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**INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY MEN AND
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN BRITAIN, 1893-1914.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the attitudes towards women's enfranchisement, and involvement within the British women's suffrage movement, of the male members of the Independent Labour Party, a mixed sex socialist organisation. The period covered ranges from 1893, the year of the party's foundation, to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The aim of this study is to contribute to our understanding of a hitherto neglected aspect of suffrage history: the male supporters. Suffrage historians have generally considered Independent Labour Party men's attitudes towards women's enfranchisement to have been positive: their ideas and activities are now placed under careful scrutiny.

The theoretical underpinnings of the thesis lie in gender history, most especially in the field of historical studies of masculinities, which in themselves have been informed by the ideas and writings of women's history. Independent Labour Party men are viewed not as a group of individuals with certain physical characteristics in common, but as sharing gendered identities as socialists and as men, which influenced their attitudes towards the roles deemed appropriate for men and women within society, and towards women's emancipation in particular. Furthermore, the thesis assesses how their ideas and identities were themselves challenged by developments within the suffrage movement.

Chapter 1 considers the years between 1893-5, a period characterised by few formal links between Independent Labour Party men and the suffrage movement, and assesses how supportive attitudes towards women's enfranchisement fitted into prevailing understandings of socialism and independent labour representation. Chapters 2 and 3, focusing respectively on the periods between 1895-1905, and 1905-1911, consider the impact of a burgeoning suffrage movement, active within the ranks of the labour movement itself, and characterised by its own priorities, objectives and tactics. Chapter 4, dealing with the years between 1911-1914, concludes by assessing Independent Labour Party men's responses to a shift in the suffrage debate, as the introduction in Parliament of adult suffrage became a practical proposition.

CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	2
ABBREVIATIONS	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
INTRODUCTION 'The kind comradeship' of men? Independent Labour Party men and women's suffrage, 1893-1914.	9
CHAPTER 1 'In the grip of a new and compelling faith'. The pioneering years, 1893-1895.	36
1-1. 'By all means let the ladies have a chance...'	58
2-2. 'Human without the woman is the merry devil in politics...'	84
CHAPTER 2 'Men of like feelings and aspirations'? The Labour Alliance, 1895-1905.	133
2-1. 'Economic freedom is the foundation upon which a free manhood must rest'.	142
2-2. 'It is only justice to grant women's suffrage all round...'	197
CHAPTER 3 'Women's enfranchisement... has been sprung upon us with alarming suddenness'. The challenge of suffrage, 1905-1911.	233
3-1. 'The incoming of the mother element into politics'.	270
3-2. 'The dawn of the new epoch of woman militant'.	290
CHAPTER 4 'Political democracy is the prelude to social democracy'. Industrial unrest and political reform, 1911-1914.	358
4-1. 'The revolutionary fervour of the masses'.	374
4-2. 'A deep, strong, true feeling in favour of the enfranchisement of women'.	393
CONCLUSION 'The promotion of socialism is the supreme duty of the ILP...'	459
BIBLIOGRAPHY	473

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 18 August 1894, 'London for Labour'	50
Figure 2, <i>The Workman's Times</i> , 4 February 1893, 'The First Conference of the Independent Labour Party'	68
Figure 3, <i>The Workman's Times</i> , 1 April 1893, 'By Hammer and Hand All Arts Do Stand'	71
Figure 4, <i>The Workman's Times</i> , 4 November 1893, 'Labour is the Source of All Wealth' (first version)	76
Figure 5, <i>The Workman's Times</i> , 30 December 1893, 'Labour is the Source of All Wealth' (second version)	77
Figure 6, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 25 August 1894, 'Liberty in England, 1894'	96
Figure 7, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 12 May 1894, 'The Whip Hand'	98
Figure 8, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 16 June 1894, 'The Height of His Ambition'	99
Figure 9, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 9 June 1894, 'The Party Nag'	100
Figure 10, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 7 July 1894, 'Hobson's Choice'	101
Figure 11, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 5 January 1895, 'Bivouac'	105
Figure 12, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 27 April 1895, 'Third Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party'	107
Figure 13, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 19 May 1894, 'Going forth to Battle'	108

Figure 14,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 2 February 1895, 'The Baby Farm'	109
Figure 15,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 24 November 1894, 'Three Horny 'Uns'	110
Figure 16,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 1 December 1894, 'Outcast England'	112
Figure 17,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 3 August 1895, 'Historic July 1895'	113
Figure 18,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 26 January 1895, 'Work, Or -'	120
Figure 19,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 16 October 1897, 'An Object Lesson to Barnsley Workers'	140
Figure 20,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 11 July 1896, 'Before'	149
Figure 21,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 1 February 1896, 'Men v Machinery'(1)	153
Figure 22,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 1 February 1896, 'Men v Machinery'(2)	154
Figure 23,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 4 July 1896, 'The Good Old Giant-Killer'	165
Figure 24,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 16 April 1898, 'Our Modern Atlas'	166
Figure 25,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 4 September 1897, 'Scotching the Rattle-Snake'	168
Figure 26,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 21 March 1896, 'Our Splendid Isolation'	169
Figure 27,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 1 May 1897, 'A Modern Prometheus'	170
Figure 28,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 19 June 1897, 'Political Independence the Key to Economic Emancipation'	171
Figure 29,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 24 October 1896,	

	'The Wages of Virtue'	193
Figure 30,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 6 February 1897, 'Labby Tries to Stop the Progress of Miss Female Suffrage'	203
Figure 31,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 1 July 1910, 'The Closed Door'	240
Figure 32,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 6 May 1910, 'Our Cycle Scouts'	244
Figure 33,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 29 April 1910, 'A Pageant of Socialism'	247
Figure 34,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 3 June 1910, 'Chorus'	249
Figure 35,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 7 January 1910, 'The Fight with Apollyon'	250
Figure 36,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 25 November 1910, 'In the Firing Line'	251
Figure 37,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 16 December 1910, 'The Hog of the Family'	252
Figure 38,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 14 April 1911, 'The New Vision'	253
Figure 39,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 28 January 1910, 'Foiled!'	254
Figure 40,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 28 April 1911, 'Another Blow!'	257
Figure 41,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 24 June 1910, 'The New Charter'	278
Figure 42,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 10 March 1911, 'Burking Enquiry!'	319
Figure 43,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 9 February 1912, 'From Bondage to Freedom'	373
Figure 44,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 23 February 1912, 'The Banquo of Labour'	377

Figure 45,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 18 July 1912, 'If the Workers Would Vote with the Solidarity with which they strike...'	380
Figure 46,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 29 January 1914, 'From Parliament to Parliament'	382
Figure 47,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 17 May 1912, 'Three Blind Ministers'	386
Figure 48,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 15 January 1914, 'Master in His Own House?'	448
Figure 49,	<i>Labour Leader</i> , 9 January 1913, 'Women's Suffrage and the Labour Movement'	471

ABBREVIATIONS

BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
BSP	British Socialist Party
<i>DLB</i>	Dictionary of Labour Biography
F.J. CORR.	Francis Johnson Correspondence
H.B. PAPERS	Herbert Bryan Papers
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LCWTOWRC	Lancashire and Cheshire Women Textile and Other Workers' Representation Committee
LEA	Labour Electoral Association
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
MLWS	Men's League for Women's Suffrage
NAC	National Administrative Council
NESWS	North of England Society for Women's Suffrage
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
PSF	People's Suffrage Federation
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
TUC	Trades Union Congress
WCG	Women's Cooperative Guild
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WLL	Women's Labour League
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WTUL	Women's Trade Union League

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INTRODUCTION

'THE KIND COMRADESHIP' OF MEN? INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY MEN AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, 1893-1914.

Historians of the British suffrage movement have only recently turned their attention to male supporters of the campaigns for women's enfranchisement.¹ This thesis provides a study of a group of men who, with some individual exceptions, are usually associated with a positive attitude towards women's suffrage: the male members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a mixed sex socialist organisation established in 1893. This has the distinction of not being mentioned in Brian Harrison's study of 'antis', while individual ILP men appear only in the guise of suffrage supporters.²

This introduction will first of all consider the ways in which suffrage histories since the beginning of the twentieth century have dealt with male ILPers and with their contribution to the movement. It will then outline the theoretical foundations upon which the present work is based, discussing the various sources used, and will conclude by briefly setting out the content of each chapter.

Suffrage histories written before 1918, when the franchise was extended to

¹ A.V. John, C. Eustance, (eds), *The Men's Share? Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, (Routledge, London, 1997).

² B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres. The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, (Croom Helm, London, 1978), although see also Martin Pugh's contention that the ILP's reputation 'is easily exaggerated'. M. Pugh, 'Labour and Women's Suffrage', in K.D. Brown, (ed.), *The First Labour Party 1906-1914*, (Croom Helm, London, 1985), p. 238.

women over thirty, generally mentioned the ILP, or men prominent within the party, only incidentally, or not at all.³ Interestingly, though, in her 1911 polemic against contemporary developments in suffrage militancy Teresa Billington-Greig, herself an ex-ILPer, acknowledged that the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the first militant suffrage organisation (established in 1903), originated from within the ranks of the ILP.⁴ Yet Sylvia Pankhurst's study of the militant suffrage movement, published the same year, barely mentioned the party at all. Rather, she pointed out that although most of the original members of the WSPU had been active in the 'Labour Movement', 'it was decided from the first that the Union should be entirely independent of Class and Party'.⁵ At the same time, she emphasised the support provided by Keir Hardie, then an MP, and one of the most prominent leaders of the ILP.⁶ Significantly, though, she portrayed him as

³ H. Blackburn, *Women's Suffrage. A Record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles with Biographical Sketches of Miss Becker*, (Williams & Norgate, London, 1902); M. Garrett Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage. A Short History of a Great Movement*, (T.C. & E.C. Jack, London, 1912); B. Mason, *The Story of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Sherrat & Hughes, London, 1912).

⁴ T. Billington-Greig, *The Militant Suffrage Movement*, reprinted in C. McPhee, A. FitzGerald, (eds), *The Non-Violent Militant. Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987), especially pp. 145-7. See also A.E. Metcalfe, *Women's Effort. A Chronicle of British Women's Fifty Years' Struggle for Citizenship (1865-1914)*, (B.H. Blackwell, Oxford, 1917), p. 23.

⁵ E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette. The History of the Women's Militant Suffrage Movement, 1905-1910*, (Gay & Hancock, London, 1911), p. 7.

⁶ Between 1904 and 1912 Hardie and Pankhurst were passionately involved, probably also sexually. P. Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst. Portrait of a Radical*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987), pp. 34-7.

an isolated figure, and (implicitly) justified his supportive attitude not in terms of his association with a sympathetic organisation, but rather of his personal character; he was ‘... kind and helpful, the only kind and helpful person in the whole of Parliament, it seemed’.⁷

The same pattern was followed by the autobiographies of suffrage activists published in the following twenty years or so. While acknowledging the WSPU’s early connection with the ILP, this was very much downplayed. Emmeline Pankhurst, for example, who had joined the ILP in 1894 with her husband Richard, admitted that at the time of the WSPU’s formation she was still a member of the ‘Labour Party’, but quickly emphasised their determination ‘to keep ourselves free from any party affiliation’.⁸ The ILP was largely ignored, and although the activities of male party members, particularly of Hardie, were mentioned, they were portrayed almost entirely as isolated individuals.⁹

The autobiographies of ‘constitutional’ suffragists Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Helena Swanwick were also silent over the subject of male ILPers’ contribution to the suffrage movement, although unsurprisingly, they showed themselves more enthusiastic than ex-militants in their assessment of the Labour Party’s position.¹⁰

⁷ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette*, p. 12.

⁸ E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, (Eveleigh Nash, London, 1914), p. 38.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 139; 157; 253-4. A Kenney, *Memories of a Militant*, (Edward Arnold & Co., London, 1924), pp. 42; 48; 68.

