, unable to suffer fools of any Party, responded to the Bill's opponents by maintaining that they:

"represented nobody except people who were living
in the Middle Ages." (26)

and that women were not asking for a revolution but their rights. The Bill was passed by 288 to 72.

It had been standard Government practice, as far as franchise Bills were concerned, for them to be blocked after they had passed their Second Reading. When Adamson's Bill had gone to the Committee Stage, it was imperative that the Women's Movement kept up the pressure on the Government to demand that they gave the Bill sufficient time during the parliamentary session for it to pass through the requisite stages. Once again, the WFL organized a public meeting to insist that either the Government gave the Bill adequate time, or that they introduce their own Bill. Again a cross-section of women were represented by such organizations as the NUSEC, the Women's Section of the NUGW, the LCM, the FWCS, the WNLF and the SJSPA, while the Liberal MP, Lady Terrington, put the Parliamentary viewpoint (27).

It was at this meeting that powerful evidence was presented as to the extent of the restrictions affecting women over 30. It was estimated that nearly five million, in total, did not have the vote: three million ~~over~~ 30 and two million ~~under~~ that age. It was pointed out that the latter group were too often forgotten, and Marguerite Fedden of the SJSPPA detailed the nine technicalities which prevented this group from voting. Apart from those which have been dealt with in chapters 5 and 8, there were:

"the daughter or sister who lived in the mother's or brother's house; the British wife of an alien cannot vote, but the British husband of an alien woman can do so; a widow who gives up her home and lives with her son cannot vote; the newly made widow automatically came off the register." (28)

The women's organizations' fears about the Bill's additional proposals were found to be valid when it was reported that:

"A long string of amendments have been put down by members of the Conservative Party, some of whom are opposed to the whole Bill, and some of whom are opposed to the contentious clauses." (29)

However, singling out clauses for amendment was also a well-known delaying tactic in which Parliamentary time could be used to leave a Bill stranded. It also gave framers of such Bills, like the NUSEC, additional preoccupations for future attempts. Time, energy and resources could all be tied up by trying to resolve such problems. Meanwhile, as time passed, it meant that the opposition

succeeded in perpetrating a delay. The 1924 Report of the LP women's work presented at the Women's Conference noted that:

"...the obstructionist tactics pursued with regard to the former (the Franchise Bill) appear likely to last for an indefinite period." (30)

Adamson's Bill passed its final Committee Stage on June 19th 1924, before it ran out of time. The non-party societies harried the Government into making some kind of commitment to the Bill. By the end of July, in replying to Mrs Wintringham in the House, the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, stated that the Government would adopt the Bill and proceed with it later in that session (31). But the session came to an end, as did the Government, without the Bill making further progress.

It was a matter not only of considerable surprise, but of intense disappointment to the Women's Movement, that the Labour Government had failed them. The suddenness of the Government's fall left the WFL with a mass meeting due to take place the day after Parliament was dissolved. It took place on October 10th 1924 and was their largest meeting to date, with nearly 30 women's organizations in attendance, including old stalwarts such as the AFL, the FWG, the WAS, the LSWS and the IWSA. Mrs Mustard of the WFL condemned the Labour Government who had no excuse for not passing the Bill. Adamson's Bill had had a large degree of all-party support and the majority of the work had been accomplished.

It would have been a relatively simple matter in June to have adopted the Bill and put it through its remaining stages (32).

The advantage to Labour's reputation would have been great, as would the gains at the ballot box. As the women's societies were always pointing out, a very large proportion of the women employed in industry were under thirty. These were women who were already in unions or members of the Women's Sections of the LP, whose votes would have been assured. Whereas, as the WFL regularly warned in 1924, failure by Labour to grant equal franchise would result in a loss of support.

In consideration of these circumstances, it is difficult to understand why MacDonald failed the women. But it was not just the suffrage movement that Labour disappointed, their brief spell in office achieved little for anyone. As Mowat explained:

"Labour was unready. It was a minority government, in office, but not in power, shackled to the Liberals and pursuing a policy of moderation." (33)

Mowat also commented on the composition of the cabinet being of moderate men who were largely from upper and middle-class backgrounds. Traditional left-wingers and trade unionists were few in number; as Mannie Shinwell observed:

"MacDonald...had no intention of practising Socialism in a country where five out of every seven voters were anti-Socialist." (34)

They also had no experience of Government and the Conservatives were ready at every turn to ensure, as their pact with the Liberals intended, (see chapter 8) that their period in office failed. Even with regard to the franchise issue, the Conservatives played a subtle game:

"When in May it (the Bill) finally went upstairs progress was greatly retarded by obstruction on the part of some Conservative Members, who although not willing actually to oppose the principle of equality in citizenship directly, found plenty of opportunities for oblique attack." (35)

Just how clever the Conservatives had been with regard to this aspect of Parliamentary business was to become clear during the 1924 General Election campaign.

In customary fashion, non-party women were pressing the leaders of the political parties for statements as to their stand on the franchise issue. The Conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin, had the following 'pledge' published in the newspapers:

"The Unionist Party is in favour of equal political rights for men and women, and desire that the question of the extension of the franchise should, if possible, be settled by agreement. With this in view, they would, if returned to power, propose that the matter be referred to a Conference of all political Parties on the lines of the Ullswater Committee." (36)

Such a timely declaration might easily trade on the women's disillusion with the LP, and by holding out hope of a Conservative Government Franchise Bill, seek to increase the Tory vote from the existing women voters.

The Conservative Election landslide has been dealt with in chapter 8; but despite Baldwin's pledge, the King's Speech contained no mention of a franchise extension (37). Soon after, in February 1925, a Representation of the People Bill was introduced by Mr Whitely, a Labour MP and seconded by Ellen Wilkinson (38). At least a new tradition was evolving of women MPs seconding franchise Bills, which gave them publicity for their new role, as well as confirming the women's interest in the measure to the Government of the day whilst giving the Movement a morale boost.

Nevertheless, on February 20th, the Home Secretary, Mr Joynson-Hicks, not noted for his past support of women's rights, rejected the Bill on grounds once used by Lloyd George: namely, that the Government could not allow a new Franchise Bill to pass at this early stage in the parliamentary session, as it would necessitate an election which would interrupt important Government legislation already in hand. In mitigation, Joynson-Hicks referred the House to Baldwin's electoral pledge:

"I have the authority of my right hon. friend who is by my side, to say, as all the House knows would be the case, that he stands by that pledge...we do mean to carry out that pledge. We do mean to give equal political rights

to men and women." (39)

But the Conference promised by Baldwin in 1924 for 1925, was now delayed until 1926.

The NUSEC, cautious and optimistic though they were prone to be, were on this occasion less than convinced on several points:

"There was not even a definite pledge that the conference would be set up in 1926. Still less was there any indication that the proposals with regard to Equal Franchise put forward by the Government when the conference had materialized, would be such as could be agreed to by the other parties, and would not involve, for example, the contentious question of raising the minimum voting age for men." (40)

The issue of raising the age limit was coming to be regarded by the NUSEC and others as yet another delaying tactic. In its implication by some Unionists that the age limit should also be raised for men, as part of the package, it was a sure way of alarming Labour MPs who would not want to consider a franchise Bill for women, which threatened to disenfranchise men, and cut Party support.

The Conference idea was also being seen by the Movement as a method of procrastination which stalled the implementation of the franchise extension, but without the Conservatives actually having to deny their belief in it. This persuaded the WFL that:

"the suggested Conference is not only unnecessary but mischievous." (41)

The confidence of the Conservatives in the longevity of their Government, which ensured that the Conference would take place in the following year, was not shared by the women's groups. The experience of recent political events did not augur well for stability, and with a fall in the Government, would go the promised Conference.

In view of this protracted campaign of obstruction, it is important to establish the extent and type of opposition to women gaining the vote at 21 which still existed. The spirit of reaction which heralded a backlash against feminism and became apparent during the 1920s, made it difficult to dispel an atmosphere of prejudice which carried with it an acceptance of women's traditional inferiority. There were numerous articles about 'the modern woman' which exuded prejudice against young women who were categorized by the pejorative term, "flappers". This term was more generally used for all women under thirty; not just for the handful of rich, Eton-cropped women who later came, erroneously, to personify the popular image of the period.

Very often, these articles would be signed by "A Mere Male". "What Does the Girl of Today Want?", written by Gilbert Frankau in 1924, was far from being untypical in its derogatory and aggressive tone:

"Are her brains fitted for the vote, which is so soon to be conferred upon her?...She is an idiot, our girl of 1924...why not let her have her own way, as

you let kittens and puppies have their own way, until she, as they say, commits some domestic activity so ghastly that even the kindest-hearted house-owner must have recourse to the chain in the backyard and the stick behind the hat-stand.

....that chain and that stick are still the prerogatives of us mere males, whom your Modern Girl affects to treat so lightly. In ultimate issues, we - and not she - possess the greater physical strength and the greater mental capacity." (42)

Ellen Wilkinson kept an article in a similar style in her cuttings collection, whose headline proclaimed that, "Woman Has Failed! Why She is an Outsider in Public Life" by a Truthful Man. The Truthful Man's analysis concluded that by 1925 there were only a handful of women in public affairs, that women did not vote for women, that women did not possess the necessary skills and temperament for such success and that the only 'affairs' they were interested in were concerned with love. He concluded that:

"After ten years of enfranchisement, there are only four women in Parliament, not one of whom succeeds in raising herself above the dead level of mediocrity." (43)

The mediocre women to whom he referred were Lady Astor, Ellen Wilkinson, Mrs Hilton Phillipson and the Duchess of Atholl. The presence of women members in the Commons was far from being taken seriously by the press, and both Lady Astor and Ellen Wilkinson

complained about the constant trivialisation of their role, as the press persisted in endless reporting of their physical appearance.

With such pervasive attitudes on regular display outside the House, and opinions expressed within it by Unionist 'Die-Hards' like Lord Hugh Cecil that the House had lost much of its dignity since women had been allowed in (44); it was hardly surprising that the general feeling was that "flappers" were not responsible enough to have the vote. Two other reasons in wide circulation had been expressed by Lt-Col. Archer Shee during the 1923 debate in the Commons on Isaac Foot's Bill. Shee argued that to have more women voting than men was tantamount to handing over electoral power to women, which would "make an election a joke." (45) He also maintained that it was well-known that at least four and a half of the five million disenfranchised women had no interest in the vote and did not want the inconvenience of it. Additionally, there was the printing cost of the extra registers; despite all this, Shee proclaimed that he was far from being an anti-feminist! (46)

These were all regular arguments in the House up until 1928. The reality was, that while many politicians paid lip-service to the concept of women's equality, they had no intention of giving it practical expression, especially where the balance of power might be concerned.