¹⁰ M. Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1924), pp. 180; 211-3; H.M. Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, (Victor

In 1931 Sylvia Pankhurst published a new account of the suffrage movement, with particular emphasis on the activities of the WSPU, and of her own family.¹¹ This has proved enormously influential on subsequent suffrage history, including on the way in which the ILP and its male activists have been portrayed.¹² Unlike her earlier work, she made clear that since 1894 the Pankhursts' political activities had been undertaken in the context of the Manchester ILP,¹³ and emphasised the early connections between the ILP and WSPU,¹⁴ which were only severed after the suffrage organisation's decision to pursue a purely anti-government election policy in 1906. At the same time, though, there are also continuities with her earlier work. She showed no interest in analysing the nature of the 'kind comradeship'¹⁵ the WSPU received from some male ILPers, but provided (particularly for the post-1906 period, when the ILP tends to disappear from the narrative) memorable portraits of individuals, who also happened to be prominent

Gollancz, London, 1935), p. 203. In 1912 the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the organisation in which both women were prominent, established an electoral alliance with the Labour Party.

¹¹ E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement. An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1931). See also the similar approach in E.S. Pankhurst, *The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst. The Suffragette Struggle for Women's Citizenship*, (T. Werner Laurie, London, 1935).

¹² J. Marcus, 'Introduction. Re-reading the Pankhursts and Women's Suffrage', in J. Marcus, (ed.), *Suffrage and the Pankhursts*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987), pp. 1-17.

¹³ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 116-52.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 164-251.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 193-4.

ILPers. Hardie appeared once more in a variety of supportive guises, including as defender of militant action.¹⁶ Pankhurst emphasised how for him the labour and suffrage movement 'were but phases of the same cause'.¹⁷ Ultimately, though, his sympathy for suffrage was once more portrayed not as the outcome of intellectual conviction, but (implicitly) as connected to his own nobility and generosity of character. He was 'the seer in his old... homespun jacket', comparable to 'a noble mountain in the limpid glory of the setting sun'.¹⁸ Portraits of other ILP men were more ambivalent. John Bruce Glasier, for example, strained his friendship with the Pankhursts by apparently stating the 'common' belief among socialists, that women's suffrage was not essential, since conflicts of interest occurred across class, not sex lines.¹⁹ While acknowledging Philip Snowden's work in support of suffrage, particularly in parliament,²⁰ he appears a far more

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 190; 376; 511.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 241.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 204-5. See also p. 126.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 167. Born in Glasgow, and though aspiring to a career as a poet, John Bruce Glasier had been apprenticed as an architectural draughtsman. He had first entered politics through the Irish Land League, and later the Socialist League. In 1897 he was elected to the ILP's executive, by which time both he and his wife Katharine St John Conway had acquired a national reputation as tireless writers and propagandists. At various times he edited *ILP News*, *Labour Leader* and *Socialist Review*, Katharine regularly taking over the duties in his absence. In 1900 he was elected party chairman, a position he held until 1903. L. Thompson, *The Enthusiasts. A Biography of John and Katharine Bruce Glasier*, (Victor Gollancz, London, 1971).

²⁰ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 252; 317; 422. Born and brought up in the Radical atmosphere of the West Riding village of Cowling, Snowden's career as a civil servant had been cut short in 1891, when an

distant figure than Hardie. In 1906 he was 'but a hesitant, newly plucked convert' to equal suffrage.²¹ After his election as MP for Bow and Bromley in 1910, George Lansbury received frequent mentions by Pankhurst: she was closely associated with his family in her East End work.²² As with Snowden, though, there was not the same amount of personal warmth as she clearly felt for Hardie, possibly also because of Lansbury's closeness with Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst, at least until his failure to be re-elected after his resignation in 1912 over the question of women's suffrage. In this, she believed he 'had been badly advised, led away by generous impulses'.²³ Pankhurst's portrait of Ramsay MacDonald is an outrightly hostile one. She did not attempt to suggest that he was opposed to women's suffrage, beyond stating that his utterances 'displayed the ambiguities of an accomplished

illness had left him with only partial use of his legs. On his return to Cowling he had become involved within the West Riding socialist movement, eventually becoming famous for his 'evangelical' style of oratory. In 1898 he joined the ILP's national executive, and in 1903 was elected party chairman. In 1905 he married Ethel Annakin, a popular ILP propagandist and suffrage activist. A year later, he was elected MP for Blackburn. P. Snowden, *An Autobiography, vol. 1 1864-1919*, (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, London, 1934); C. Cross, *Philip Snowden*, (Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1966).

²¹ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 203. See also pp. 167-8.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 389-90; 482-3; 502. An East-End timber merchant, in the early 1890s Lansbury had left the Liberal Party to join the Social Democratic Federation. Before his election as MP for Bow and Bromley in 1910, he had concentrated, with other socialists such as Will Crooks, on the need to reform, or indeed abolish, the Poor Law system. Their sphere of action had been local government, particularly the Poplar Board of Guardians, and later the Poplar Borough Council. G. Lansbury, *My Life*, (Constable & Co., London, 1928).

²³ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 427.

politician'.²⁴ Nevertheless, he was mentioned in the narrative almost exclusively in order to illustrate his opposition to militancy.²⁵

Significantly, Ray Strachey's *The Cause*, which in many ways was a history of the women's movement quite different from Pankhurst's,²⁶ and which mentioned the ILP only fleetingly, also did so in terms of its individual activists. Strachey pointed out the involvement within the party of feminists such as Isabella Ford, and stated that it was through the pressure of men like Snowden and Hardie that it committed itself to 'equal rights for men and women'.²⁷

It seems clear that a model was already well-established by 1931 with which to deal with male ILPers' suffrage activities. It was a model which was to be followed by scholars for almost half a century. Although only

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 399. Born in Scotland the illegitimate son of a then farm servant, Ramsay MacDonald spent some years as a pupil-teacher, before eventually moving to London. There he was employed for a spell as a clerk, before becoming the private secretary of a prominent Radical politician. In the 1880s and 1890s he was active in the Fellowship of the New Life, the organisation out of which grew the Fabian Society. From 1892 he earned his livelihood as a journalist, and in 1894 gave up his efforts to work through the Liberal Party and joined the ILP. In 1896 he married Margaret Gladstone, a comfortably-off middle-class woman and herself an enthusiastic socialist. In 1896 he joined the National Administrative Council of the ILP, and in 1900 was elected secretary of the newly formed Labour Representation Committee. D. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1977).

²⁵ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 241; 362; 421-2.

²⁶ K. Dodd, 'Introduction. The Politics of Form in Sylvia Pankhurst's Writing', in K. Dodd, (ed.), *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993), pp. 1-30.

²⁷ R. Strachey, *The Cause. A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, (Virago, London, 1978, first edition 1928), pp. 288-90. See also pp. 292; 297.

chronicled in any detail by Andrew Rosen²⁸ (whose account was still heavily dependant on Sylvia Pankhurst's work), the connections between the early WSPU and ILP were acknowledged. The nature of such connections, or of male ILPers' attitudes, was not examined.²⁹ When dealing with the post-1906 suffrage movement, the ILP tended to disappear from narratives, although ILP men continued to make occasional appearances. The influence of Sylvia Pankhurst's characterisations is here obvious, although in some cases images acquired a new rigidity. Hardie's support, for example, gained at times an almost mythical quality, while at the other end of the spectrum, Marion Ramelson could characterise MacDonald as among 'those who led the opposition to the women's claim'.³⁰

In 1962 Mary Gawthorpe, a one-time Leeds teacher, published her autobiography. Through this form of writing, she traced the various stages of her emotional and intellectual development, significantly culminating with the beginning of her involvement in suffrage militancy in 1906. One of

²⁸ A. Rosen, *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union 1903-1914*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974), pp. 14-78.

²⁹ R. Fulford, *Votes for Women. The Story of a Struggle*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1958, first edition 1957); C. Pankhurst, *Unshackled. The Story of How We Won the Vote*, (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1959); M. Ramelson, *The Petticoat Rebellion. A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights*, (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1967); A. Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, (Victorian & Modern History Book Club, Newton Abbot, 1974). Constance Rover devoted very little attention to the ILP, but see her portraits of various Labour Party leaders, most of whom were also prominent ILPers. C. Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1944*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967), pp. 151-6.

³⁰ Ramelson, *The Petticoat Rebellion*, p. 154.

these stages saw her active at the heart of the Leeds labour movement, including the ILP, the Labour Church and the Leeds Art Club: her commitment to suffrage was portrayed as both an extension of these activities, and as ultimately involving a break with them.³¹

Six years later, the autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, a Lancashire-based ILPer and early member of the WSPU, was published posthumously.³² In it, she provided a fascinating picture of the WSPU's early years in Manchester. Her work's interest lies not only in the information she was able to provide about the Union's activities within the Lancashire labour movement, but especially in her deeply-felt observations about male ILPers' attitudes towards women's enfranchisement. Some individuals, most of whom never achieved national fame, appear as wholehearted supporters,³³ others as not necessarily sympathetic to the WSPU, but as willing to act as 'bodyguards' and 'protect their women-folk'.³⁴ At the same time, she also presented the image of socialist men masking indifference to women's enfranchisement with support for adult suffrage,³⁵ or more bitterly, not extending their radical beliefs to their own homes, and still expecting their wives' domestic services, independently of any other claim on their time.³⁶

³¹ M. Gawthorpe, *Up Hill To Holloway*, (Traversity Press, Maine, 1962).

³² H. Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, (Virago, London, 1977, first edition 1968).

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 128-30.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 128; 148-57.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 126.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 96-9; 130; 149.

Five years later, Sheila Rowbotham began to investigate the responses of socialism to the pre-First World War women's movement.³⁷ It was in 1978, though, that Jill Liddington and Jill Norris broke new ground with their study of a group of Lancashire suffragists, many of working-class origin, who were active in the two decades before the First World War. They showed how these 'radical suffragists' were active within the labour movement, demonstrating that such links existed not only in relation to the early WSPU. And although the authors were primarily concerned with women activists, the ILP played an important part in their narrative.³⁸ Individuals such as Hardie still occasionally emerged as isolated, exceptional figures.³⁹ Nevertheless, Liddington and Norris showed that both male and female ILPers were operating not in a vacuum, but within the context of debates within the labour movement, in particular between supporters of equal and of adult suffrage.⁴⁰ Even more importantly, they were to a certain extent at least, able to move away from a concentration on 'leaders', and to provide an analysis of the branch activists: they showed, for example, the close connection until 1906 between the WSPU and Manchester Central

³⁷ S. Rowbotham, *Hidden from History. 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, (Pluto Press, London, 1992, first edition 1973), pp. 90-107.

³⁸ J. Liddington, J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us. The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Virago, London, 1994, first edition 1978).

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 127; 152-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 180-6.

ILP.⁴¹

Suffrage works published subsequently showed a greater interest in assessing the extent of working-class support for women's enfranchisement, as well as in considering the connections between the suffrage campaign and the labour movement in general. In 1986, Sandra Stanley Holton's important contribution to suffrage history focused on a group of activists (particularly a number involved in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the largest non-militant suffrage organisation) who saw the suffrage campaign as part of a more general movement towards the democratisation of society, and advocated a suffrage/labour alliance in order to further this goal, strengthening the case made by Liddington and Norris concerning the suffrage/labour connections existing outside the WSPU.⁴² Holton portrayed the labour movement as deeply divided on the issue, most notably on equal versus adult suffrage lines.⁴³ But although individual ILP men do emerge from this background, it was with the Labour Party, rather than the ILP in particular, that she was concerned.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 188-92. These issues were also explored in J. Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel. Selina Cooper (1864-1946)*, (Virago, London, 1984), especially pp. 153-5; 221-3.

⁴² S. Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986). Although direct references to the ILP are few, interest in such issues can also be detected in L. Parker Hume, *The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies 1897-1914*, (Garland Publishing, London, 1982); L. Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty. Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918*, (Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1984).

⁴³ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 53-75.

In 1989, in her biography of the middle-class Quaker Isabella Ford, June Hannam placed her subject's trade union, socialist and suffrage activities within the context of her involvement within the West Riding labour movement, and in particular the Leeds ILP.⁴⁴ As the earlier study by Liddington and Norris had done for Lancashire, her work provided a fascinating picture of the activities of Yorkshire socialist and suffragist women. She not only illustrated the work of the 'constitutionalist' Isabella Ford, but also suggested a more complex image of WSPU/ILP relations than that of a clear break in 1906, emphasising the continued connections between the two movements in the West Riding.⁴⁵ At the same time, there also emerged from the narrative a number of male ILPers, rooted in the political traditions of the West Riding, whose attitudes towards the issue of women's suffrage were inseparable from their ideas about men and women's role within society in general, and in the workplace in particular.⁴⁶

Shifting the discussion to a national level, Hannam made the fundamental observation that within the ILP the suffrage debate, including the issue of adult versus equal suffrage, '... was often the outward expression of a more

⁴⁴ J. Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989). See also J. Hannam, 'In the Comradeship of the Sexes Lies the Hope of Progress and Social Regeneration': Women in the West Riding ILP, c. 1890-1914', in J. Rendall, (ed.), *Equal or Different? Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987), pp. 214-38.

⁴⁵ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 123-5. See also Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, p. 36; Garner, *Stepping Stones*, pp. 35-6.

⁴⁶ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 47.

fundamental difference in approach towards gender and class politics'.⁴⁷ Focusing on the figure of Isabella Ford, she showed how one socialist woman negotiated her way through such politics.

The works of Jill Liddington and Jill Norris and of June Hannam have deeply influenced my approach to the subject of ILP men and women's suffrage. While primarily interested in socialist women⁴⁸, by using biographical and regional approaches, they have showed the existence of a depth of interest for suffrage among male ILPers beyond supposedly exceptional figures like Hardie or Snowden, a support which extended beyond an early and limited connection with the WSPU, and most importantly, which rested on complex ideological foundations.

Other biographies of ILP women active in the suffrage movement have not been interested in exploring their subjects' male comrades' interest and involvement within the suffrage campaign.⁴⁹ Sandra Stanley Holton's in many ways extremely interesting new work, for example, acknowledges the ILP background of two of the suffrage activists she considers in some detail,

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 108-9.

⁴⁸ Such interest was (and is) of course justified by the neglect of women by historians, including labour historians, until comparatively recently.

⁴⁹ P. Hesketh, *My Aunt Edith*, (Peter Davies, London, 1966); A. Linklater, *An Unhusbanded Life. Charlotte Despard. Suffragette, Socialist and Sinn Feiner*, (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1980); D. Nield Chew, (ed.), *Ada Nield Chew. The Life and Writings of a Working Woman*, (Virago, London, 1982); Romero, E. *Sylvia Pankhurst*; A. Morley, L. Stanley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison. A Biographical Detective Story*, (The Women's Press, London, 1988), especially p. 182; B. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst. Sexual Politics and Political Activism*, (UCL Press, London, 1996).

Hannah Mitchell and Mary Gawthorpe, but sheds no new light on their male colleagues.⁵⁰ Regional suffrage studies also make only incidental references to the ILP. Leah Leneman, for example, mentions the Glasgow ILPer and editor of the socialist paper *Forward's* staunchly supportive attitude towards women's suffrage, which, though, she does not place in the context of debates over suffrage within the ILP either at a local or at a national level.⁵¹

At one level, therefore, an argument can be made for the need to rescue from historical oblivion the contribution made by these male ILPers to the suffrage campaign. As will be seen in the course of the thesis, they certainly believed their contribution to be an important one: whether such belief was justified will also be seen. Although still relatively small, a fee-paying membership ranging over the period between five and thirteen thousand, made the ILP the largest pre-First World War socialist organisation in Britain.⁵² More importantly, perhaps, particularly after 1900, its leaders

⁵⁰ S. Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days. Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Routledge, London, 1996).

⁵¹ L. Leneman, *A Guid Cause. The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland*, (Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1991), pp. 43; 46-7; 97; 136. See also K. Cook, N. Evans, '"The Petty Antics of the Bell-Ringing Boisterous Band"'? The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales, 1890-1918', in A.V. John, (ed.), *Our Mothers' Land. Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1939*, (Cardiff University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1991), pp. 159-88. The political situation in Ireland was of course a distinctive one, but see R. Owens, '"Votes for Ladies, Votes for Women". Organised Labour and the Suffrage Movement, 1876-1922', in *Saothar*, no 9, (1983), pp. 32-47.

⁵² K. Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain c. 1881-1951*, (Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1997), p. 32. These figures refer to fee-paying membership. The actual membership could have been considerably larger. For a comparison, the Social Democratic Federation never seems to have acquired more than three thousand members. K. Hunt, 'Women and the

were well-known national figures, whose speeches could attract large audiences, and whose actions were reported (if not always favourably) by the national press. A number of them were also in this period elected to Parliament, including Hardie, Snowden and MacDonald. At the same time, in towns such as Bradford, Leicester or Merthyr Tydfil, the ILP acquired considerable local influence.

Nevertheless, this thesis does not intend to be simply a piece of 'recovery' history, and I certainly do not wish to substitute female with male activists in the suffrage narrative.⁵³ This work's point of departure is the belief that ILP men did not simply share certain physical attributes, but also gendered identities as male socialists, whatever individual form these identities may ultimately have taken.

As recent historical studies of masculinities have shown, individuals' masculine identities were (and are) constructed in a variety of locations, in a complex interplay between social and psychological influences, and in a relationship of power with the 'Other', be that women, different race or age groups, and so on. Most importantly, masculine identities should be understood not as unchanging entities, ultimately based on biology, but as constantly shifting historical constructs.⁵⁴

Social Democratic Federation: Some Notes on Lancashire', in *North-West Labour History Society Bulletin*, no 7, (1980-1), p. 54.

⁵³ This has been the probably unwitting result in S. Strauss, 'Traitors to the Masculine Cause'. *The Men's Campaigns for Women's Rights*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1982).

⁵⁴ J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 38,

As will be seen more fully later, ILP men, attracted mostly from the ranks of skilled manual workers, clerks and supervisory workers,⁵⁵ were deeply influenced by the strand in working-class (and arguably, lower middle-class) ethos, which associated the achievement of a successful masculinity with the ability to support dependants (normally a wife and young children) and to secure a wife's domestic services.⁵⁶

This does not mean, though, that masculine identities in general, and those of male ILPers in particular, were always stable and uncontroversial. The uncertainty in terms of status of prominent individuals such as Hardie, the illegitimate son of a Scottish farm servant, who escaped his life as a miner through a journalistic and political career, has been remarked upon, albeit only in terms of class. It should also be considered in terms of his gender identity.⁵⁷ Most importantly, though, membership of the ILP implied

(Autumn 1994), pp. 179-202. See also M. Roper, J. Tosh, (eds), *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, (Routledge, London, 1991); A.V. John, C. Eustance, 'Shared Histories - Differing Identities. Introducing Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage', in John, Eustance, (eds.), *The Men's Share?*, pp. 1-37.

⁵⁵ D. Hopkin, 'The Membership of the Independent Labour Party, 1904-10: A Spatial and Occupational Analysis', in *International Review of Social History*, vol. 20, part 2, (1975), pp. 175-97. At a 'national' level, Hopkin also observed the presence of a 'considerable leavening of professional people', particularly teachers.

⁵⁶ S.O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods. Gender and Class in Nineteenth Century England*, (Routledge, London, 1992), pp. 126-53. See also K. McClelland, 'Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan" in Britain, 1850-80', in Roper, Tosh, (eds), *Manful Assertions*, pp. 74-81; H. Land, 'The Family Wage', in *Feminist Review*, no 6, (1980), especially pp. 55-62.

⁵⁷ F. Reid, *Keir Hardie. The Making of a Socialist*, (Croom Helm, London, 1978).

discontent with the contemporary organisation of society, and desire for change. It will be seen, therefore, whether this implied also a radical re-thinking of gender identities, as was the case, for example, with involvement in the Salvation Army.⁵⁸

The specific forms of the socialism adhered to by ILP men will be considered in the course of the thesis, but there is no doubt that it was profoundly gendered, and based upon definite understandings of the roles to be played by men and by women within society. Other historians have already explored the gendered nature of various labour/socialist movements and organisations,⁵⁹ and although they have not been particularly concerned to distinguish between the ideas of male and female activists, it is interesting to note the extent to which differences if not of opinion, at least of emphasis, constantly crop up, at least on issues considered particularly relevant to women.⁶⁰

A recognition of the gendered nature of the socialism espoused by them

⁵⁸ P.J. Walker, "I Live But Not Yet I For Christ Liveth in Me". Men and Masculinity in the Salvation Army, 1865-90', in Roper, Tosh, (eds), *Manful Assertions*, pp. 92-112.

⁵⁹ B. Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem. Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Virago, London, 1983); E. Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850-1914*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991); K. Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists. The Social Democratic Federation and the Woman Question, 1884-1911*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996). See also J. Hannam, 'Women and the ILP, 1890-1914', in D. James, T. Jowitt, K. Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party*, (Ryburn Academic Publishing, Halifax, 1992), pp. 205-28.

⁶⁰ For example, within the Social Democratic Federation it seems to have been mostly women who defended women's right to work, or expressed concern about the problem of female unemployment. Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 122-3; 146-9.

certainly does not mean that masculinity itself was a subject of discussion among male ILPers. Except when notions of ideal 'manliness' were threatened, most notably by ILP men's sexual misconduct, it was women who were seen if not as the 'problem', at least as the 'issue'.⁶¹ Carolyn Steedman suggests that by concentrating on attitudes towards women's suffrage '... we ignore the actual and theoretical role that women and the idea of women, played in the movement'.⁶² It seems to me, rather, that attitudes towards suffrage are worth focusing on, but that they cannot be understood without reference to wider beliefs about the roles of men and women within society. The thesis, therefore, aims to address these general issues as well as to deal more specifically with attitudes towards and involvement within the women's suffrage movement.

At the same time, it is clear that as male ILPers brought to bear their identities as socialists and as men on the issue of women's suffrage, these same identities and ideas were being challenged by suffrage activists' own understandings of women's 'political' activities and identities.⁶³

Most obviously, such a challenge could take place at a personal level.

⁶¹ As John Tosh has admirably put it, 'in the historical record it is as if masculinity is everywhere but nowhere'. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', p. 180.

⁶² C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931*, (Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1990), p. 133.

⁶³ Harold Benenson provides a salutary reminder that ideas about women's role within society (in this case, with reference to the notion of the 'family wage') were not simply imposed upon a passive female constituency. H. Benenson, 'The "Family Wage" and Working Women's Consciousness in Britain, 1880-1914', in *Politics and Society*, vol. 19, no 1, (March 1991), pp. 71-108.

Biographies of prominent ILP men have tended to place particular emphasis on this aspect of their subject's interest in the issue of suffrage, at times using blatant sexual innuendos. According to K.O. Morgan, for example,

It is not demeaning Hardie's own courageous advocacy of the cause of women's rights to suggest that he was intrigued by sex as well as by sexual discrimination and that the wider aspects of sexual relations added fire to his advocacy of the cause.

At the same time, he emphasised the influence of his friendship with Mrs. Pankhurst and his relationship with Sylvia Pankhurst.⁶⁴ The echo of such an approach can also be found in Colin Cross' biography of Philip Snowden: His wife 'Ethel... as no one else in the world could... was able to influence her husband. Snowden's prolonged devotion to women's suffrage was due mainly to her...'.⁶⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, Lawrence Thompson included among the reasons for Bruce Glasier's supposed antipathy towards the suffrage movement, his dislike of the Pankhursts.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ K.O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie. Radical and Socialist*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1975), pp. 162-8. See also I. McLean, *Keir Hardie*, (Allen Lane, London, 1975), pp. 122-4. Caroline Benn deals much more sensitively with Hardie's relationships with women, including his wife Lillie, and recognises that principle underlay his support for suffrage, but she also ultimately conflates such support with an entanglement with the Pankhursts. She considers, thus, that after 1905 he 'put himself at the disposal of the women's movement - that is to say, of the Pankhurst family'. C. Benn, *Keir Hardie*, (Hutchinson, London, 1992), pp. 196-7. See also pp. 213; 220.