The Final Phase.

Faced with what began to look like interminable delay, the NUSEC instructed its vast network of affiliated societies to mount an intensive campaign over the winter of 1925. Dame Millicent Fawcett, as she now was, having been so honoured in January 1925, had given £1,000 to the Union in 1924. They decided to use a large part of this gift to launch the campaign which was to culminate in a mass meeting at their Annual Council Meeting in Spring 1926. So the final concerted struggle for the franchise extension began, which was to dominate the next two and a half years.

The strength and unity of the women's struggle was fired by their abiding conviction in the rightness of their Cause and the sense of loyalty which had deepened over the years of struggle, a loyalty to the women pioneers of the nineteenth century, to their Movement and to each other. They were determined to add the ultimate prize of the equal franchise to the rest of the Movement's achievements:

"Now is an opportunity to make a final and determined effort to secure once and for all that fundamental equality between men and women for which women have laboured, suffered and even died." (47)

Girls could marry at twelve, start work at thirteen, and the age of consent was sixteen. Women paid the full rate of income tax, and were employed in large numbers as teachers and civil servants, and were represented to some extent in most of the other professions; as well as making a huge contribution to the wealth production of

the country in industry. They could become MPs at 21 and represent men and women in the community, they were JPs and councillors, and yet they were denied the right to vote at 21.

An interesting development in this final phase of the struggle, was the re-emergence of the concept of militancy, albeit in discussion only. It was revived as a potential threat, but never as an actual weapon. This was not really so surprising, as militancy was an inevitable component of the franchise struggle. Dorothy Jewson, the Labour MP and ex-suffragette, declared that:

"The militant spirit was still needed to solve the many problems that remained." (48)

And as was mentioned earlier, the SPG, whose membership was largely composed of ex-WSPU women, favoured direct action, and declared that suffrage societies needed to be unpleasant in order to pressurize the Government into introducing a Franchise Bill.

Perhaps it was this renewed energy and determination which put the idea of militancy into the minds of the press. For by February 1925, 'The Daily Sketch' was commenting that the amount of lobbying and activity for votes for women at twenty-one was reminiscent of the early suffrage days, although "without however, the old danger" (49). But by February 1926, when the WFL realized that equal franchise had once more been 'betrayed', as the Unionists had no mention of the issue in their policy statement and had even abandoned the promise of a Conference, the WFL seemed set

to present that challenge:

"We warn this Government that more than one political Party has been sent into the political wilderness because their leaders, through their actions in office, have proved hostile to the women's cause. The Women's Freedom League has never hesitated to fight any Party in power which refused to do justice to women." (50)

The NUSEC having set the tone for 1926 in the Autumn of 1925, when it promised a campaign to pressure all the political parties in the Government's expected Conference, to produce an acceptable and workable policy, declared in January 1926:

"It is still a world in which one would not choose (unless endowed with the fighting spirit of revolt) to be born a woman." (51)

With the absence of any intended Government activity on the franchise, 1926 was dominated by the Movement's work to put pressure on the politicians for the franchise extension.

The whole of the 1926 Spring and Summer offensive aimed at arranging the maximum number of meetings, demonstrations and deputations to MPs on a national and regional level, culminating in a mass procession and rally on July 3rd in London. The SPG originated the idea of the July event, and realising the scale of the enterprise, the Equal Political Rights Demonstration Committee (EPRDC) was set up to co-ordinate all the groups taking part, with Lady Rhondda as its Chairman. Ethel E. Froud, the General Secretary

of the NUWT was the Vice Chairman; she had also been a WSPU member and had been in the NUWT since its earliest days when it supported the suffragettes. The EPRDC's Honorary Secretary was Daisy D. Solomon, a WFL member, whose mother, Mrs Saul Solomon had been in the WSPU and now belonged to the WFL. Dr Elizabeth Knight, Treasurer of the WFL, was in charge of press and publicity and Miss Margaret Digby was the Committee's Organizing Secretary (52).

The NUSEC's demonstration on February 26th 1926 at the Central Hall, Westminster was timed to coincide with its Annual Council Meeting so that representatives from all its branches and affiliated societies could hear Millicent Fawcett, Eleanor Rathbone, Maude Royden and Ellen Wilkinson launch the campaign. The fact that there was no intended Government franchise measure and the Conference idea had been dropped, gave an added incentive to the meeting (53).

At the beginning of March, Wedgewood Benn's Private Bill, backed by Frederick Pethick-Lawrence and Ellen Wilkinson, failed to get past its first reading (54); and on March 4th, at a Women's Conservative & Unionist Association Conference, the Home Secretary, divulged that he did not know what the Government's plans were concerning the franchise extension (55). At the end of March, as a rider to this announcement, Baldwin, responding to a question in the House as to whether equal franchise was to be introduced in that session, said that he had no comment to make. However:

"The Home Secretary, less discreet than his Chief, has

of course, "let the cat out of the bag" and stated that the Conference will be set up next year." (56)

Meanwhile, the meetings went on apace, with an EPR meeting combined with a dinner to welcome the return of Mrs Pankhurst to London after an absence of seven years (57). The Mid-London Branch of the WFL were beginning regular Sunday morning meetings in Hyde Park from the end of March; and another major rally was planned by the SJSPA. This meeting, supported by thirty organizations, was addressed by Millicent Fawcett, Ellen Wilkinson, and a member of the special 'Under Thirty Section' of the Alliance, Monica O'Connor (58).

Having lost none of their flair for priming the press, a pre-July 3rd publicity meeting was held by Lady Rhondda on June 16th at her Chelsea home, to enable the press to meet representatives of the forty women's groups who were supporting the event. There were speeches from Mrs Pankhurst, Eleanor Rathbone and Winifred Cullis, with Rhondda giving details of the procession's route (59).

Two days later, the AFL held an 'At Home' at the popular suffrage venue of the Criterion Restaurant, where Ellen Wilkinson proposed the resolution that:

"this meeting of the AFL calls upon the Prime Minister to introduce without delay a measure giving votes to women at 21 on the same terms as men, and further demands for

Peeresses in their own right admission to the House of Lords." (60)

The latter section was preparatory to Lord Astor introducing his Parliament (Qualification of Peeresses) Bill on June 24th. It was heavily defeated, much to the delight of many peers, with Lord Newton and Lord Birkenhead (see Chapter 7 for his part in Lady Rhondda's previous defeat) making speeches which:

"savoured more of the pothouse than of Parliament." (61)

Newton had said that women were:

"much more unchristian-like in their characteristics than men," (62)

Also that women MPs had not improved the Commons in any way, were inferior to male MPs, and he could see no reason why they might be of use in the Lords. Their one possible use might be to act as an attraction for ensuring the attendance of younger peers; but Newton thought it would be better employ chorus girls, because they were more attractive (63)! Meanwhile, Birkenhead maintained that:

"There is no one of those ladies who would be nominated by any competent tribunal to sit in this or any other legislative assembly." (64)

He went on to say that the only proper function for a peeress was to be "fecund" and he did not know whether any of the peeresses in question qualified even on that qualification. Little wonder that the women's societies were furious, inured though they were to ridicule and abuse (65). The final galvanizing rebuff from Baldwin himself, was his refusal to receive a NUSEC deputation of

representatives from the women's societies concerning the proposed Government Conference (66).

Publicity for the crescendo to the year's activity which had been carried out for months, with poster parades and fleets of decorated cars advertising the July demonstration, was given a last rallying call:

"WHICH SIDE
ARE YOU ON?
DEPENDENCE OR INDEPENDENCE?

Independence is certainly the happiest side. Watch the women who are marching to-morrow to demand political independence. All have broken the chains of dependence in some measure, all have tasted in some measure the peace of independence." (67)

The NUWT uncertainly called it "The Last Procession?" (68) and voiced the desire of the whole Movement for this event to bring success and victory.

Three and a half thousand women from over forty societies (69) marched from the Embankment to Hyde Park. As 'The Woman Teacher' noted, an evening paper's headline read, "Suffragettes Out Again" (70), for the procession lacked none of the style and dramatic impact of former occasions. Mrs Elliot-Lyn, the pioneer aviator and WES member, flew over the marchers and the procession had been carefully orchestrated to produce the maximum effect. Cohorts of women were drawn up by occupation to emphasise the

enormous contribution which women were now making to society, and to stand as a reproof to a legislative assembly which refused to recognize all women's right to citizenship.

The Procession was headed by young women in their different 'Under Thirties' groups, followed by political and suffrage societies from Britain and America, which included British women MPs such as Ellen Wilkinson, who had travelled all night to attend. Parliamentary candidates came next behind a red and black banner of Big Ben; and this section was completed by mayors and women magistrates. Veteran suffragettes wearing their prison badges were part of the NUSEC's 'Old Gang' contingent, with Millicent Fawcett, Maude Royden and Margaret Ashton, among them. Mrs Pankhurst with her old colleague, General Drummond, Charlotte Despard and Dr Annie Besant also walked the entire route. Women had come from all over the country and abroad for this last procession (71).

Decorated motorcades, bands, banners and pennants made an impressive sight:

"One after another, each with its distinctive colours, the contingents swept across the park; green, white and gold; blue and silver; green and rose; blue, white and silver; red, white and green; purple, green and white; red; green and gold. In one section the members wore pink dresses with wreathes of green leaves, or green dresses trimmed with roses; in another section, a group of "Under-Thirties" very

appropriately wore bright green dresses, the colour symbolical of Spring and hope; and a further group wore academic robes, but there were no traces of the solemnity and gloom usually associated with this garb." (72)

It was a reminder of the underlying unity of the extraordinary network which the Women's Movement had created for itself in less than sixty years. The differences of party and non-party, industrial working-class and professional middle-class; welfare and equalitarian; militant and constitutionalist were reconciled, or at least laid to one side. It was an important way to demonstrate to Parliament and to themselves, that ideological difference did not destroy the bonds of co-operation.

The fifteen platforms in Hyde Park where the speeches were made, also demonstrated the catholic nature of the Movement and the mixed allegiances, as speakers from a cross-section of organizations spoke from 'rival' platforms. The speeches covered every aspect of the campaign and the struggle, culminating in the passing of the following resolutions:

"That this Mass Demonstration demands an immediate Government measure giving votes to women at 21 on the same terms as men; That this Mass demonstration demands for Peeresses in their own right a seat, a voice and a vote in the House of Lords." (73)

The event was a major publicity success and reasserted the Movement's strength of purpose; but there was a bitter side, as the

NUWT considered:

"And yet, upon reflection, was it good? Good, indeed, to know the old faith living and the old power there, but not good to be obliged to re-sharpen the old weapons. It was not good to think that eight long years had elapsed since the barrier had been pushed grudgingly a little aside and still the gateway to political and economic equality had not been pushed freely wide open in the name of justice." (74)

The SPG asserted that the proceedings could only be regarded as a success, if the Women's Movement concentrated all its efforts on an effective follow-up. But if it continued to "spread itself thin", then equality would remain a distant hope (75).