⁶⁵ Cross, *Philip Snowden*, pp. 63-4.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, pp. 148-9. For a more balanced assessment of their subject's attitude towards suffrage, see Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, pp. 147-50; J. Schneer, *George Lansbury*, (Manchester

It seems clear that the influence of personal relationships cannot be reduced to such simple terms. The experiences of feminist ILPers such as Hannah Mitchell and Ada Nield Chew, both married to socialists, would for example suggest that men's ideas about the appropriate roles and responsibilities of women (and implicitly, of men) were very resistant to change.⁶⁷ More generally, one of the aims of this thesis has been to assess how successful the suffrage movement was in challenging and changing such ideas.

A proviso is necessary here. Although this thesis is concerned with ILP men, this is to some extent an artificial category. ILPers were also members of a variety of other organisations, most notably after 1900 of the Labour Party, but also of suffrage organisations such as the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, or the adultist People's Suffrage Federation, established respectively in 1907 and 1909. Of course, the commitment of many, including for example Hardie and Snowden, was primarily to the ILP, but in general, individuals have been considered when they spoke, acted or wrote with their 'ILP hat' on, although certainly not always directing themselves to an ILP audience. As will be seen, this provides a by no means narrow focus, but rather encompasses a variety of attitudes, expressed through a range of media.

'National' ILP newspapers have been extremely important, representing both a source of information for ILPers' activities, and an arena in which

University Press, Manchester, 1990), pp. 68-129.

⁶⁷ Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, pp. 96-9; 149; Nield Chew, (ed.), *Ada Nield Chew*, pp. 59-60.

ideas about women's enfranchisement were discussed. Their use is, of course, not entirely straightforward. First of all, it is worthy of note the extent to which the ILP press was in the hands of a small group of (exclusively male) 'leaders'. The *Labour Leader* was until 1904 owned and edited by Hardie, being then acquired by the party, and becoming its 'official' organ under the editorship of Bruce Glasier, who resigned in 1909. In 1910 Fenner Brockway⁶⁸ joined the editorial staff, in 1911 becoming acting editor (with William Anderson⁶⁹ writing the editorials), and in 1912 responsible editor. While still lacking an official organ in 1897, the National Administrative Council (NAC) had launched the monthly *ILP News*, which was intended to provide an avenue of communication between it and the branches. As it turned out, the communication proved to be a one-way one, with branches contributing very little material. A number of different editors took charge of the small paper: H. Russell Smart⁷⁰ between 1898 and 1900,

⁶⁸ Born in a securely middle-class home, Brockway had first joined the Social Democratic Federation on hearing a speech by Herbert Burrows. In 1907 he transferred his allegiance to the ILP, and became active in the Finsbury branch. He later joined the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, and was an enthusiastic suffragist. F. Brockway, *Inside the Left. Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament*, (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1942).

⁶⁹ Born in 1877 in Banffshire, he had become a prominent member of the Shop Assistants' Union, before leaving it in 1907. In 1908 he joined the NAC, where he became 'adroit in avoiding too close an involvement with any particular faction'. In 1911 he married Mary Macarthur, the women's trade union organiser. J.M. Bellamy, J. Saville, (eds), *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, (DLB), vol. II, pp. 11-6.

⁷⁰ An actor for ten years, Smart had eventually found employment with a firm of sanitary engineers in 1884. In 1896 he was a member of Fabian Society and Social Democratic Federation, as well as ILP. He had been one of the delegates at the 1893 Conference. J. Edwards, *The Labour Annual*.

Bruce Glasier between 1900 and 1903, Snowden for the remaining issues. Ultimately, though, the NAC remained firmly in control.⁷¹ *The Socialist Review*, on the other hand, was established in 1911 under the editorship of MacDonald as a more self-consciously 'intellectual' endeavour, with contributions ranging from discussions of the relationship between eugenics and socialism to articles dealing with issues of foreign policy. After MacDonald's resignation, Bruce Glasier took his place as editor in November 1911.⁷²

Karen Hunt has observed in relation to the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) the difficulties faced by supporters of women's rights in getting their views adequately represented by the party's paper, *Justice*, as well as the lack of consideration given to protest about the inclusion of misogynistic material, particularly from the pen of Belfort Bax and his admirers.⁷³ The issue of editorial control is equally important in relation to the ILP, although in a rather different way. The NAC's control over the *ILP News* has already been observed. Privately, it was admitted that *The Socialist Review* was to

A Year Book of Social, Economic and Political Reform, 1896, (Clarion Company, London, 1896), pp. 186-7.

⁷¹ D. Hopkin, 'The Newspapers of the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1906', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, College of Aberystwyth, 1981), pp. 1-43. The case of *The Workman's Times*, which will be discussed more fully in chapter 1, was rather different. Although enthusiastically supportive of independent labour representation, its links with the ILP were informal ones.

⁷² J. Bruce Glasier to J.R. MacDonald, 30 September 1911, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, Public Records Office, Kew.

⁷³ Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 70-7.

provide a 'platform' for MacDonald's revisionist ideas, and 'to rescue socialism... from the tyranny of phrases and impossibilist policies'.⁷⁴ Historians have tended to remark upon the extent to which the *Labour Leader* under Hardie's ownership reflected his ideas.⁷⁵ It seems clear, though, that although after 1904 branches began to contribute more material, editorial control remained strong. Support for 'Socialist Unity', for example, (which was opposed by the ILP's leadership) found little expression. More importantly for the present thesis, so did support for adult suffrage.⁷⁶ The extent to which differing opinions were (or could be) gagged should not be exaggerated: adult suffrage opinion for example was expressed at a 'national' level through (particularly the *Labour Leader*'s) 'letter pages' or, outside the confines of the press, through the party's annual conferences.

ILP men's pamphlets, leaflets and other more ephemeral material, often published by the ILP itself, have also been considered. Their use is of course not entirely unproblematic. To a greater extent even than the party's periodical press, which to some extent was 'preaching to the converted', their main function was a propagandist one. The same can also be stated of other efforts at persuasion, such as speeches. As Anna Clark has illuminatingly

⁷⁴ W.C. Anderson to J.R. MacDonald, 31 March 1911, Ramsay MacDonald Papers.

⁷⁵ F. Reid, 'Keir Hardie and the *Labour Leader*, 1893-1903', in J. Winter, (ed.), *The Working-Class in Modern British History. Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983), pp. 19-24.

⁷⁶ Including under the editorship of Bruce Glasier, supposedly hostile to equal suffrage.

observed, working-class activists such as the Chartists, made use of what she called 'rhetoric' in order to engage in 'a political dialogue that intends to persuade its audience and pressure its opponents'.⁷⁷

At the most mundane level, this means that contents and emphases would shift not only with the author, but also with the audience: a leaflet to 'The Workers of Great Britain' would for example be very different to one directed at 'The Women of Great Britain', while a speech in the House of Commons would be different from one given to a local ILP branch. Most importantly, though, this means that by analysing the prime constituency to which ILP men directed themselves and their propaganda (usually, as will be seen, male workers, often considered synonymous with trade unionists) as well as more marginal ones (for example, women), deep-rooted if often unexpressed assumptions about the roles of men and women within society come to light.

Other material has been used to provide alternative slants. Records of various local branches, as well as press accounts of their activities have served to counterbalance the 'national' picture. Nevertheless, although a relatively clear picture emerges, for example, of the Manchester Central branch, much detailed local research still needs to be done; for example into the Brixton ILP's enthusiastic support for suffrage, or the continued

⁷⁷ A. Clark, 'Comment', in 'Dialogue. Women's History/Gender History: is Feminist History Losing its Critical Edge?', in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 5, no 1, (Spring 1993), p. 117. For a fuller discussion of the notion of 'rhetoric', see A. Clark, 'The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity: Gender, Language, and Class in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 31, no 1, (January 1992), pp. 62-88.

connections between the ILP and militant suffrage activists in Preston, or indeed, Stockton ILP's staunch commitment to adult suffrage.

A different slant is also provided by personal material, such as diaries and letters, which, at least in theory, are not concerned with an 'audience'.⁷⁸

It must be noted, though, that of the individuals figuring prominently in the thesis, Hardie and Snowden have left no collections of personal material, while mentions of suffrage among MacDonald's pre-First World War papers are relatively rare. So, although Bruce Glasier may well emerge from the thesis as a rather disagreeable character, (at least in his personal utterances) it should in fairness be stated that with a few exceptions, we simply do not have the private responses of suffrage 'champions' Hardie or Snowden to, for example, the WSPU's decision to include opposition to the Labour Party to its anti-government policy. Surviving snippets suggest that their comments could be just as acid.

This thesis provides an analysis which views ILP men as belonging to a national body, which was, though, also geographically diverse and included within its ranks men of different backgrounds and aspirations. At the same time, it also recognises that the ILP was by no means a static organisation, but one which changed over the period under consideration, in response to

⁷⁸ It is difficult not to suspect, though, that for example Bruce Glasier's diaries have been tidied, and headings provided, for the convenience of historians. Autobiographies, of course, while often providing valuable insights into private motivation and personal politics are still very much concerned with an 'audience'. For ILP men, both autobiographies and biographies 'constituted an important assertion of an experience that might otherwise have been lost, a means of entry into a cultural formation'. Steedman, *Childhood*, pp. 157-8.

impulses both from within and from outside its ranks. The thesis, therefore, is organised within a chronological framework.

The first chapter concentrates on the party's early years, between 1893 and 1895. These were characterised by a great enthusiasm in the potentialities of socialism, and optimism about the imminence of its achievement. I have found little evidence of connections between ILP men and the suffrage movement in this period, but much that suggests that attitudes were decidedly favourable. I therefore consider how such support fitted in with disapproval of concentration on 'political' reforms, and with understandings of socialism as a 'way of life'. Attitudes are compared with those expressed within *The Workman's Times*, a labour newspaper strongly committed to the establishment of the ILP, but directed at a 'trade unionist' audience. The chapter's section 1 concentrates on *The Workman's Times*, section 2 on the party in general.

The second chapter considers the ten years following the party's humiliating defeat at the 1895 general election. It shows how ILPers responded by seeking an electoral alliance with trade unionists, and assesses the significance of this shift in terms of attitudes towards issues thought to be of special interest to women, and women's suffrage in particular. It then considers how ILP men responded to the challenge provided by suffragists active within its own ranks: 'radical suffragists' and later the WSPU.

The third chapter focuses on the period between 1905 and 1911. The return to Parliament of twenty nine Labour MPs in 1906 could be seen as the revindication of the ILP's commitment to the 'Labour Alliance'.

Nevertheless, criticisms started to be voiced almost simultaneously about the performance of the parliamentary party. To some extent, suffrage arguments, both in favour of equal and of adult suffrage, had by 1905 settled in well established patterns, and no new ones were developed. The real challenge of these years was perceived by ILP men to lie in the development of 'militant' methods of campaigning: the varied responses are considered.

The last chapter is concerned with the years between 1911 and 1914. Against a background of strikes and industrial unrest, ILP men faced the possibility of an adult suffrage measure passing Parliament. Their reactions are analysed, as developments in suffrage militancy continued to engage their attention and an electoral alliance with the 'constitutional' suffragists of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), with all its inherent tensions, was set up.

The story, though, begins in 1893, when a group of labour activists met in Bradford with the aim of establishing a new party. It is to these 'Pioneering Years' that we must now turn.

CHAPTER 1

'IN THE GRIP OF A NEW AND COMPELLING FAITH', THE PIONEERING YEARS, 1893-1895.