In the weeks which followed, two new organizations were established. The EPRDC decided at a meeting in mid-July that it would extend its life-span to co-ordinate a concentrated campaign for the franchise as the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee (EPRCC). Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence had said in her Demonstration speech that July 3rd marked a fresh stage in the campaigning to begin in the Autumn. The EPRCC confirmed that the necessary organizational framework would be in place by then (76). A completely new group which joined the struggle, was that of the Young Suffragists. Inspired to form a group for the under thirties at a WEC dinner in July, their President was Barbara Wootton, the economist and Principal of Morley College (77). Another development was the formation of junior sections of established organizations, which aimed to politicise the under thirties, fight for the

franchise and combat public criticism of 'flappers'. One such group was the Junior Council of the LNSWS, which was formed in September 1926 (78).

By the Autumn, the time limit whereby a woman's name could be entered onto the Electoral Registers in time for the next election had become a pressing factor for consideration. Frank Briant, MP told a WFL meeting at Caxton Hall on October 22nd, under the banner of the EPRCC, that there were only six to nine months left in which Parliamentary action could be taken in time. The EPRCC now initiated a series of local constituency meetings, hosted by different groups and attended by women from organizations which had branches in that constituency. They also aimed to interview local MPs and get as many prospective candidates as possible to attend these local meetings. At one such meeting on December 1st in Chelsea, hosted by the SPG, there were women members from all three political parties, and those from the non-party groups (79).

The Movement had certainly fulfilled its promise to make 1926 a year of ceaseless activity. The NUSEC's groups had held over 200 meetings all over the country. In Edinburgh there had been a mass meeting attended by eighteen different organizations where two MPs had spoken; Birkenhead had even instituted their own campaign Conference; and public meetings, demonstrations, deputations, lecture programmes and education classes had been arranged by groups large and small (80). The WFL also recorded the ceaseless work of its Executive members (81). The Movement felt that such

activity had been heightened by the large number of women's conferences which had taken place in London and abroad during 1926, focusing attention on women's issues. The WIL in Dublin, the IWSA in Paris, the IFUW in Amsterdam and the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage, where women from all over Britain journeyed to a London rally on June 19th to promote international law as a means of settling disputes, all provided venues for the franchise message (82).

But in spite of all this effort, by the end of 1926, 'The Woman's Leader' recorded that:

"We look back among our own columns and week after week paragraphs dealing with Equal Franchise with titles such as "Hope Deferred," "Dilly Dally," "No Progress," etc....we have been faced the whole time with a policy of complete negation on the part of the Government with regard to their intentions." (83)

A large meeting held by the WFL before the King's Speech on February 8th 1927, supported by over twenty organizations and calling upon the Government to include equal franchise in its programme, was totally disregarded, as Baldwin's famous pledge entered its third year without action. Meanwhile the campaign machine ground on relentlessly. But on March 8th, the Prime Minister agreed to see a Deputation to discuss the subject. The Deputation was organized by the EPRCC and supported by fifty-six societies, although only twenty-four women were permitted to attend

(84). This was the first time, since 1918, that a Prime Minister had received a franchise deputation.

Introduced by Lady Astor, the main spokeswomen were Lady Rhondda as President of the EPRCC, Eleanor Rathbone from the NUSEC, Mrs Hood for the SJCIWO, Dr Elizabeth Knight of the WFL, Nancy Parnell from the 'Under Thirty' section of the SJSPA, the Hon. Mrs Franklin speaking on behalf of the NCW and Ethel Froud of the NUWT. Baldwin explained that the General Strike, followed by the Miner's Strike and the war in China, had prevented the Government from dealing with women's franchise in 1926, but he assured them that he would make a statement in the House before Easter (85).

With so many years of disappointment and broken politicians' promises behind them, such an undertaking did not affect the pace of their campaign. Rather, they determined that they should escalate their programme to maintain the pressure. With a Cabinet meeting taking place on April 12th, the NUSEC concentrated its efforts on a meticulous lobbying exercise:

"To make sure that no Member of the Cabinet should have any excuse for forgetting one syllable of the Government's pledges on the subject, the full text of those pledges was once more reprinted...and circularised to every Member of the Government and Parliament." (86)

The next day, Baldwin stated that the Government would introduce a Bill to extend the franchise in the next parliamentary session, and

most importantly, that the age limit would be 21 and not the 25, that the Unionists 'Die-Hards' had been arguing for.

Baldwin, ever cautious, covered himself with a disclaimer by stating that:

"the only case in which new voters would not be able to vote would be in the event of any unexpected, shall I say catastrophe, bringing the life of this Parliament to an end." (87)

Used as they were to catastrophe, they determined to step up the campaign to get the Bill passed as soon as possible.

The NUSEC now engaged organizers with the specific brief of canvassing for the support of MPs for the proposed Bill (88). They were particularly anxious to register the views of Conservative MPs and to monitor all those who supported the Prime Minister's pledge. The established pattern of promises and assurances, followed by inaction and procrastination, now took a new turn, when on May 20th a LP Bill for the equalisation of the franchise due for its Second Reading, had its Parliamentary time appropriated for Government business. The WFL in an editorial in 'The Vote' responded angrily:

"This cavalier treatment of British women can only serve to increase their tenacity and determination...Until women have this measure of political equality with men, they have no chance whatever of winning any real equality with men in any other sphere." (89)

Looking for any positive moves, the Movement took heart at a speech made by Baldwin on May 27th 1927 at a Conference of Unionist women, when he made some rather vague remarks about democracy and women's enfranchisement (90).

But this was very much a situation of clutching at straws, for as the WFL diagnosed:

"Ever since woman suffrage became practical politics, its greatest danger has come, not from direct opposition, but from the delay of politicians outwardly friendly to this cause." (91)

This observation was prompted by the latest obstacle. Baldwin having declared that measures would be introduced in the next session, rumours emerged in May implying that the Parliamentary sessions were to be re-arranged (92). This meant that the next session would now begin in February 1928, instead of in Autumn 1927, which heightened the problem of the time limit.

In the face of such sustained obstruction, the women once again took to the streets on July 16th in a mass protest rally which resolved that:

"This Mass Demonstration welcomes the Prime Minister's promise of a Bill giving votes to women from 21 and on the same terms as men, and calls upon the Government to introduce and pass without delay a simple franchise measure so as to ensure the inclusion of the new women voters on the Register in time to vote at the next

General Election." (93)

The resolution to allow peeresses in the Lords was also included. This time the protest took the form of a huge demonstration in Trafalgar Square, arranged by the EPRCC and supported by forty-two organizations. Three speakers' platforms surrounded the central plinth on which all the societies' banners were displayed, from which Mrs Despard, Lady Rhondda and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence gave speeches (94).

By the end of 1927, the EPRCC had planned its 1928 opening meeting for February 8th, the day after the King's Speech. Meanwhile, the programme of meetings and lobbying was sustained by a Movement which did not intend to take any chances until the Bill was on the Statute Book. Expectations at the opening of Parliament in 1928 were dashed when the anticipated statement failed to materialize. However, during the debate later that evening, in response to an attack on the omissions in the Government's future policy, Baldwin did state that the Franchise Bill would be introduced in that session, with the necessary clause to enable all women to participate in the next election.

What effect the incidents during the day of February 7th had on Baldwin's evening speech, can only be assumed. The morning saw YS members creating an incident first at the Prime Minister's house and then at Buckingham Palace, as they delivered a petition to Baldwin and tried to give a letter to the King, which they had already managed to get published in that morning's papers. This was

followed at the time of the opening of Parliament, by an EPRCC demonstration, led by Lady Rhondda, which took the form of a fleet of cars owned and driven by women, and festooned with placards demanding votes for women which drove down Whitehall (95).

At last, the Government's Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Bill was introduced in March 1928. Several Conservatives hung on to their illogical arguments as to why women should not have the vote, but the Bill passed its Second Reading on March 29th with a majority of 377, only 10 members having voted against; although it is interesting to note that approximately 218 members were absent from the House for this historic debate (96).

When the Bill reached the Committee Stage, the LP attempted to introduce an amendment which would abolish plural voting. It was just such an issue that the suffrage societies had been concerned to avoid, fearing that the introduction of any complexities would lead to its defeat. Margaret Bondfield argued that without this amendment, some households might have a possible six votes between husband and wife. The Labour concern was that:

"It is a duplication of a fancy franchise...and serves very little purpose except to perpetuate existing anomalies and privileges for a very small section of the voters." (97)

Such voters were not likely to be using those additional votes to support a Labour candidate. The amendment was lost, and the Bill received the Royal Assent on July 2nd 1928. It would enfranchise an

additional 5,221,902 women and had taken the Women's Movement sixty-one years to achieve (98).

The value of examining the final strategic push for the vote, is that it enables the pattern of tactical manoeuvring employed by the Women's Movement, to be teased out from the otherwise bewildering mass of activity. During this process, some features emerge which move us toward considering questions which need to be addressed by additional research: research into how women have tried to increase their share of political power; and the contemporary corollary, of how women can increase their political power.

Why did successive Governments not have the political will to complete the enfranchisement of women before 1928? In response to such determined opposition and repeated postponements, why did the Women's Movement not return to their threatened militancy? Was it only as a result of ^{the} Movement's repeated efforts and their clever manipulation of every small advantage, that the franchise extension was achieved? Or was there an agreed ten year waiting period which Parliament was determined to enforce? If this was the case, then what was the rationale behind it? And can the opposition that the Women's Movement faced to retard their political progress, be viewed in the light of a male conspiracy? Could there have been other, more effective, tactics which the Movement might have employed to have progressed their case more rapidly? What might such tactics have consisted of? Did the Women's Movement at any

point in this ten year struggle set the agenda, or were they always a reactive force? Did they make best use of the measure of power which the partial franchise and qualifying to stand for Parliament gave them? How damaging was the continuance of the non-party stance by the suffrage societies? And how effective was the contribution of the Labour and industrial women to securing the franchise extension?