In January 1893 around a hundred and twenty delegates, mostly from the industrial North of England and Scotland, met at a conference in Bradford. The majority were members of Independent Labour Parties and Labour Unions, as well as a variety of other organisations, including the Fabian Society and six Lancashire branches of the SDF. Among those present were James Keir Hardie, the Scottish miner and trade unionist who had turned to journalism for a living, and after breaking with official Liberalism, had now become the MP for West Ham South. Other well-known figures were Ben Tillett, the dockers' leader and now an alderman of the London County Council, Katherine St. John Conway, a Newnham graduate and rapidly becoming one of the most popular of the party's propagandists, as well as socialist veterans such as Edward Aveling. Aside from the 'national' figures, delegates tended to be young men in their thirties; in Henry Pelling's words, they represented 'a new type of political delegate. The intelligent, respectable, working trade unionist of the new labour clubs'.¹

In the course of two days, they set about laying the foundations of a new national party. As the title of Independent Labour Party itself suggests, their

¹ H. Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party. 1880-1900*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, first edition 1954), pp. 115-6; D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party. 1888-1906*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983), pp. 290-2.

aim was not only to obtain the representation of labour in parliament and in local government, but also to ensure that this was done independently of either Tory or Liberal parties.²

This was not the first such attempt. As early as 1869, in the aftermath of the Second Reform Act, a Labour Representation League had been established, apparently independently of both main parties. In 1874 it secured the election to parliament of Thomas Burt and Alexander MacDonald, but by the mid-70s it had been absorbed by the Liberal Party.³

In 1886 a new attempt was made to organise the enlarged working-class electorate, when the Trades Union Congress (TUC) established a Labour Electoral Committee, the following year reorganised as the Labour Electoral Association (LEA).⁴ Although advocates of independent labour representation, such as H.H. Champion, were active within the organisation, its main thrust was to work within the Liberal Party, encouraging working-class candidates and strengthening the 'Lib-Lab' presence in parliament. By the mid-90s, though, it had become clear that the LEA's attempts to influence the Liberal Party had failed: historians of the ILP have emphasized the obduracy of local Liberal caucuses (if not of the national executive) in the face of demands for increased working-class representation, as being a central influence on the decision to establish an independent party.⁵

² Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 283-300.

³ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 2-3; Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, p. 26.

⁴ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 57-8.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 224-5; Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 26-7.

The ILP, though, identified itself not only as an organisation aiming at representing the interests of 'labour', but also as a socialist body. The first Conference decided that the party's ultimate object was 'to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange'.⁶ As such, the formation of the party must be placed not only in the context of long-standing demands for the representation of labour on governing bodies, but also of the 'revival' of socialism which had taken place in the 1880s and 1890s, and which had led to the establishment of SDF, Socialist League and Fabian Society in 1884.⁷ Eugenio Biagini and Alastair Reid have questioned the extent to which both socialism and 'New Unionism' brought about a change in working-class political culture, and have emphasized the continuities with an older strand of 'plebeian radicalism'.⁸ Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the unemployed demonstrations organised by the SDF in 1886 and 1887, and in particular the arrest and imprisonment after a Trafalgar Square demonstration in 1887 of John Burns, then a leading member of the Federation, and of Robert Cunninghame Graham, a Scottish MP recently converted to socialism, greatly increased the profile of socialism in Britain.⁹ A few years later, this profile

⁶ ILP Conference Report, 1893, p. 4

⁷ For a brief account of the formation of these organisations, see Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 3-23.

⁸ E.F. Biagini, A.J. Reid, 'Currents of radicalism, 1850-1914', in E.F. Biagini, A.J. Reid, (eds), *Currents of Radicalism. Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991), pp. 1-19.

⁹ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 42-3.

was consolidated by the role of socialists in the outbreak of industrial disputes which led to the establishment of so-called 'new unions', and most notably by the leadership provided by Tom Mann (also at the time a member of the SDF) and John Burns in the London dock-strike of 1889.¹⁰

But although at one level, the ILP can be seen as one of the products of the ferment in labour politics in the 1880s and 1890s, the relationship between the party and other working-class organisations, most notably the trade unions, was by no means a simple one. As David Howell has shown in his detailed study of the early years of the ILP, the shift of both individuals and organisations to an 'independent' political stance was affected by a variety of influences, whose impact made itself felt at local, grass-root level. Industrial relations, local working-class political traditions, the level and nature of trade union organisation, the attitude of Liberal caucuses, all had an impact.¹¹ In an area of strength for the party such as the West Riding, for example, the first gains were made 'in opposition to a reactionary Liberalism', while expansion took place 'by drawing on the affinities with Radical and Progressive idioms in communities where institutional rules and political strengths appeared to justify... a narrowing of the rift'.¹²

In E.P. Thompson's words, the ILP was a movement which 'grew from the bottom up: its birthplaces were in those shadowy parts known as the

¹⁰ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 79-83.

¹¹ Howell, *British Workers*.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 203.

provinces...'.¹³ As early as 1888 a Scottish Labour Party had been established, with Hardie as secretary.¹⁴ Labour Unions were formed in 1891 in Bradford, Huddersfield, Colne Valley and Salford. By 1892 independent organisations had been established in Manchester, Keighley and Halifax. These and others were already in existence by the time the Bradford Conference was held.¹⁵ In a sense, the conference can be seen as the bringing together of local bodies, as part of a process of building up a national organisation.

The Workman's Times, the newspaper with which section 1 of this chapter is concerned, also represented part of this process of bringing together separate individuals and organisations. At the same time, it also embodied a particular understanding of independent labour politics. And although it certainly was not the only body of opinion which sought to influence the party's direction,¹⁶ it raised issues, particularly concerning the relations with waged-workers and trade unions, with which the party had to confront itself throughout the period under consideration, and which had a fundamental impact upon ideas concerning women's enfranchisement.

In 1891 this northern paper, edited by Joseph Burgess, a Lancashire piecer

¹³ E.P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in A. Briggs, J. Saville, (eds), *Essays in Labour History: in Memory of G.D.H. Cole*, (Macmillan, London, 1967), p. 277.

¹⁴ Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 144-56.

¹⁵ Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, p. 30.

¹⁶ See also for example Champion's distinctive brand of 'Tory' socialism. Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 373-88.

and poet turned journalist, had shifted its attention from purely trade union matters, and had began to advocate the representation of 'workers' in Parliament and in local government independently of either Tory or Liberal parties.¹⁷

Inaugurated only a few years before the better known socialist paper the *Clarion*, it was neither as successful nor as long-lived. Lasting only five years, between 1889 and 1894, it was hardly ever out of financial difficulties. It can best be described as the poor relation of successful northern papers such as the *Cotton Factory Times* and *Yorkshire Factory Times*, whose owner it shared until 1892.¹⁸

Yet, it could boast that it was the appeal to its readers to send in names pledging support to the principle of independent labour representation which set into motion the events which led to the Bradford Conference and the establishment of the ILP in 1893.¹⁹

Many causes were advocated, or merely discussed in the columns of the paper, for example trade unionism, the eight hour day and cooperation. Nevertheless, it is in its guise of independent labour representation advocate that I shall, in section 1 of this chapter, consider the attitude of its male contributors towards women's suffrage. In section 2, I shall consider how

¹⁷ J. Burgess, *A Potential Poet? His Autobiography and Verse*, (Burgess Publications, Ilford, 1927), pp. 143-9; J. Burgess, *John Burns. The Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable*, (Reformers' Bookstall, Glasgow, 1911), pp. 1-4.

¹⁸ Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', pp. 11-2.

¹⁹ Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 283-300; Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 99-124.

far such attitudes were adopted by male ILP members in the first years of the party's existence. An investigation of the paper's aims in advocating independent labour representation reveals the primary importance of the association of the 'worker' (whose representation was being sought) with a masculine identity. Not all men may have belonged to the category of 'workers', but all women were excluded. It is necessary to assess the extent to which the achievement of women's own enfranchisement and political emancipation could be accommodated within this ideology, and furthermore, whether this came to be shared by the newly-formed party.

Although the columns of the paper were open to socialists, and Burgess considered himself to be one, the paper's editorial policy was not distinctively socialist: a wider audience was clearly hoped for.

It is impossible to calculate with any precision the extent of the paper's readership. It seems that on 9 January 1891 it was receiving 10,077 orders, increasing to 13,464 by 5 June, and then suddenly jumping to 51,284 on 3 July. The last given figure was that of 62,517 on 2 October. Apparently, though, circulation continued to grow until the time of the 1892 general election, after which it started to fall (although the rate was not revealed).²⁰

On more than one occasion, *The Workman's Times* defined itself as a 'family paper'. Moreover, the presence of a column on 'Household Hints' and serialised romantic fiction was presumably designed to attract a female

²⁰ By way of comparison, the *Clarion's* early circulation of around 30,000 seems to have established the paper as a 'reasonably high-selling weekly'. Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 147.

readership. Nevertheless, the paper's main audience was clearly meant to be not only one of waged workers, but also of those among them who were already members of a trade union. Burgess himself did not believe that many unorganised workers read his paper.²¹ The backgrounds of the paper's contributors seem to have been similar to those of its prospective readership. They were men like Ben Turner, who, apart from addressing meetings to publicise the paper, also undertook 'all sorts of writing, notes, leaders, special articles, news from villages...'. Himself an ex-weaver, he was the Leeds and District Secretary of the West Riding Power-Loom Weavers' Association.²² The sub-editor was the Ulsterman James Bartley, of the Bradford Typographical Association, who later was one of the founders of the Bradford Labour Union.²³

It was the shift from a concentration on purely trade union to political matters, and the advocacy of labour's political action independently of either Liberal or Tory parties, that marked the beginning of the paper's difficulties. Ironically, *The Workman's Times'* fundamental contribution to the establishment of the ILP ultimately served to spell its own destruction, as support from the party was not sufficient to allow it to survive.²⁴

²¹ *The Workman's Times*, 19 June 1891; 19 December 1891; 17 September 1892; 24 September 1892.

²² B. Turner, *About Myself 1863-1930*, (Cayme Press, London, 1930), pp. 77-8; 99-100.

²³ K. Laybourn, 'The Manningham Mills Strike, December 1890 to April 1891', in James, Jowitt, Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History*, pp. 121-2.

²⁴ *The Workman's Times*, 5 November 1892; 12 August 1893. See also Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 13.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the paper had struck a responsive chord among its audience, the success of its message being symptomatic of a growing feeling of discontent towards working-class MPs such as Henry Broadhurst, who were characterised as ‘men who masquerade in Labour garb and dance obedience to the party whips’. It was felt that MPs should have been able to act in the interests of workers, irrespective of either Liberal or Conservative party lines.²⁵

The opposition of interests between ‘workers’ and those who controlled the main political parties was emphasized. In some cases the latter were explicitly identified with capitalists, while it was thought that genuine working-class MPs would naturally legislate in the interests of their own class.²⁶ Very occasionally, a commitment to socialism was explicitly proposed as the distinguishing feature of a new party.²⁷

Much more often, though, the emphasis was on the difference between those who had experience of work and those governing the country who lived in an ‘intellectual heaven’.²⁸ The main parties were dominated by ‘men of wealth’ and ‘parasites’, while the workers were those who produced all the wealth of the country and who had, at least at some point in their lives, experienced the harshness of the labour market. The true

²⁵ *The Workman's Times*, 11 March 1893. See also, for example, 9 October 1891.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 24 July 1891; 11 March 1893; 3 June 1893; 5 August 1893.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 10 July 1891; 15 July 1893.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 6 January 1894.

representatives of labour would thus 'deal with public questions from the point of view of those who have to work with their hands for scanty pay, and who know where the shoe pinches'.²⁹

The same arguments in support of workers' claims to independent representation were used by ILP men after the party's establishment. 'Working-men' were warned by the new organisation that their interests could not be adequately safeguarded by the two main political parties, since these were the representatives of capitalists and landlords who had an interest in the perpetuation of the present industrial system: 'Better a thousand times no representatives than that the men elected should be in the pay of, and consequently at the disposal of, the employer class'.³⁰

As Jim Connell, the author of *The Red Flag*, wrote in the *Labour Leader*, the methods of the ILP were to be constitutional and political: a socialist society would be established and maintained 'by democratic methods, which involved and necessitated getting a majority of the people to vote for our candidate', from local government to the Imperial Parliament.³¹

And yet, if one considers the extent of the franchise as late as 1911, when

²⁹ *Ibid*, 2 January 1892. See also 3 April 1891; 26 June 1891; 30 April 1892.

³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 9 March 1895; see also 7 April 1894; 2 June 1894; 6 July 1895; H.Russell Smart, *The Independent Labour Party, its Programme and Policy*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1893), pp. 14-15; NAC of the ILP, 'An Appeal to Trade Unionists, Cooperators and Workers Generally', (Circular 3, Glasgow, December 1894), p. 3, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, Independent Labour Party Archive (ILP Archive), British Library of Political and Economic Science Archive, London School of Economics.

³¹ *Labour Leader*, 27 April 1895.

only roughly fifty nine per cent of the adult male population was registered to vote in parliamentary elections, it can hardly be said that the proposed party of workers would have represented the working class as a whole, unless one wished to define the latter as exclusively male and selective at that.³² Both *The Workman's Times'* contributors and ILP men, thus, called for a type of empowerment for workers which depended on the possession of the vote, and from which women (as well as a good number of men) were in fact debarred.

The Workman's Times' male contributors were at one level remarkably supportive of women's claim to the vote. Although the paper was not always above caricaturing suffrage activists, it welcomed, for example, the introduction in Parliament by Haldane of a suffrage bill in April 1891, and warned that politicians could not be trusted. Furthermore, although in some cases women's suffrage was advocated within the context of adult suffrage, this was by no means always the case: Haldane's bill, for example, would have granted women the vote on the same terms as men.³³

³² N. Blewett, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918', in *Past & Present*, no 32, (December 1965), pp. 27-56. See also D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour party 1900-1918*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p. 102. Although excluded from the parliamentary franchise, by the late 1880s unmarried women ratepayers represented between twelve and twenty five per cent of the municipal electorate, and could both vote and be elected for School Boards and Boards of Guardians. In 1894 this eligibility was extended also to the newly established Parish and District Councils. P. Hollis, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space', in Rendall, (ed.), *Equal or Different?*, pp. 192-213.

³³ C. Rover, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 220; *The Workman's Times*, 10 April 1891; 24 April 1891; 8 May 1891; 11 February 1893; 18 February 1893; 20 January 1894. In a fictional piece, a 'female agitator' was described as a 'queer woman', and the suspicion was left to hang in the air that she

At another level, though, contributors also emphasized the power of the working-class at the ballot-box and the adequacy of the contemporary franchise: an editorial of May 1891 pointed out that a change in the personnel of government should come before one in the system.³⁴ Even when the limitations of the present franchise were lamented, no mention was made of women's suffrage. Burgess himself emphasized that the great number of non-voters were welcome to join the ILP, but then simply advocated a reform of the Registration Laws.³⁵

ILP men took up *The Workman's Times'* rejection of what they saw as a Liberal-Radical tradition of emphasis on the primary importance of political reforms. Although these would have been welcomed if enacted, it was felt that it was not by 'tinkering with the constitution' (including the introduction of universal suffrage) that the condition of the people was to be improved and the problem of poverty solved. It was rather the economic foundations of contemporary society which would have to be altered. As the first circular published by the NAC of the ILP stated:

intended to steal the money collected at the end of the meeting. See *ibid*, 28 November 1891.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 8 May 1891. See also 31 December 1892; 16 September 1893.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 3 December 1892.

In seeking to democratise the system of government, let us not overlook the infinitely greater issue of the Nationalisation of the Land and Instruments of Production, since upon the latter depends the well-being, and in many cases, the life of the common people.³⁶

When the party's first annual conference thus came to deal with political matters, it was decided to shelve the original motion, which had included adult suffrage, payment of election expenses, and so on. Its place was taken by one 'in favour of every proposal for extending electoral rights and democratising the system of government'. Shaw Maxwell, an ex-land reformer and Scottish Labour Party chairman, who then became the ILP's first general secretary,³⁷ considered this made the party's position clear without laying it open to accusations of taking planks out of 'ordinary political parties'.³⁸

³⁶ NAC of the ILP, 'To the Workers of Great Britain and Ireland Greeting', (ILP Circular 1, Manchester, April 1894), n.p., Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive. See also L. Barrow, I. Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), pp. 75-87.

³⁷ J.L. Smyth, 'The ILP in Glasgow, 1888-1906: the Struggle for Identity', in A. McKinlay, R.J. Morris, (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside, 1893-1932: from Foundation to Disintegration*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p. 5.

³⁸ ILP Conference Report 1893, p. 12. See also *Labour Leader*, 31 March 1894; 9 June 1894; 4 August 1894; 27 April 1895. Although with slightly different emphases, both Pat Thane and Duncan Tanner have observed that a continued commitment to 'political' reforms formed part of the ILP's radical heritage. As will be seen in the following chapters, I agree that MacDonald (on whom both historians concentrate) attempted in later years to formulate a coherent set of ideas concerning political / constitutional change. Furthermore, there certainly are strong and convincing arguments relating to the adoption and adaptation of a radical heritage (and in particular, I believe, language) by ILPers. Nevertheless, all evidence for this early

ILPers also followed the example of *The Workman's Times* in constantly highlighting the already existing political power of the workers, however incomplete. These only had to 'learn' not to use such power in favour of the two main parties for it to become an effective weapon. On the one hand, for example, Fred Hammil, a member of the Fabian executive and of the London Trades Council,³⁹ stated that although he did not put his faith entirely in franchise reform, (including adult suffrage) 'I do say they are stepping stones, and when they are written on the Statute Book of England, then will begin the true democratic fight for the social revolution'. On the other hand, though, he added that

the workers of England have the power in their own hands, and can overturn the constitution of England in 12 months if they care to do it, and our work is to educate them to it.⁴⁰

Once more, there was no mention of women's suffrage as a precondition for the establishment of a true labour representation. (See figure 1 for a

period points to the fact that ILPers were attempting to change priorities, with 'economic' taking precedence over 'political' reforms. P. Thane, 'Labour and Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy and Social Reform, 1880-1914', in Biagini, Reid, (eds), *Currents of Radicalism*, especially pp. 261-70; D. Tanner, 'Ideological Debate in Edwardian Labour Politics: Radicalism, Revisionism and Socialism', in *ibid*, pp. 271-93.

³⁹ Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1895), p. 172.

⁴⁰ F. Hammill, *The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party*, (J. Dowling & Sons, Newcastle, 1893), pp. 20-1.



FIGURE 1. 'LONDON FOR LABOUR'.

representation of the male worker as an elector).⁴¹

Party members were not always able to refrain from ridiculing women's suffrage, and yet there was no shift away from the clear support shown by the male contributors to *The Workman's Times*. I have found no serious argument in print developed by a man against the extension of the franchise to women.

By 1893 a suffrage movement had been in existence for almost thirty years. After the disappointments of the 1880s, most notably the exclusion of women from the provisions of the 1884 reform act, it was experiencing the divisive influence of a variety of different issues, the most significant tension being created by the debate over the expediency of including married women within the terms of proposed suffrage bills.

This, though, does not mean that the movement lacked vitality. Most importantly, Sandra Stanley Holton has shown how an organisation such as the Women's Franchise League, founded in 1889, and committed to the explicit inclusion of provisions for married women in franchise proposals, aimed to secure the support of labour organisations such as radical clubs and Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG) branches. Use was regularly made of working-class propagandists such as Jessie Craigen, while the launch in 1892 of an 'Appeal from Women of all Parties and all Classes' by a committee under the leadership of Millicent Garrett Fawcett shows that attempts to widen the basis of support for suffrage were made also by activists outside

⁴¹ *Labour Leader*, 18 August 1894. See also 3 November 1894; 18 May 1895; J. Trevor, *An Independent Labour Party*, (John Heywood, Manchester, 1892), pp. 4-5; NAC of the ILP, 'An appeal', p. 3.

radical circles.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence of real contact between ILP and suffrage organisations before 1895. Even the Women's Franchise League saw itself as ultimately belonging to the Liberal fold. Richard Pankhurst, a lawyer active in radical causes in Manchester since the 1860s (including women's suffrage) and a leading member of the League, in 1894 joined the ILP together with his wife, Emmeline Pankhurst. He was one of the exceptions, rather than the rule.⁴²

ILPers, though, were clearly aware of the existence of a women's suffrage movement, towards whose demands they adopted a generally favourable attitude. From its founding conference, the ILP had declared its support for any extension of the franchise, which Enid Stacy, a London graduate, Fabian, and one of the most popular of the party's propagandists,⁴³ considered implied the inclusion of women. At the 1895 Conference, at least partly under pressure from the Glasgow Women's Labour Party and its representative, Isabella Bream Pearce (the *Labour Leader's* columnist 'Lily Bell') such a commitment was made explicit. At Hardie's suggestion, the original NAC proposal that 'the ILP is in favour of every proposal for extending electoral rights and democratising the system of government' was

⁴² S. Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days*, pp. 7-90; D. Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes. Women's Emancipation in the 1890s*, (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1986), pp. 137-64.

⁴³ Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1895), p. 188.

amended to include 'to both men and women' after 'rights'.⁴⁴

The wording would clearly leave open to ILPers the possibility of supporting a measure of women's suffrage in advance of full adult suffrage. They were, thus, called upon in no uncertain terms to make their presence felt at a suffrage meeting organised by the North of England Society for Women's Suffrage at the Manchester Free Trade Hall on 25 June 1894:

Verily, if any recreant soul stays away for any less cause than his own funeral, I will pronounce upon him, that new, improved malediction which I have hitherto strictly reserved for city councillors and composers...⁴⁵

The reasons for such support were, though, hardly ever spelt out: references to women's suffrage before the general election of 1895 tended to be incidental and brief. They do not help to solve the contradiction between supporting a form of emancipation for 'workers' which used political power as a tool while scorning it as an end in itself, and supporting another for 'women', which centred on the empowerment brought by political enfranchisement. A wider analysis of the roles and identities attributed to 'workers' and 'women' becomes necessary.

The workplace was the central area of contest for the ILP, and the 'workers' its main concern. In a poem celebrating the 1894 May Day, the

⁴⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1895, p. 10; ILP Conference. Resolutions and Amendments, 1895, p. 13, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 23 June 1894. See also 19 May 1894; 30 June 1894; 20 April 1895; 25 May 1895.

painter and designer, as well as socialist writer and lecturer, Walter Crane,⁴⁶ spoke for many others in looking forward to a time ‘... when the world’s workers, sisters and brothers, Shall build, in the new-coming years a fair house of Life - not for others, For the earth and its fullness is theirs’.⁴⁷ Many ILP pioneers retrospectively connected their experience of work and workplace conditions with their first commitment to the cause of Labour. Writing in the 1930s, Ben Tillett vividly remembered the casual nature of work in the London docks fifty years earlier, and the fights among labourers to obtain one day’s employment. ‘It was then that the seeds were sown in my mind which made me an agitator and a fanatical evangelist of Labour’.⁴⁸

The Workman’s Times, hoping to attract a trade union readership, was always careful about explicitly committing itself to socialism. In comparison, the party was much more explicit about its ultimate aim. It saw its role as a workers’ party as helping effect the establishment of a socialist society. Its aim was to ‘enable the community to engage in production and distribution on a cooperative basis’.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1894.

⁴⁸ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, (John Long, London, 1931), pp. 75-6. See also F. W. Jowett, *What Made me a Socialist*, (Strickland Press, Glasgow, 1941), pp. 3-4; R. Smillie, *My Life for Labour*, (Mills & Boon, London, 1924), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁹ NAC of the ILP, ‘An appeal’, pp. 2-3, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive. See also T. Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester 1894); *Labour Leader*, 16 June 1894; 22 September 1894; 11 May 1895; 6 July 1895.

This certainly did not mean, though, that the party's vision was a purely materialistic one. On the contrary, great pains were taken to counter such an impression. With hindsight, J. McNair wrote that to the ILP pioneers, socialism meant more than the economic transformation of society: they were fired by a moral, or even religious zeal.⁵⁰ Edwin Halford, a baker by trade and secretary of the Bradford Labour Church, writing in 1893 to Hardie, believed that organisations such as the Labour Church⁵¹ had a vital role to play within the labour movement, thus

lifting the question from the low sordid level which it now occupies to a higher and nobler plane of thought, and generally imparting that solidity, that sense of brotherhood of humanity as a whole, without which the movement must at no very distant date collapse like a bubble pricked with a pin.⁵²

In a path-breaking article, Stephen Yeo has suggested that the 1880s and 1890s were characterised by a great 'religious' enthusiasm in socialism, and a belief that the Cooperative Commonwealth was about to be established.