It must always be remembered that the explanations along the way to any possible answers will depend both on who is asking and who is answering the questions. The NUSEC displayed their usual confidence in believing themselves to have been primarily responsible for the 1928 success:

"There was always a section of opinion in the woman's movement who said of further franchise reform "It will come of itself," while another section said "It is too soon to press for equal franchise yet." If the National Union had yielded to either section in 1922, we should not have obtained from Mr Bonar Law ...his declaration of personal belief in equal franchise, which is said to have considerably influenced the present Government... If we had not again pressed the question on all three Parties at the General Election of 1924, we should not have obtained from the present Prime Minister his now famous promise of "equal political rights." " (99)

The SPG had never put any faith in such pledges (100) and had they been a larger organization, might well have

revived the militancy which they so frequently referred to. The Movement's intelligence network must have known just how intense the fear inculcated by the pre-War suffrage militancy had been (101). Why then did the Women's Movement not make use of a fear of the revival of militancy to progress the franchise extension more rapidly in the 1920s?

But different times call for different tactics. Giving verbal expression to the possibility of militancy, may also have been all the additional power they needed. It would also have split the Movement again on an issue on which they were solidly united, and they could not afford an internal wrangle if they were to mount a successful campaign. As they were the first to appreciate, the Movement had progressed a long way since the War. Even with the limited franchise, they were in quite a different position from that of the militant years. They now had something to lose; they were inside the establishment and militancy against the establishment would, strictly speaking, have been militancy against themselves. Having limited power had to some extent limited their options; they had to play by the rules of the club they wanted to have full membership of. Pertinently, Brian Harrison has recently dubbed them, "prudent revolutionaries." (102)

No sooner had their main objective been accomplished, than the different organizations in the Movement began the process of planning for the future, and realigning their aims in the light of their full entry to citizenship and Parliamentary power. Similar

to the process which had taken place in 1918, when the Movement's agenda had been re-examined, this time, there was a greater feeling that this was still very much only the beginning, as the WFL declared:

"To have won equal voting rights for women and men is a great victory, but it will be an infinitely greater achievement when we have succeeded in abolishing forever the "woman's sphere," "woman's work," and a "woman's wage," and have decided that the whole wide world and all its opportunities is just as much the sphere of women, as of man..." (103)

This is an achievement which has still to be realized.

Notes

1. 'Evening News' February 20 1925, Ellen Wilkinson Newscuttings Collection.
2. MACMILLAN, Chrystal, 1918, "And Shall I Have A Parliamentary Vote?" NUSEC, p.1.
3. 'The Vote' January 22 1926, p.29.
4. 'Time & Tide', "Equal Political Rights" 29 January 1926, as quoted in SPENDER, 1984, p.167.
5. 'The Vote' January 21 1927, p.20.
6. 'The Vote' January 22 1926, p.29.
7. 'The Vote' December 10 1926, p.390.
8. 'The Daily Herald' January 11 1924, p.4.
9. 'Time & Tide' July 30 1926, p.701.
10. 'The Woman's Leader' December 21 1923, p.379.
11. NUSEC, "Equal Franchise 1918-1928" June 1927, pp.1-4.
12. Ibid, p.4.
13. 'Time & Tide' March 2 1923, p.242-243.
14. 'The Vote' March 16 1923, p.85.
15. Ibid.
16. NUSEC Annual Report 1923, p.8.
17. 'Time & Tide' February 5 1924, p.149.
18. 'The Vote' February 15 1924, p.50.
19. Ibid, front page.
20. Ibid, p.54.
21. 'The Labour Woman' April 1 1924, p.52.
22. HANSARD, House of Commons, Vol.163. 1923 April 23-May 1; April 25, col.474.

23. Ibid, cols 817-899.
24. Ibid, cols 918-919.
25. 'The Labour Woman' April 1 1924, p.52.
26. HANSARD, House of Commons, Vol.163. 1923 April 23-May 1; April 25, col. 937.
27. 'The Vote' April 4 1924, front page & p.106.
28. Ibid, p.106.
29. 'The Woman's Leader' May 23 1924, front page.
30. 'The Labour Woman' June 1 1924, p.86.
31. 'The Vote' October 17 1924, p.332.
32. 'The Vote' October 17 1924, p.330.
33. MOWAT, 1968, p.174.
34. SHINWELL, 1963, p.118.
35. 'The Woman's Leader' January 2 1925, front page.
36. NUSEC Annual Report 1924, p.9-10.
37. 'The Labour Woman' January 1 1925, p.5.
38. 'The Labour Woman' March 1 1925, p.40.
39. "Equal Franchise 1918-1928" NUSEC, June 1927, p.5.
40. NUSEC Annual Report 1925, p.6.
41. WFL Annual Report April 1924-April 1925, p.3.
42. FRANKAU, Gilbert, 1924, "What Does the Girl of Today Want?" in Woman Magazine, Hutchinson & Co, London, August, p.399-401.
43. 'Newcastle Chronicle' December 12 1925, Ellen Wilkinson Newscuttings Collection.
44. NEVINSON, Henry W., 1924, "Votes for Women" in The New Leader, March 7, p.8.

45. HANSARD, House of Commons, Vol.163 1923 April 23-May 1; April 25, col.474.
46. Ibid, cols 472-474.
47. HOPKINSON, 1954, p.92.
48. 'The Vote' February 15 1924, front page.
49. 'The Sketch' February 20 1925, Ellen Wilkinson Newscuttings Collection.
50. 'The Vote' February 5 1926, p.44.
51. 'The Woman's Leader' January 1 1926, front page.
52. 'The Vote' December 31 1926, p.411.
53. 'The Woman's Leader' January 15 1926, front page.
54. 'The Star' 2 March 1926 in Ellen Wilkinson's Newscuttings' Collection, p.187.
55. 'The Woman's Leader' March 12 1926, front page.
56. 'The Woman's Leader' March 26 1926, p.70.
57. 'The Vote' March 12 1926, p.82.
58. 'The Vote' May 7 1926, p.147.
59. 'The Woman's Leader' June 25 1926, p.188.
60. Ibid.
61. 'The Vote' December 31 1926, p.413.
62. HANSARD, House of Lords VOL. 64 1926 May 4-July 15; June 24 col.602.
63. Ibid, cols 602-605.
64. Ibid, col.593.
65. NUSEC Annual Report 1926, p.5.
66. 'The Vote' July 2 1926 p.204.
67. 'Time & Tide' July 2 1926, p.605.

68. 'The Woman Teacher' July 2 1926, p.298.

69. The organizations taking part were:

Association of Women Clerks & Secretaries; Actresses' Franchise League; British Commonwealth League; British Federation of University Women; Civil Service Sorting Assistants; Electrical Society for Women; Federation of Women Civil Servants; International Women's Suffrage Alliance; League of the Church Militant; Liverpool Dressmakers' Association; London Society for Women's Service; National Council of Women; National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship; National Union of Teachers; National Union of Women Teachers; Post Office Women Clerks' Association; Saint Joan's Social & Political Alliance; Six Point Group; Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organizations; Theosophical Order of Service; Women's Co-operative Guild; Women's Election Committee; Women's Engineering Society; Women's Freedom League; Women's Group of the Ethical Union; Women's Guild of Empire; Women's International League; Women's National Liberal Federation; Women Sanitary Inspectors' & Health Visitors' Association; Workers' Union.

70. 'The Woman Teacher' July 9 1926, p.305.

71. 'The Woman's Leader' July 2 1926.

72. 'The Woman Teacher' July 9 1926, p.305.

73. WFL Annual Report April 1926-April 1927, p.9.

74. 'The Woman Teacher' July 9 1926, p.305.

75. 'Time & Tide' July 9 1926.

76. 'The Vote' July 23 1926, p.228.

77. 'The Woman's Leader' July 30 1926, p.240.

78. LNSWS Junior Council Report and List of Members May 1927, p.2.
79. 'The Vote' December 10 1926, p.390.
80. NUSEC Annual Report 1926, p.20-28.
81. WFL Annual Report April 1926-April 1927, p.9.
82. 'The Vote' December 31 1926, p.43.
83. 'The Woman's Leader' December 31 1926, front page.
84. 'The Vote' March 11 1927, front page.
85. Ibid, p.74.
86. NUSEC Annual Report 1927, p.9.
87. Ibid, p.10.
88. Ibid.
89. 'The Vote' May 20 1927, p.150.
90. 'The Woman's Leader' December 30 1927, p.374.
91. 'The Vote' June 3 1927, p.172.
92. Ibid.
93. WFL Annual Report April 1927-April 1928, p.11.
94. 'The Woman Teacher' July 22 1927, front page & pp.318-321.
95. 'The Times' February 8 1928, p.9.
96. 'The Vote' April 6 1928, front page.
97. 'The Labour Magazine' May 1928, Vol.VII, No.1, p.37.
98. 'The Labour Magazine' July 1928, Vol.VII, No.3, p.122.
99. NUSEC Annual Report 1928, p.7.
100. 'Time & Tide' April 8 1927, p.327.
101. Letter from E.R.Henry to Reginald McKenna, January 25 1913, John Johnson Collection in which the reality of the fear was born out in the Commissioner of Police's suggestion to the Home

Secretary, McKenna that it was now too dangerous for MPs to walk to and from Parliament, especially at night.

102. HARRISON, 1987.

103. 'The Vote' July 6 1928, p.212.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

"For sixty-one years women have striven to win an equal political footing with men; it is only an equal footing they have gained, not equal political power." (1)

The WFL's analysis of women's position after winning the equalisation of the franchise in July 1928 demonstrates that they were under no illusion as to how far women still had to travel to gain complete emancipation. This was no time to rest. As both the WFL and the NUSEC reminded their membership in their 1928 Annual Reports, women still did not have economic equality and their employment position was deteriorating. The rights of married women were under continuing attack; there was still only a handful of women in the Commons and no entry for women to the Lords; and the concept of the equal moral standard had not become a reality. These were only a few examples which demonstrated that inequalities were still too numerous and too significant to warrant any cessation of the Movement's campaigning.

Just as in 1918 after the RPAAct, again there was a recognition of the need for organizations to keep evolving, whilst keeping in sight the difficulties which the Movement might still face. In July 1928, an article in 'The Woman's Leader' anticipated the Movement's future:

"Some of the white-heat of their (the leaders') ardour has

gone, the need for headlong battling with circumstances has given place to the need for stabilization everywhere..... Inevitably, too, the people concerned have changed; the suffragist to whom the vote was all in all has given place to the woman who, intent on her own work, absorbed in a variety of interests, is, by the very fact of being a feminist, in honour bound to get on quietly with the work..... Any movement worth the name must first and foremost possess the individual.... To do that it needs a broader base than one group or generation can give. Especially is this important in the case of the women's movement... to see it as the sum of countless aspirations and viewpoints." (2)

This articulation of the pragmatic demands of a Movement intent on political success, presents a succinct reply to those criticisms which some contemporary historians have made of the 1918 to 1928 period, to which this research has presented an alternative interpretation.