⁵⁰ F. Johnson, *Independent Labour Party 1893-1943. Jubilee Souvenir*, (ILP, London, 1943), p. 1.

⁵¹ The first Labour Church had been established in Manchester by John Trevor, a Unitarian minister, in 1891. Mostly concentrated in the textile regions of Lancashire and Yorkshire, they often coexisted with ILP branches, their memberships overlapping. L. Smith, 'Religion and the ILP', in James, Jowitt, Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History*, pp. 259-61.

⁵² E. Halford to J.K. Hardie, n.d. c.1893, Francis Johnson Correspondence, (F.J. Corr.) ILP Archive. For Halford, see Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1897), p. 226.

Such enthusiasm affected not only the ILP, but all socialist bodies.⁵³ Most ILPers' autobiographies commented on the almost 'spiritual' nature of the early days' commitment to socialism. J.R. Clynes, an Oldham piecer and Lancashire organiser for the Gasworkers' Union, remembered how before his election as Labour MP in 1906, a great part of his work 'consisted in an endless round of Labour meetings at which I preached the gospel of the new Party'. The pioneers of the 1890s 'were upheld by a deep sense of the religious necessity for their work'.⁵⁴ Even Harry Snell, the son of agricultural labourers, whose first entry into politics had been through the secularist movement while in Nottingham working in various public houses, described the young socialist advocates of the 1890s as 'preachers filled by the Holy Ghost'. The very experience of socialist propaganda was 'scorching and cleansing, a spiritual cleansing the like of which I shall never again see'.⁵⁵

There did not exist a single definition of the ethical basis of the ILP's socialism: John Bruce Glasier, for example, openly stated his atheism, and saw in socialism the possibility of spiritual fulfilment in this world.⁵⁶ J.M.

⁵³ S. Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 4, (Autumn 1977), pp. 5-56.

⁵⁴ J.R. Clynes, *Memoirs, 1869-1924*, vol. I, (Hutchinson & Co, London, 1937), pp. 84-5.

⁵⁵ H. Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself*, (J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1936), pp. 99-100. See also S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left. Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist*, (Edward Arnold & Co., London, 1938), p. 30; Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 63-4.

⁵⁶ K. St. John Conway, J. Bruce Glasier, *The Religion of Socialism*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1895), pp. 10-6.

Wilson, on the other hand, believed that the ethical basis of the labour movement lay in the moral potential existing in each individual, and which ultimately derived from God.⁵⁷ ILPers shared a vision of socialism based on a set of moral/ethical principles, (however at times ill-defined) which they often expressed using a religious (in practice, Christian) language: aspirations ranged beyond improvements in material well-being.

We have a right to refuse the name of socialist to those who have not grasped the economic truth. But an economic theory alone, or any number of economic theories will not make a religion. If you want socialism to be a religion, you must widen your definition of socialism. You must draw out all the ethical and spiritual implications of these desires and efforts for a juster social order.⁵⁸

The chapter's following two sections will consider where women's own emancipation could fit into this vision of socialism as both solidly grounded in the workplace and at the same time understood as a spiritual and moral endeavour. The first will focus on *The Workman's Times*, the second on ILP men more in general. The aim is to assess what role they saw women as playing within society: were they simply part of the mass of 'workers' whose industrial salvation the ILP was seeking? It is to the strategy adopted by the

⁵⁷ J.M. Wilson, *The Ethical Basis of the Labour Movement*, (Labour Literature Society, Glasgow, 1895), p. 14.

⁵⁸ R. Blatchford in *The Labour Prophet*, April 1897, quoted in Yeo, 'A New Life', pp. 5-6. See also Alf Mattison's description of his 'conversion' to socialism in his manuscript 'Some random reminiscences of the early years of the socialist movement 1885-1895', (1932), Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 13), ILP Archive.

male contributors to *The Workman's Times* that we need to turn first of all.

1-1. 'By all means let the ladies have a chance...'

There was no blanket condemnation of women's work anywhere in *The Workman's Times*. Their participation in the labour market was often taken for granted. In the case of young or single women such participation was even commended. In a short story entitled 'Two Girls' Plans', the girls were described as they discussed their plans on leaving school. Both were mechanics' daughters, but the mother of one of them had told her that it was not genteel for women to work, while the other wanted to become a dressmaker to help her family's finances. In the end the first one died miserably, having become unfit for any activity, while the second started a prosperous dressmaking business, later in a telling twist giving that up to marry an even more prosperous manufacturer.⁵⁹ By the 1890s it was considered the norm for such girls to go out to work before marriage. Shop-work in particular provided working class girls with a relatively high-status occupation without requiring more than an elementary education, although as the story indicates, marriage continued to be considered girls' ultimate

⁵⁹ *The Workman's Times*, 6 February 1892.

goal in life.⁶⁰

Occasionally the necessity (if not the advisability) of married women's work was admitted. Contemporary social commentators had increasingly come to the conclusion that married women's work was not an evil per se but the result of evil circumstances. Similarly *The Workman's Times* recognised that women such as the London matchbox makers worked because, for various reasons, the breadwinning husband could not provide for the family.⁶¹ Much emphasis was placed on the importance of forming strong trade union organisations among working women, in sympathy with the trend towards mixed, general unions, rather than with the exclusive practices of many craft societies: '[United, women would]... be the better able to command proper respect due to labour of all sorts, and gradually but surely elevate themselves socially, morally and politically'.⁶² The work of women such as Lady Dilke of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL)

⁶⁰ H. Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work. A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989), pp. 175-87. For a useful introduction into the shifts in patterns of women's employment in the 1890s, see Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes*, pp. 94-109. For two excellent studies of the nature of women's participation in the workplace, which cover a longer time-span, see A.V. John (ed.), *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986); E. Gordon, E. Breitenbach, (eds), *The World is Ill-Divided. Women's Work in Scotland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1990).

⁶¹ S. Meacham, *A Life Apart. The English Working Class, 1890-1914*, (Thames and Hudson, London, 1977), p. 97; *The Workman's Times*, 23 April 1892; 30 April 1892; 18 June 1892.

⁶² *The Workman's Times*, 19 December 1891. See also B. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, (Virago, London, 1984, first edition 1920), pp. 26-43.

was warmly praised.⁶³ In her classic study of women's trade unionism, Barbara Drake observed how the two decades between 1886 and 1906 saw not only the formation of a number of small women's societies, often under the auspices of the WTUL, but also the opening up to women of men's trade unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, the London Society of Compositors, and so on. These organisations, mostly of skilled workers, either opened up their membership to women or established allied women's sections. Such actions, though, were 'not entirely disinterested'. The introduction of new machinery and the development of new sub-divisions of labour in many of these trades 'had increasingly the effect of adapting... [them] to semi-skilled classes of workers, and underpaid women were more than usually dangerous competitors'.⁶⁴

Equally, underlying most of *The Workman's Times*' discussions of women's waged work was the belief that while the latter may at times have been a necessity, and in the case of young girls even a praiseworthy activity, work was essentially a masculine right and duty. A division of labour was seen as desirable whereby the men could support their families with married women not being forced to seek work outside the home. In this *The Workman's Times* reflected the increasingly wide acceptance, at least among certain sections of the working class, of the desirability for the male worker

⁶³ For a positive attitude towards women's work, see *The Workman's Times*, 5 June 1891; 11 September 1891; 7 May 1892; 10 September 1892.

⁶⁴ Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 26-43. The extent to which trade unions' sectional policies were abandoned must not be exaggerated. See Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 86-101.

to be able to support a family on his sole earnings, while at the same time securing the wife's domestic services.⁶⁵ Investigations such as those carried out by the Women's Industrial Council in the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrate that for vast sections of the working class this remained only an aspiration. Nevertheless, historians such as Sonya Rose and Keith McClelland have shown that apart from its economic rationale, considerable emotional investment was placed in the equation between notions of 'respectable masculinity' and status as family provider.⁶⁶ *The Workman's Times* endorsed a vision of society in which men and women's roles were clearly distinguished: '[Men]... have no more right poking [their]... nose into the kitchen than [women]... to walk into... [the men's] place of business and give them directions...'.⁶⁷

Understandably, in this context, *The Workman's Times'* contributors considered women's competition in what was perceived as 'men's work' to be particularly obnoxious. As Harriet Bradley has shown, although by the 1890s the masculine nature of trades such as fishing was firmly established, others like hosiery and pottery were experiencing feminisation and shifting gender divisions. She considers the 1880s and 1890s to have been central

⁶⁵ For the 'family wage' see W. Secombe, 'Patriarchy Stabilized: the Construction of the Male Bread Winner Norm in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Social History*, vol. 11, no 1, (January 1986), pp. 53-76.

⁶⁶ C. Black, *Married Women's Work*, (Virago, London, 1983, first edition 1915); Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 126-53; K. McClelland, 'Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan"', pp. 74-81. See also Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 73-101.

⁶⁷ *The Workman's Times*, 6 February 1892. See also 1 May 1891; 17 July 1891; 10 September 1892; 18 March 1893.

decades in the redefinition of gender roles in the workplace, causing a widespread sense of crisis among many sections of the male workforce, presumably including *The Workman's Times'* readership.⁶⁸ The paper clearly reflected such concerns, although an attempt was made to soften the condemnation by emphasizing that the objection was to the 'unfairness' of women's competition:

By all means let the ladies have a chance. But... no woman ought to take work previously done by a man at less wages than the man was wont to receive. If she does... she is neither more nor less than a blackleg....⁶⁹

And yet there was a clear distaste for what was perceived as a reversal of proper gender roles, which resulted in men standing idle while women were engaged as cheap labour to the benefit of the employer and detriment to the family. It was suggested, thus, that if women were excluded from chain-making there would have been more work and higher wages for men. It was largely because of female competition that this was the 'worst paid skilled industry in the world'.⁷⁰

Such an ambivalent attitude towards women's work was often bound up with (and possibly at the same time rationalised by) an emphasis on the 'unsuitability' for women of certain types of employment. *The Workman's*

⁶⁸ Bradley, *Men's Work*.

⁶⁹ *The Workman's Times*, 1 May 1891.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 3 April 1891. See also 20 February 1891; 5 June 1891.

Times tended to place particular importance on the strength necessary to perform tasks such as chain-making, a strength which men, but not women, were considered to possess.

This issue was raised in an article by a J.W. Gardner, dealing with the problem of unemployment in the mining industry. Among the various suggested solutions, such as reducing hours of work or abolishing royalties, can be found the abolition of the work of women on the pit brow. But although the author's central concern was clearly to increase male employment opportunities, he still felt the necessity of rationalizing his demand for the exclusion of women from surface work, by emphasizing the unsuitability for women of work which involved using heavy hammers, wheeling barrows and pushing wagons full of coal.⁷¹

A year earlier, though, *The Workman's Times* had published a rather startling challenge to such ideas in a piece whose aim was to refute the 'physical force' argument against women's suffrage. This stated that men such as Gladstone had obviously never

seen the women in the white-lead works carrying great loads up and down ladders on their heads, nor the poor girls cleansing the dirt out of their lordships' garments in damp cellars; nor the girls in countless factories, warehouses and shops preserving the divine ideal of the politicians' 'woman' at high pressure through a 60 or 70 hours week.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 18 March 1893. For a study of women's employment in coal mines, see A.V. John, *By the Sweat of their Brow. Women Workers in Victorian Coal Mines*, (Croom Helm, London, 1980).

If political representation were a case of physical force, women could hold their own.⁷² A note of pride in the strength of working class women can certainly be detected here, but nonetheless the work itself was hardly portrayed as a possible source of pride. Furthermore, this piece was unique: women's employment in 'unsuitable' trades, especially those requiring masculine attributes of physical strength was otherwise seen as both degrading to women and a threat to men.⁷³

A good deal was written about women's role and responsibilities as wives and mothers. They were supposed to be confidants, advisers and makers of the 'little domestic sphere so bright and cheerful that... [the] husband and children will not want to spend their evenings away from it'.⁷⁴ Although a contributor writing under the nom de plume of 'Proletarian' looked forward to a time when women would no longer be 'domestic drudges', and motherhood and domestic work received a state payment, he did not question the association of women with these activities.⁷⁵ Burgess chose to emphasize the power wielded by women in their capacity as housekeepers and consumers. He pointed out that no cooperative venture could be successful without enlisting the support of those in charge of buying household goods. He himself had taken great pains to explain to his wife

⁷² *Ibid*, 30 April 1892.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 15 May 1891; 14 August 1891; 2 April 1892.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 19 December 1891.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 27 February 1892. See also 20 February 1891; 12 December 1891; 10 September 1892; 17 March 1894.