These views, variously expressed by Liddington (1984), Vicinus (1985), Jeffreys (1985), Harrison (1987), Beddoe (1989), Smith (1990) and Pugh (1992) can largely be attributed to Doughan's paper, "Lobbying For Liberation" (1980), originally given as a lecture in 1979. His paper was a response, intended as a modification, to Rowbotham's (1973) condemnation.

The criticisms expressed by these feminist writers, (or those who recognise the importance of "reclaiming" feminist

history) occur in work that does, to differing extents, affirm some kind of continuation of the Women's Movement after 1918. Their position must be distinguished from that maintained by mainstream historians which fails to recognise any post-1914 activity by a Women's Movement.

The pivotal point determining these writers' discontent with the 1920s Movement is their perception of, and allegiance to the militant phase of the Women's Movement as the pinnacle of the Movement's activity. Understood as the embodiment of revolution in both strategy and ideology, the militant phase is perceived as one where Edwardian women succeeded in overcoming the restrictions of social conditioning to the extent of being able to defy the law and dictate their terms to public and politicians alike, as women. Subsequently, therefore, as a result of the abandonment of its militant tactics, and a return to constitutional methods (a misapprehension, as the largest part of the Movement had never abandoned these methods), the Movement jettisoned this revolutionary stance. All the other criticisms of the 1920s period are a consequence of this initial position. Any judgement which interprets the militant phase as a position of strength and success, will find any deviation from such a stand a diminution of power. Although among these writers, Pugh does not even accord feminism with a successful zenith, but only with "rise, stagnation, decline and revival" (3). The 1920s, in his judgement, constituting part of the period of stagnation.

This lauding of the militant period produces the judgements of a Movement, "not as dynamic as the pre-war mass movement" (4); "concerned to look as sober and responsible as they could" (5); that had "lost all the force of their feminism by the 1920's" (6) which inevitably entails further deficiencies. So that loss of militancy was also seen as relinquishing the fight against patriarchal values and male-determined sexuality (7). It has also been argued that this subdued form of feminism came as a result of the loss of most of the original suffrage workers after the War (8) and increasing compliance with the male establishment meant that the gains made by women during the War were yielded up (9), as the Movement allowed the acceptance of the traditional role of wife and mother to invade its policies and political work (10).

But one of the most consistently levelled criticisms of the 1920s was that the Movement lost its dynamism because its motivating energies and unity of purpose were dissolved as the Movement broke into a multiplicity of small, ineffectual groups which, simultaneously, duplicated effort and promoted rival policies. The nature of the language used and the way in which blame is directly ascribed to the women and their Movement, rather than to the male establishment which was continuing to resist the women's legitimate claims, is also interesting in "feminist" historians. "The fragmentation of women's efforts was depressing" and "the NUSEC....became savagely split" (11); "internal divisions that were to plague the ...NUSEC" (12); "characterised... by increasing fragmentation" (13) are some of the assessments.

Another factor which contributes to this distorted judgement, is the way in which several of these writers collapse and characterise two distinct periods of activity as one. Talk of the inter-war years, and even beyond, as constituting one period or phase, results in generalisations being made which embrace the 1920s, which cannot accurately be said to describe the 1930s either (14). This desire to impose a convenient or "general overview" (15), can lead to false periodisation (16).

Other accounts, some more recent, including Pugh (1992), Thane (1990), Alberti (1989), Harrison (1987), Holton (1986), Spender (1984) and Hume (1982) acknowledge, to differing extents, the continuation of suffrage work during the war years, the existence of a multiplicity of factors for the franchise gain of 1918 and the strength and vigour of the continuing Movement. Harrison's account is able to differentiate between a change of tactics and a decline in efficacy; whilst Alberti's treatment demonstrates the extent of the opposition which the Movement continued to resist. Thane's account of the significance of the positive contribution of Labour Party women to feminist issues and its differentiation between the roles played in the Party by men and women, is in direct contrast to Rowbotham's earlier absolute dismissal (17). Pugh's work, as the only study which covers the period from a comprehensive standpoint rather than using the restricted biographical method (see Alberti and Harrison), is also flawed by the same judgements as those made by the first group of writers which undermine many of his judgements of the period (18).

Alternatively, the interpretation informing this thesis is based on appreciating the 1920s as a further continuative phase of the Women's Movement, a development and progression arising out of and fuelled by all that had gone before, rather than a poor sequel. A period of difference arising out of political, social and economic change for women and the country, which determined the adoption of altered strategies and reassessed objectives. In this difference of perspective, Harrison's point that it is necessary to:

"prevent the First World War from artificially separating Edwardian from inter-war feminism." (19)

is most instructive. However, in the light of the difficulties discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Harrison's contention that:

"Neglect of the Edwardian inheritance makes much of what happened between the wars difficult to comprehend." (20)

is understood somewhat differently. It would seem that it is rather the over-emphasis (see Chapter 1) on the Edwardian inheritance, rather than its neglect, which has led to a distorted understanding of the period of the 1920s.

Turning to the findings of this research, the contention has been made and demonstrated, that the continuation of suffrage and women's rights activities throughout the Great War contributed to the continuous development of the Women's Movement. That without this wartime activity, there would have been insufficient pressure available to take advantage of the constitutional loophole whereby

women's suffrage amendments were forced on to the legislative agenda in 1916. To use Mrs Fawcett's analogy of the progress of the Movement:

"Sometimes the pace was fairly rapid; sometimes it was very slow, but it was constant and always in one direction. I have compared it to a glacier; but, like a glacier, it was ceaseless and irresistible....it always moved in the direction of the removal of the statutory and social disabilities of women." (21)

Rather than losing its impetus, the Movement gained new vigour from its franchise success, and went on to entrench its position by building up an extended network. The need was to consolidate its gains, extend its sphere of operation, effect further legislative change and fight the continued opposition to restrict women's lives.

Movements continue to operate successfully when the revolutionary impetus which prompted their foundation is still fuelled by unredressed injustices. But Movements are organic entities which must respond to changes in the society in which they aspire to participate. In order to succeed, the nature of the Women's Movement was bound to change to meet the realities of the post-war world and, in turn, tactics also had to change. Martin Luther King declared that:

"The riot is the language of the unheard." (22)

The Women's Movement had had their riots, and they had been heard. The need after the War was to move on to more sophisticated

strategies which carried their cause forward within the institutions to which they had now gained access, to enable them to take the next step towards complete emancipation.

Women sought to improve their lives, as wives and mothers, as workers, and by extending their scope of involvement throughout society. That was the revolution they were engaged in. They would not have been revolutionary if they had sought to reject the role of wife and mother. Rather they would have been completely outside a society in which their aim had always been to claim their full, participative rights, including the right to be free from the pain of maternal and infant mortality and the relentless poverty which engendered it, which further restricted and burdened so many women's lives. That was why they resisted the return to domestic service. They were not contesting the need for women to find alternative employment, they were seeking to expand and improve their economic position through improved employment potential. To have accepted the return to domestic service without protest would, indeed, have been to yield up the gains of the wartime years.

Far from the proliferation of organizations which took place after the War, duplicating effort and diluting effectiveness, this network was essential to cope with the enormity of the task in hand which concerned itself with every aspect of women's lives. Women were responding to and recognising the truth of what the industrial and political groups said, when they advocated that strength lay in organization and co-operation. The novelty and

excitement for large numbers of women of experiencing firstly, the power of economic participation, and secondly, the power of setting up their own organizations, should not be forgotten or underestimated. Whether their effectiveness was handicapped by the proliferation of so many groups, is a question which may only be raised with the aid of hindsight.

As to the existence of factions and opposing ideological interpretations, which has been made so much of, as evidence of weakness and disunity, a thorough examination of the course of the Movement from its origins in 1867, demonstrates a history of such divisions over procedural matters, differing doctrines and ideological conflict. No movement or party in the process of working out ideas and beliefs on its journey from oppression to emancipation, whilst devising campaign policies to effect that transition in the face of continued opposition, could realistically hope to avoid conflict (23). As Margaret Bondfield wrote of her particular world:

"The Labour Movement is like all human movements - full of little wars, wrestlings, disagreements and minor disputes..." (24)

Any other expectation serves to devalue the scale of the undertaking in hand. Although excessive conflict which rises to the level where it overshadows all else, becomes destructive, debate is a necessary tool in the production of effective policy as a method of seeking out weaknesses. And all movements benefit from the

stimulation of combining radical and conservative elements, in order to find the effective middle ground.

The feminist movement (as opposed to the women's Labour/industrial movement) was largely sustained by "professional" women's rights workers, large numbers of whom worked through from the Movement's earliest years to the 1920s and beyond. The belief that the majority of the experienced suffrage workers gave up the struggle in 1918 is quickly dispelled by the most cursory reading of suffrage periodicals and annual reports. On the contrary, it is the continuity of personnel which reveals the level of commitment of women who made the emancipation of women their life's work. It was, indeed, this very continuity of women who had amassed experience and skills as they grew up with the Movement, which contributed to the success of their cause. Tenacity was one of their biggest assets.

The frustration of the Movement's failure to attract large numbers of younger women in the 1920s was lamented (25). But it was also recognized as being partially the result of the Movement's success in enabling these young women to make a profession or other employment their life's work. Their fight for feminism was, as Ewing claimed, to gain recognition in the world of employment (26). As Janet Carlton, who became Assistant Editor of 'The Listener' in 1930, recalled of her feelings as a student at Somerville in the 1920s:

"I don't think we were nearly as interested in the vote as

exploring the greater social latitude for women, you know... I remember this friend and I agreeing that really it was rather bad luck for poor, old Miss Lorimer who had been a doughty fighter for the vote and so forth, to see the result of it her girls climbing over walls who'd been to dances.... So I certainly didn't feel at all militant as a woman. I think one felt that one had come in at a very enjoyable time for a woman and the big battle of the vote had been won, and entry into the professions, in a way it was up to us to make good." (27)

It was only those women who had been through the whole journey who were able to ascertain how far they had come, and how far they still had to go. And it was by dint of their perseverance that numbers of women under thirty were recruited in the mid-1920s, when the final push for the franchise extension made its direct appeal to such young women (see Chapter 10).

A significant contributory factor which underpins the belief in the waning of the Women's Movement during this period, was the contention that the raw edge of feminism gave way to the more traditional pursuit of welfare goals relating to women and children. Implicit in this belief was the implication that such legislation presented less of a challenge and was more easily achieved and that the Movement was no longer challenging the tenets of the patriarchal system, but was engaged in reforming certain aspects of it.

To dismiss the value of the welfare work pursued by all sections of the Movement, is not to recognize the extent of the poverty, dismal housing conditions and lack of health care which burdened large numbers of women and children in particular. Conditions such as those described by Mrs C.S. Peel in her research on housing conditions, dispel any doubt as to the importance of such work:

"In the bedroom the bugs were crawling over the walls and dropping on to the beds.....Father, mother and two youngest children slept in this room. Three girls slept in the ground-floor room and the two boys in the kitchen." (28)

It is also not to acknowledge why such conditions prevailed. As the suffrage cause never failed to state:

"The vote alone is valueless, but it is the key to Citizenship. It unlocks the door to real equality..." (29)

To get welfare problems addressed had always been a prime motivation for women gaining the vote. The concentration on such goals in the 1920s was no dereliction of the feminist credo, but a fulfilment of its manifesto. Through its dogged pursuit of such reforms, it was a potent force in what Mowat called;

"the inexorable advance of social welfare through state action." (30)

Nor were such legislative gains achieved without opposition and procrastination from the Government and Parliament, as has been demonstrated.

Similarly, it has also been contended that the passion went out of the feminists in the post-War world, that acting within constitutional confines they became cautious and that the Movement lost its revolutionary potential. Eleanor Rathbone answered similar criticisms:

"We knew when it was necessary to compromise. There is a school of reformers which despises compromise.... we acquired by experience a certain flair which told us when a charge of dynamite would come in useful and when it was better to rely on the methods of a skilled engineer." (31)

Alternately, the question seems to be what would challenging the system have consisted of, if not what women from 1918 to 1928 were engaged in?

What must not be underestimated was the importance of the existence of a movement of resilient women during this period to sustain the women's cause. How far would women have progressed towards emancipation if the Movement had not resisted each and every attempt to retard the gains which had been won? Immediately after the RPAct in 1918 and throughout the 1920s, the women's periodicals cautioned against the belief, held by some women, that the battle had been won. Challenges to the women's gains were not limited to the reconstruction period, but continued throughout the 1920s at every level. The multiplicity of organizations worked relentlessly for women's causes, and members of Parliament, Ministers and Prime Ministers were forced to respond to these

organizations. Without the women's work, so many of the issues would not have been raised; so many of the challenges would not have been made.

This raises the question of the theoretical issues which underlie the subject of this thesis which fall into two main categories which can be further sub-divided. The first is what the nature of a political movement is and the second, is the way in which a minority functions in the face of the continuing opposition of a majority. The political movement, in this case, being feminism, with the minority consisting of women and the majority being those members of the male-dominated and male-created institutions (although not exclusively male) through which political power is exercised and controlled.

Examining first, the issue of the nature of a political movement, in this case, feminism, it has been necessary to consider the diversity, range and complexity of opinion which may be held by people who still all qualify as members of that movement. The distinguishing mark being some kind of collective consciousness which confers on both the Movement and its members, an identity. The nature of that consciousness and how it emerges is yet another component of the issue. The mark of feminism as a particularly broad movement, capable of embracing a wide and, often, seemingly, conflicting membership, leads us to consider the origins and ideologies of different strains of the Movement's loose configuration. How and where those ideological facets overlap or

collide, and how well they serve their adherants in the pursuit of their objectives.

Lastly, how successfully a Movement can operate in the pursuit of power when many of its significant tenets, such as collective action, and single sex operation, are in direct contravention to those establishments in which it strives to operate. More generally, in relation to all Movements, is the concept of initiation, development and change; how far can a Movement influence social, economic and political factors and how far is it merely responding to those factors? Finally, in the face of these factors, what is the potential for constant evolution and regeneration, or do Movements wither as their objectives are fulfilled or as the conditions which enabled them to flourish, cease to exist.

The passage of a minority from a position of influence to power in the face of a resistant majority has been the most insistent theme running through this work, and the one which holds the greatest fascination. Where power lies and the most effective means of seizing it, how power can be successfully redistributed through legislation and what are the controls and mechanisms needed to ensure that entitlement becomes empowerment. Another quandry is the difficulties relating to the ways in which attitudes can be changed, in relation to custom and practice. How a position of influence can be acknowledged and therefore, accorded a certain amount of power by proxy, but that the move from that kind of

secure, but limited, advantage to the full enjoyment of rights on a public platform can expose the extent and determination of the opposition.

The question must be asked what measure of success the Women's Movement had achieved on that journey from their considerable position of influence, to a position of power by the end of the 1920s? Looking at the question through the words of the Movement, a re-examination of the WFL's view in 1928, given at the start of this chapter, indicates a realistic understanding of the limited nature of their success. 'The Woman's Leader' of July 1928 assessed the achievements of the Movement's expanded goal, set in 1918, not only to extend the franchise, but to achieve "a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities." They pondered the results:

"Has "a real equality" been nearly achieved? Of status - very nearly, except in the diplomatic, civil and municipal services, the church and a few minor spheres. Of opportunities - emphatically not. In scarcely any profession or industry are opportunities really equal. Even the ground already won is continually threatened by the forces of reaction....Of liberties - it depends what you mean by liberty. Has a working housewife and mother equal liberty with her husband when she possesses not a penny in the world except what he chooses to give her.....Or has an industrial worker liberty when she is kept out of nearly all the

more skilled and better paid jobs not by legislation, but by the impregnable forces of Trade Unionism in unnatural alliance with the hoary sex prejudices of employers?" (32)

But despite these conclusions, the problem is explained as being more subtle and complex than a mere recitation of equalities could satisfy. A shift in ideology was underway which developed New Feminism still further to embrace the concept of being woman-centred:

"..the question we ask ourselves is not, "Do men need it? Have men got it?" But, "How can women best work to secure this good thing, whatever men may do about it?" (33)

This somewhat echoes the WFL's voice, suggestive of a conclusion that women are not going to win on male ground, with male tactics, but needed a reformulation of a campaign to create a new, female territory.

But even operating on male terms, by 1928 there had been total or partial success on many fronts. Apart from the scope of the legislative gains, even where success had yet to be achieved, a good start had been made, by establishing mechanisms for change, and women themselves had changed irrevocably. By 1925 there were 14,000 women taking diploma and degree course; half a million women working in offices; and approximately 1,300 qualified women doctors (34); the first women were allowed to sit for the administrative class of the Civil Service (35); and by 1927 the struggle for women police had resulted in an increase to 142 women employed with the

same powers as male officers (36). Such gains represented years of ceaseless activity which had pierced a degree of attempted containment by the establishment, and in historical terms, such success had been earned in a relatively brief period of time.

Eileen Power, the medieval historian, maintained that:

"truth is mainly a question of giving events their true proportion." (37)

The key to appreciating the extent of the Movement's success is likely to become clearer in the future as more research provides us with a more detailed account of the women's struggle.

This thesis has attempted to give a wide map of the period. By re-establishing an appreciation of the vigour of the Movement's activities and women's achievements, it seeks to act as the basis for a more detailed exploration of the different facets of the Movement's work. At the end of Chapter 9 (38), there is an extensive list of questions which hold the key to the type of further research which needs to be undertaken.

One of the most important opportunities for further research lie in undertaking a review of the way in which the women's groups and women MPs operated within Parliament and in discovering how and why successive governments sought to curtail the emancipation process. This would necessitate a detailed study of Cabinet and other parliamentary papers, which have been underused in this context. Apart from Harrison's limited analysis with regard to the activity of women MPs in the House of Commons

(39), Hansard has also not been extensively examined for the above purpose.

Another equally major investigation needs to be undertaken with regard to the Labour and industrial women's activities of this period. Collette, Rendel and Middleton have researched the earlier pre-War period to varying extents, and Thane's chapter provides the basis for an alternative appreciation of Labour women's undervalued contribution during this period (40). Research into industrial and Labour women's work during the 1920s has especially suffered from perceiving 1918 as bringing the demise of such women's participation. Trade union records, Labour Party archives, together with parliamentary papers and research into the records of large industrial employers, could be used to assess the full extent of women's employment patterns, political and union participation and the nature of their involvement in struggles both strictly within the Women's Movement and peripheral to it.

A piece of research which would prove a useful tool for all other work on this period, would be largely statistical. An estimate of the numbers of women involved in the different sections of the Movement in all its phases from the 1860s to the Second World War, would prove invaluable. Apart from its intrinsic interest, it could be used in the process of analysing women's political participation. Membership records, annual reports and other statistics produced by the Movement's publications, together with the census figures could be used as source material.

Another approach, both satisfying for its own sake, and providing an essential aid for additional study, would be extensive biographical research into the Movement's membership, particularly of working class women. Banks' first volume of her biographical dictionary began the process (41). However, there is a vast amount of material which could yield important information about the nature of the membership and the extent of active feminism during the 1920s.

Finally, there is a need for work which combines a comprehensive guide to all archival sources of the period, linked to an historiographical account which traces the preservation and location of those materials. This would assist in the understanding of the suppression and absence of women's contribution in traditional historical interpretation and the role which the process of documentation plays in the legitimising of the activities of the Women's Movement. On the crudest level of scholarship, one need only cite the enormous amount of extant primary sources for the 1920s period, to deny the accusation of minimal activity. But an understanding of the reasons for the continued denial of such material (42) and the process of concealment, are an essential component in the further research of this and all other periods of women's history.

During the 1918-1928 period the Movement was engaged in making the transition from outgroup to mainstream. Further changes lay ahead in the next decade of the 1930s, adjustments within the

Movement and its organizations in response to both its own needs and those of the society in which it now played a fuller part. It is important to remember the tenacity of women engaged in an attempt to alter the distribution of power in the face of consistent opposition, and of working women struggling to help each other to survive and change their lives in the face of near overwhelming poverty.

For the contemporary Women's Movement, such knowledge emphasises women's debt to this past and to those women who laid the foundation for the future, and demonstrates how productive a study of their ideas and strategies can be. The sum total of an appreciation of that ten-year period can be inspirational, no less so than the militant phase, for it can legitimise women's present demands and set them within an ongoing tradition, which serves as a source of strength and reassurance.

The fundamental significance of what had been achieved gave the Cause and the Movement its universal importance:

"For Liberty is in itself wider than the Liberty of any class which enjoys it; and each step towards freedom, whether it be political or social or moral, makes progress in all other directions easier and surer, and adds to the justice and civilization of the world. We can therefore rejoice in our victory without alloy. We have won our cause, and by so doing we have helped forward an ideal even wider and greater and nobler than our own." (43)

Notes

1. 'The Vote' July 6 1928, p.212.
2. 'The Woman's Leader' July 13 1928, p.187 & P.189.
3. PUGH, 1992, p.313.
4. BEDDOE, 1989, p.140.
5. DOUGHAN, 1980, p.4.
6. JEFFREYS, 1985, p.148
7. JEFFREYS (1985) and ROWBOTHAM (1973), as respectively,
Lesbian separatist and revolutionary socialist feminist, are most
vociferous on this front.
HARRISON, 1987. p.7.
8. LIDDINGTON, 1985, p.287.
9. JEFFREYS, 1985, p.147. and SMITH, 1990, p.48.
10. PUGH, 1992, p.312.
11. LIDDINGTON, 1985, p.313 and p.387.
12. SMITH, 1992, p.47.
13. BEDDOE, 1989, p.140.
14. BEDDOE, 1989, p.140; BANKS, 1981, p.150; DOUGHAN, 1980, p.2.
15. DOUGHAN, 1980, p.2.
16. CARR, 1988, p.60.
17. cf. ROWBOTHAM, 1973, p.162 with THANE, 1992, pp.124-141.
18. PUGH, 1992, Preface & Conclusion.
19. HARRISON, 1989, p.8.
20. Ibid.
21. FAWCETT, Mrs Henry, n.d. approx. 1918/1919, Women And The
Use Of Their Vote, p.262.

22. "Eyes On The Prize: The History of The Black Civil Rights Movement", BBC 2, September-October 1990.
23. Certainly, the contemporary phase of the Women's Movement has been riven with such conflict on a far larger and more damaging scale.
24. BONDFIELD, 1950, p.271.
25. At the same time there was also an appreciation of the number of young women who were still joining the Movement, see 'The Woman's Leader' February 1920, p.7.
26. 'The Woman's Leader' July 13 1928, p.187.
27. Interview February 2 1989, London with JANET CARLTON, d.o.b 1905.
28. PEEL, 1933, p.241.
- The extent of the poverty at this time was repeatedly emphasised by several of interviewees, who insisted that it would be unimaginable to younger people.
29. NUSEC, "The Case for Equal Franchise" Elizabeth Macadam, 1924.
30. MOWAT, 1968, p.284.
31. STOCKS, 1950, p.113.
32. 'The Woman's Leader' July 13 1928, p.186.
33. Ibid.
34. RHONDDA, 1928, p.16.
35. See MEYNELL, 1988, pp.78-81.
36. FAWCETT, Millicent, October 1927, What The Vote Has Done, NUSEC, p.4.

Interestingly, the copy of this pamphlet held by the Fawcett has written under "By Dame Millicent Fawcett" the addition (most of it by E.M.H!) E.M.H. being the Parliamentary Secretary, Eva Hubback, who, evidently, did not get the credit for her work in this publication.

37. POWER, 1921, p.8.
38. See pp.418-419.
39. HARRISON, 1989.
40. COLLETTE, 1989; RENDEL in MIDDLETON, 1977; MIDDLETON, 1977; THANE in SMITH, 1990.
41. BANKS, 1985.
42. See Appendix 2, Bibliographical Note, p.446.
43. 'The Woman's Leader' July 13 1928, p.187.

histories. Apart from Collette's book on the WLL; there are only Stott's excellently informed "Organization Woman" on the Townswomen's Guilds, which fall just outside the period, and Gaffin and Thoms (1983) on the Women's Co-operative Guild.

Peace and internationalism have only been dealt with briefly in this research and the two most valuable sources are Wiltsher's "Most Dangerous Women" and Liddington's (1989) recent history of the peace movement. As to the philosophy underlying feminist ideology, there is a wide and fascinating selection, of which Banks' "Faces of Feminism" compares historical perspectives with English and American experience. Feminism's multiple intellectual heritage, discussed by Banks, is given greater prominence by Storkey (1989). Riley (1988) provides some intriguing theories concerning the identification of feminist consciousness; and Grimshaw (1986) encapsulates this theme as part of her challenge to traditional philosophical interpretations. It is the aspect of class, rather than that of gender, which provides the basis for Phillips' "Divided Loyalties" which uses the inter-war period as part of its review of the feminist movement. Class also underlies Rowbothom's analysis of the period in her classic, "Hidden from History".

The contribution of oral history, the skills required and the use of such information are ably dealt with in Thompson's authoritative and comprehensive, "The Voice of the Past"; which can be reinforced with Evans' "From Mouths of Men."

In trying to establish the feminist network of this period and trace the women involved, biographical dictionaries play their part. Such dictionaries fall into two groups: those solely concerned with women, produced in the first part of the century, as well as those published more recently; and those which purport to cover both men and women. The criteria used in compiling such dictionaries is an important factor for consideration. As Olive Banks commented in the introduction to her "Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists":

"compiling a dictionary of notable women does not necessarily serve the purpose of a feminist dictionary either." (2)

This is evidenced by what is omitted about women and why women are included. For example, "The Europa Dictionary of British Women" tends to misrepresent women because of what it omits.

Of the modern publications, Banks' (1985) is the most useful, but there are three such works from the earlier period which are essential. "The Roll of Honour for Women" from 1906, although not reserved to feminists, is very useful for information on more elusive women, and helps to make the connection with the Movement's origins. The 1913 "Suffrage Annual" is an invaluable reference work, with detailed biographical sketches and membership information in its section on suffrage organizations. "The Women's Who's Who" (1934) which relies on submitted accounts, tends to be rather erratic in its detail, but it is nevertheless very useful. Of the general biographical dictionaries, the most productive are

"The Dictionary of Labour Biography" (1972), despite some odd omissions, and "The Labour Who's Who" of 1924 and 1927.

As to other useful reference works: for details on the women's organizations, "The Women's Year Book" for 1923-24 is essential reading, as is Doughan & Sanchez on "Feminist Periodicals 1855-1984." For reference to sources, Barrow's "Women 1870-1928" is a refreshing starting point, with Cook's "Sources in British Political History 1900-1951" providing some important supplementary detail on women's organizations.

There is an abundance of primary material, a large percentage of which is held by the Fawcett Library, the mecca for feminist research. The two most important information sources are the annual reports of organizations and organization propaganda pamphlets, which can be complemented and amplified with the rich source of feminist periodicals. Additionally, there are the individual collections of personal papers and autobiographical material.

Of the non-party papers, the reports of the NUSEC and the LSWS are of most help, in terms of detail; while the WFL are rather frustrating in their generality, as they cover several years at a time. However, the WFL's paper, "The Vote" makes up for this. The WFL's information and propaganda pamphlets are also of great use, as are the NUSEC's. There are disappointingly few papers of the SPG available for this period, what exist are fragmentary. There are

often complete sets of periodicals which are so comprehensive in their reports, that they are an adequate substitute for an organisation's papers. A case in point is 'The Woman Engineer', the paper of the WES. The other large block of papers which balance the picture, are those of the industrial and trade union groups, such as the SJCIWO, which should be used in conjunction with 'The Labour Woman'. There are also collections which are under-used, for example the WSI&HVA archive has much work which still needs to be done; and small collections, like that of the WPH, all contribute their fragments to the whole.

Personal collections of papers can be disappointing. The wish would always be that such papers matched up to the detail and comprehensiveness of the Arncliffe-Sennett and Nancy Astor papers. The former are of most use for the suffrage struggle from 1907 to 1914. Astor's papers are a meticulous record of her life. The Middleton papers referred to here are those of the LP's General Secretary which are to be found scattered throughout the folders mentioned, not the composite collection as such.

As to autobiographies, Mitchell's, "The Hard Way Up" is a rare first-hand glimpse into the problems for working-class women in grass-roots political work; whilst Bondfield's "A Life's Work", does provide some interesting information about a working woman's progress through the Labour movement and into ministerial office. Many such volumes concentrate on the earlier period of struggle, of which, Fawcett's "Reminiscences" (1920) is good for the First World

War. Of those which include the decade under review Pethick-Lawrence's (1938), Nevinson's (1926), Swanwick's (1935), Picton-Turbervill's (1939), and Hamilton's (1944) are the most fruitful. For setting the scene and giving a sense of period, all the works listed of Brittain and Holtby are important. Two compilations are particularly productive, "Myself When Young" edited by Oxford and that edited by Strachey, "Our Freedom And Its Results". Others can be used with reference to a particular issue, such as Wyles (1952).

Despite the disappointment when papers catalogued are 'lost' (3), or the legend conveyed is that "You'll be lucky to find anything on that", ten years of political activity by such a number of women does not simply disappear, inspite of neglect and ignorance.

Notes

1. RIEMER, 1980, p.xiv.
2. BANKS, 1985, p.1.
3. This has happened several times during the course of the research. The explanations have been either that papers have been wrongly shelved or misplaced, especially when collections have been moved to new premises, or sometimes stolen.

Appendix 3

List of Organisations

This is a list of organizations which either appear in the text, or are of related interest. They are not all women-only organizations, although those which are not, are largely women's groups or are mainly of concern to women. The date for inauguration has been given in all cases where it could be traced.

AFL:	Actresses' Franchise League	1908
AAMSS	Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools	1884
ACSSA	Association of Civil Service Sorting Assistants	
AH	Association of Headmistresses	1874
AHM	Association of Hospital Matrons	1919
AMCWC	Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres	1911
AMSH	Association for Moral and Social Hygiene	1915 *
APTSM	Association for Promoting Training and Supply of Midwives	
APOWC	Association of Post Office Women Clerks	1901-13 *
ASWCML	Association of Senior Women Clerks in the Ministry of Labour	
ASW	Association of Service Women	1920
ASWO	Association of Senior Women Officers	
ATDS	Association of Teachers of Domestic Subjects	1896
ATCGO	Association of Temporary Clerks in Government Offices	
AUWT	Association of University Women Teachers	
AWASPCPO	Association of Women Assistant Superintendents and Principal Clerks of the Post Office	

AWCS/AWKS	Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries	1903
	(Because of its initials, this group took the bird, the Awk as its emblem, and thereby changed the C to a K).	
AWL	Association of Women Launderers	1921
AWP	Association of Women Pharmacists	1905
AWST	Association of Women Science Teachers	1912
BAWC	British-American Women's Crusade	
BCL	British Commonwealth League	1925
BCN	British College of Nursing	1926
BDWSU	British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union	1914 *
BDWCU	British Dominions Women Citizens' Union	1919 *
BFUW	British Federation of University Women	1907
BHA	British Housewives Association	1925
BLWS	British Legion Women's Section	1921
BWILPF	British Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	1915
BWSS	Belfast Women's Suffrage Society	*
BUC	Business and University Committee	1925
CWL	Catholic Women's League	1906
CWSS	Catholic Women's Suffrage Society	1911 *
CCWI	Central Council of the Women of Ireland	
CBC	Chelsea Babies' Club	1926
CLWS	Church League for Women's Suffrage	1909
CSA	Civil Service Alliance	1916
CSTA	Civil Service Typists' Association	1912/1913

CN	College of Nursing	1916
CPW	Communist Party Women	
CWFA	Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association	1911
CWRA	Conservative Women's Reform Association	1908
CCWO	Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations	1921
CRWLN	Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations	1919
CWCS	Council of Women Civil Servants	1920
DWU	Domestic Workers' Union	
ELFS	East London Federation of the Suffragettes	1914 *
EAW	Electrical Association for Women	1924 *
EPRCCC	Equal Political Rights Campaign (Demonstration) Committee	1926
FSWB/FWG	Fabian Society Women's Branch/Fabian Women's Group	1908
FEC	Family Endowment Committee	1917 *
FEC1.	Family Endowment Council	1918 *
FES	Family Endowment Society	1924 *
FWGC	Federation of Working Girls' Clubs	
FWCS	Federation of Women Civil Servants	1913
FCSU	Forward Cymric Suffrage Union	1912
FCLWS	Free Church League for Women's Suffrage	1910
FCWC	Free Church Women's Council	
IWSPU	Independent Women's Social and Political Union	1916 *

IWSLGA	Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association	1876 *
IWCLGA	Irish Women's Citizens' and Local Government Association	1918 *
IWFL	Irish Women's Franchise League	1908
IAWSEC	International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship	1926
ICWG	International Co-operative Women's Guild	1921
ICW	International Council of Women	1888
IFUW	International Federation of University Women	1919
IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Alliance	1904
LPWS	Labour Party Women's Sections	1918 *
LCM	League of the Church Militant	1919
LBWA	Leeds Babies Welcome Association	1910
LCCWTU	London County Council Women Teachers' Union	
LNSWS	London and National Society for Women's Service	1926 *
LSWS	London Society for Women's Suffrage	1907 *
LSWS	London Society for Women's Service	1919 *
MU	Mothers' Union	1876
MVF	Medical Women's Federation	1916
MVIA	Medical Women's International Association	
NAPIM	National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality	

NCUMC	National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child	1918
NOGC	National Council of Girls' Clubs	1926
NCW	National Council of Women	1895
NEWI	National Federation Women's Institutes	1915
NEWT	National Federation of Women Teachers	1906 *
NFWW	National Federation of Women Workers	1906-1920 *
NIPWSS	National Industrial and Professional Women's Suffrage Society	1905
NOGC	National Organisation of Girls' Clubs	1911
NUC	National Union of Clerks	
NUSEC	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship	1919 *
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies	1897 *
NUWT	National Union of Women Teachers	1920 *
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers	1895 *
NWCA	National Women Citizens' Associations	1918
NWLF	National Women's Liberal Federation	1919 *
NMFWS	Northern Men's Federation of Women's Suffrage	1913
ODC	Open Door Council	1926
ODI	Open Door International	1926
PL	Primrose League	1883
PUTN	Professional Union of Trained Nurses	
RWG	Railway Women's Guild	

SCWCA	Scottish Council of Women Citizens' Associations	1919
SCWG	Scottish Co-operative Women's Guild	1892
SCWT	Scottish Council for Women's Trades	
STUCWAC	Scottish Trades Union Congress Women's Advisory Council	1926
SAU	Shop Assistants' Union	
SPG	Six Point Group	1921
SCBCRP	Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (usually known as CBC)	1921
SOSBW	Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women	1920- 1962
SPBCC	Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics	1924 *
SWWJ	Society of Women Writers and Journalists	1894
SJSPA	St Joan Social and Political Alliance	1923 *
SJCIWO	Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations	1916
SC	Suffragette Crusaders	
SF	Suffragette Fellowship	1926
SWSPU	Suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union	1916 *
UJW	Union of Jewish Women	1902
UPOWWS	Union of Post Office Workers Women's Section	1919
US	United Suffragists	1914
WAS	Women's Auxiliary Service	1914
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild	1883

WEC	Women's Election Committee	1920
WES	Women's Engineering Society	1919
WFGA	Women's Farm and Garden Association	1899
WFL	Women's Freedom League	1907 *
WGE	Women's Guild of Empire	
WHVCF	Women's Housing and Village Council Federation	
WIC	Women's Industrial Council	1894
WIL	Women's Industrial League	1918 *
WLGS	Women's Local Government Society	1888-1925
WLL	Women's Labour League	1906-1918
WLF	Women's Liberal Federation	1886 *
WNLA	Women's National Liberal Association	1892 *
WP	Women's Party	1918 *
WPH	Women's Pioneer Housing	1920
WPHOA	Women Public Health Officers' Association	1896
WPL	Women's Political League	1918
WPS	Women's Printing Society	1897
WSF	Workers' Suffrage Federation	1916 *
WSIHVA	Women Sanitary Inspectors and Health Visitors' Association	1896
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union	1903 *
WTUL	Women's Trade Union League	1874-1922 *
WWSL	Women Writers' Suffrage League	1908
WUO	Women's Unionist Organisation	1918
WWG	Women Workers' Group (of the TUC)	1921 *
WBCG	Workers' Birth Control Group	1924

YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association	1855
YS	Young Suffragists	1926

Organisational Changes Indicated by an Asterisk *.

AMSH:	the British branch of the International Abolitionist Federation, founded by Josephine Butler in 1875; and successor to the Ladies' National Association for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice and for the Promotion of Social Purity, founded by J.B. in 1870.
APOWC:	became part of the Federation of Civil Service Clerks in 1913, which was later FWCS.
BDWSU:	became the BDWCU in April 1919.
BWSS:	became the WPL in February 1918.
CWSS:	became the SJSPA in October 1923.
ELFS:	became the WSF in March 1916. Then in June 1920 the WSF was renamed the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International).
BAW:	originally known as the Women's Electrical Association, WEA. But this caused confusion with the Workers' Education Association, so the name was changed.
FEC:	begun in October 1917, became the FECl. after the Autumn of 1918 and then the FES in 1924.
IWSPU:	this and the SWSPU were breakaway factions of the WSPU.
IWSLGA:	became the IWCULGA in November 1918.
LPWS:	came into existence in June 1918 from the WLL, as a

- result of the LP's new constitution.
- LSWS: became the LSW Service in February 1919; became the LNSWS February 1926; 1953 the LNSWS renamed the Fawcett Society.
- NFWT: became the NUWT at its Bath Conference 1920.
- NFWW: became the Women Workers' Section of the National Union of General Workers in 1920.
- NUWSS: became the NUSEC in March 1919.
- NUWW: its governing body was the NCW; in October 1918 it merged with the NCW and ceased to exist as a separate entity.
- SPBCC: originated in 1921 as the Walworth Women's Advisory Clinic.
- WFL: broke away from the WSPU in September 1907.
- WLF: split in their ranks in 1892 over suffrage, with the formation of the WNLA who were not interested in the suffrage question. WLF and the WNLA merged in April 1919.
- WP: formed from the WSPU in November 1917.
- WTUL: became the Women Workers' Group operating through the Women's Department of the General Council of the TUC.

Organizations Still In Operation.

- BFUW British Federation of University Women
- BLWS British Legion Women's Section
- CN now the Royal College of Nursing
- FS Fawcett Society

HVA	Health Visitors' Association (WSI&HVA)
MU	Mothers' Union
NCW	National Council of Women
NFWI	National Federation of Women's Institutes
UJW	Union of Jewish Women
WCG	now the Co-operative Women's Guild
WES	Women's Engineering Society
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPH	Women's Pioneer Housing
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Other Relevant Organisations

C	Conservative Party	1830s
C.U.	Coalition Unionist	
ILO	International Labour Organisation	1919
Ind.C	Independent Conservative	
ILP	Independent Labour Party	1893
LCC	London County Council	1889
LN	League of Nations	1919
LP	Labour Party	1906
NCCVD	National Council for the Combating of Venereal Disease	
NMWC	No More War Campaign	1914

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SMITH PAPERS: private collection, Barbara Strachey, Oxford. It contains a draft biography of Ray Strachey by her mother, Mary Costelloe/Berenson. The folders also contain letters and ephemera.

PHILIPPA STRACHEY PERSONAL PAPERS: Box 61, Fawcett Library.

EVELYN SHARP: Bodleian Library, Oxford. MSS ENG. MISC. c.278 Letters to; d.277 Letters from; d.669 Notebook; d.670 Scrapbook.

GERTRUDE TUCKWELL COLLECTION: TUC Library. Consists of newspaper cuttings and a draft autobiography.

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 'The Woman Teacher' NFWT/NUWT
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 'The Woman's Leader' NUSEC

Organization Papers

Annual Reports and/or Miscellaneous Papers of:

1. Political Groups.

CWSS/SJSPA: Fawcett and LP.
 CCWO: Fawcett and Lady Astor.
 FWG: TUC
 LSWS: Fawcett and Lady Astor.
 NCW: Fawcett and Lady Astor.
 NUWSS/NUSEC: Fawcett and Lady Astor.
 NWCA: Fawcett and TUC.
 ODC: Lady Astor and LP.
 SPG: TUC, LP, Lady Astor and Fawcett.
 WEC: Lady Astor.
 WFL: Fawcett and LP.
 WSPU/WP: Fawcett and London Museum Archive.
 WUO: Lady Astor.
 ELFS/WSF: Fawcett.

2. Industrial Groups.

LP: LP.

LPWS: LP.

NFWW: TUC.

NUGW: TUC.

NURWG: TUC and Fawcett.

SJCIWO: LP and TUC.

WCG: TUC.

WLL: TUC and LP.

WWG of TUC: TUC.

3. Professional Groups.

AWKS: TUC and Fawcett.

CWCS: Fawcett

EAW: Lady Astor.

FWCS: TUC

SOSBW: Bodleian.

NFWT/NUWT: Fawcett

WES: WES Archive.

WSI&HVA: HVA Archive.

4. Welfare/Voluntary Groups.

AMSH: TUC.

BHA: Lady Astor.

FEC/FECncil: Fawcett.

LBWA: property of the writer.

NCUMC: Lady Astor.

SCBC: Lady Astor.

SOSBW: Bodleian and Fawcett.

WPH: WPH Archive.

YWCA: Lady Astor.

5. Peace and Internationalist Groups.

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Mrs NAOMI MITCHISON, b. 1897, interviewed 27 January 1989. Lives-London/Argyll.

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