Sarah why, on coming home in the evening, he did not wish to see certain products on the tea table. It seems clear that the Burgess household also operated on the basis that the husband's role was to provide financial support, that of the wife to care for house and numerous offspring.⁷⁶

Yet, although it is doubtful whether many would have gone so far as the anonymous (therefore, possibly a woman) correspondent who in a letter advocated birth control in order to safeguard women's health, marriage and motherhood were not always seen as the only future open to women.⁷⁷ For those who did not meet the 'right man', earning their own livelihood was emphasized as a perfectly acceptable alternative. The useful and fulfilling nature of 'old maids' lives was stressed, whilst most of the court cases reported in the paper's columns and describing incidents of violence between spouses, must effectively have subverted any idyllic image of domestic life, especially among the poorer sections of the population.⁷⁸

On the whole, though, the image of womanhood represented by *The Workman's Times* was connected only in a very limited sense to waged work: a woman was by no means always also a 'worker'. Women's work was accepted, or even commended in the case of single women, although even here only so long as it was considered 'suitable' and did not interfere with men's employment. Married women's domestic role, at least as an ideal, if not always a reality, was emphasized.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 19 December 1891.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 13 February 1892.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 30 January 1891; 4 September 1891; 19 August 1893.

It is necessary now to consider the ways in which independent labour representation was advocated and the gender assumptions expressed, particularly in relation to the use of the term 'workers'. Was the latter gender-neutral in its meaning, thereby including both men and women?

With very few exceptions, the tone of the language used when advocating independent labour representation was uncompromisingly masculine. It was the election of 'working men' that was almost invariably sought.⁷⁹ This may well have been the result of linguistic convention, whereby the feminine was simply implied within the masculine: the use of 'working men' may have been a convenient short-hand for 'working men and women'. 'Frances' certainly thought so: she started her regular feature on women workers in the belief that the paper's editor and contributors wished *The Workman's Times* title to be 'parsed "common gender" and understood *Workers' Times*'.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it is my contention that we are dealing not with linguistic convention, but with the construction of a notion of 'worker' associated with a masculine identity, the latter contributing an essential characteristic to the 'labour' whose independent representation was being sought.

In many cases, the independent representation of workers was suggestively portrayed as a masculine affair. A particularly interesting symbolism was proposed for example by John Trevor, who compared capitalists and their

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 28 August 1891; 4 November 1893; 25 November 1893. An example of such language is Will Sprow's use of the terms 'horny-handed sons of toil'; *ibid*, 21 October 1893. Possibly as a counter to its overwhelmingly masculine tone, on 21 May 1892 the subtitle 'Everybody's paper' started to appear on the paper's front page.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 13 February 1892.

parties to a bad mother who tried to control Labour, her son, first by kicking and then by 'wooing' him, until eventually the latter achieved his 'manhood' by starting to despise and then breaking relations with her.⁸¹

The drawings which marked the 1893 and 1894 Conferences of the ILP are also revealing, and certainly seem to confirm Eric Hobsbawm's suggestion that by the 1890s a 'masculinization' of Socialist and trade union imagery was taking place, with the naked muscular male torso now taking centre stage. The drawings were provided by an artist working under the pseudonym of 'Leon Caryll', and obviously sympathetic to the cause of independent labour representation. They portrayed the insurgent Labour as a male, muscular and bearded figure, reminiscent of a Saxon warrior. (Figure 2)⁸²

Most often, though, the masculine nature of labour was suggested by the use of the ambiguous term of 'working man'. While women were seen only in a very limited sense as 'workers', the image of the male worker was generally much more positive, despite some deprecation of the excessive identification of the working class man with the 'worker'. This may have reflected the shift observed by some historians, away from an exclusively

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 5 December 1891.

⁸² *Ibid*, 4 February 1893. E. Hobsbawm, 'Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography', in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 6, (Autumn 1978), pp. 121-38. For the use of masculine imagery and rhetoric, see also *The Workman's Times*, 31 July 1891; 3 September 1892; 31 December 1892; 10 March 1894. Burgess seems to have become aware of such a masculine bias. In an editorial in which he stated that '... (the Labour movement) is a movement in which the man asserts the dignity of man, and of labour as man's most divine attribute', he took pains to add that the movement at its best also embraced women and children. *Ibid*, 20 January 1894.



FIGURE 2. 'THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY'.

work-centred masculine culture, as even well-paid manual workers tended to find less satisfaction in their work. Writing about Salford in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Robert Roberts scorned the romanticization of men's attachment to their work. As he succinctly put it, 'they toiled on through mortal fear of getting the sack'.⁸³ It was stated in *The Workman's Times* that the labour movement stood not only for improvements in workplace conditions. As a contributor writing under the nom de plume of 'Bronterre' pointed out: '... the toiler has discovered that he is also a man, and demands a man's necessities: health, clothing, housing, culture...'.⁸⁴ The emphasis placed by some commentators on the importance of 'honest toil' was considered to be a mockery under the present system, seeing that all the advantages of labour went to the capitalists. The drudgery of workers such as alkali operatives was stressed.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, in general, waged work was considered to hold a distinctively positive role in a man's life, to the extent that it could be stated that 'not only, in the case of most men, does daily work get daily bread, but the daily work is as necessary for health and happiness as daily food'. Conversely, unemployment was almost invariably portrayed as a masculine calamity. Thus, although 'Jean Val-Jean' emphasized the right not only of men but

⁸³ G. Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working-Class', in *Journal of Social History*, vol. 7, no 4, (Summer 1974), pp. 485-86; R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum. Salford in the First Quarter of the Century*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, first edition 1971), p. 88.

⁸⁴ *The Workman's Times*, 19 December 1891.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 14 November 1891; 26 March 1892; 10 December 1892.

also of women and children to live by their labour, he saw unemployment, pauperism, and its consequent disenfranchisement as making 'the man... an outsider; he has no place among his fellows except such as they choose to accord him'.⁸⁶

The drawings of workers provided for the paper from May 1892 by 'Leon Caryll' are also revealing. Not only were the workers portrayed invariably male, but their 'maleness' was also greatly emphasized. Although some effort was made to depict these as intelligent men (for example two agricultural labourers were portrayed as reading the paper), greater stress was placed on their muscular arms and bodies and the fact that they were obviously engaged in hard, manual labour. (Figure 3)⁸⁷ By the end of the century the performance of physically demanding work was a central route to the achievement of a successful working class masculinity within the workplace, and one more easily realisable than the ability to support a family, especially by unskilled/casual workers.⁸⁸ In his autobiography, the gasworkers' organiser, SDFer and Labour MP Will Thorne remembered the pride in their physical strength common among navvies. Being called 'thick leg' was the highest accolade a man could receive. 'I have known them to wrap pieces of calico around their calves to make them bulge and give them a "thick-

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 28 October 1893. See also 12 December 1891; 27 February 1892; 21 May 1892; 1 April 1893.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 1 April 1893.

⁸⁸ Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p. 130.



FIGURE 3. 'BY HAMMER AND HAND ALL ARTS DO STAND'.

legged" appearance'.⁸⁹ The association of masculinity with labour requiring physical strength, only occasionally usurped by women, such as in the case of the Cradley Heath chain-makers, was endorsed by *The Workman's Times*.⁹⁰

Efforts were made to include within the ranks of Labour not women, but rather, those men who did not conform to such images of muscular, manual labour. This can be seen for example in the calls made to clerical and shop workers to abandon their pretensions to gentility, recognise that 'they are no better off than unskilled labourers' and join the ranks of labour. Very little importance was placed on the notion of 'respectability' and excessive attachment to it among workers was condemned.⁹¹

In some ways, therefore, *The Workman's Times*' 'worker' seems to have been quite different from McClelland's 'independent' and 'respectable' artisan of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, as the earlier language of respectability was rejected and the importance of physical strength given greater prominence.⁹² Rose has located a shift in definitions of masculinity

⁸⁹ W. Thorne, *My Life's Battles*, (George Newnes, London, 1925), pp. 32-3. Thorne became Labour MP for West Ham South in 1906.

⁹⁰ For a parallel with the imagery used by the American 'wobblies', see E. Faue, '"The Dynamo of Change": Gender and Solidarity in the American Labour Movement of the 1930s', in *Gender & History*, vol. 1, no 2, (Summer 1989), pp. 138-58. For other 'Leon Caryl' drawings, see *The Workman's Times*, 29 May 1892; 7 January 1893.

⁹¹ *The Workman's Times*, 31 October 1891; 26 March 1892; 3 September 1892; 12 August 1893.

⁹² McClelland, 'Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan"', pp. 74-81.

among organized workers in the 1880s, with the rise of 'new unionism'.⁹³ Nevertheless, the continuities were just as significant: the sexual division of labour and the family wage, themselves central gender components of earlier working class 'respectability', remained unchallenged. Thus, when white-collar workers' 'respectability' was being condemned, the reference was not to its basis in family arrangements, but rather to its manifestations within the workplace: the deferential attitude and the aping of middle class habits, symbolized by the wearing of the black coat.

It is possible to conclude that *The Workman's Times*' advocacy of independent labour representation for 'working men' was no simple linguistic short-hand, but rather represented a *more or less conscious association* of workers for wages outside the home with masculinity: often a new type of uncompromising, 'muscular' masculinity, although still based upon domestic authority. Both the paper's male readership and contributors would have been able to identify with this.

It is clear that the terminology used to advocate the independent representation of labour was a class-bound one, serving to emphasize the opposition between the 'workers' and the 'non-workers' who controlled the main political parties. It was also a gendered one. Women were perceived primarily not as workers, but rather as domestic beings (although the distinction was never quite so clear-cut). They could thus be ignored when advocating independent labour representation because their role within

⁹³ S. O. Rose, 'Gender and Labour History, the Nineteenth Century Legacy', in *International Review of Social History*, vol. 38, (1993), p. 155.

society was seen as different from that of the masculine worker: women's claim to political empowerment was a separate, if equally just cause. Once obtained, this would lead to their separate interests being represented on political bodies, although at least one contributor to the paper felt there were limits beyond which such representation should not be allowed. 'The Chucker-Out' deplored the situation where both husbands and wives could be enfranchised while holding different political opinions.⁹⁴ He, though, was a lone voice. As 'Cunctator' pointed out, enfranchised women would be able to look after the interests of all women and to legislate for working women in particular. The latter did not necessarily imply a recognition of women's role as 'workers'. *Burgess, for example, considered that one of the first acts of politically powerful women to safeguard the interests of working women would have been to prohibit their employment in chain-making.*⁹⁵

It was also emphasized that women's own brand of 'domestic' expertise and distinctive 'female' character could be made use of in the political sphere. As 'C.G.' pointed out, home certainly was the proper sphere for women, but the conception of the home had to be widened to encompass the whole world:

... and here, in her own home, amongst her own children, shall woman, the mother of the race, exercise those qualities of heart and mind that shall rise man from a grovelling savage to

⁹⁴ *The Workman's Times*, 23 April 1892.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 10 April 1891; 1 May 1891.

a God.⁹⁶

An example of the tension resulting from the desire to include women within the ILP's constituency, but only on very specific terms, was evident in the modification to the design of a party banner presented in the Autumn of 1893 by 'Leon Caryll'. The first version was dominated by the figures of two male workers holding their work-implements. (Figure 4)⁹⁷ Their bearded faces, large, muscular bodies and grim features, all pointed to the expression of a masculinity based on the undertaking of physically demanding, manual toil, both within the context of industry and agriculture. The background, made up both of further figures of masculine workers and of the products of their labour, together with the writing, served to emphasize further the experience of 'masculine' work as a distinguishing feature of ILP adherents.

A week after the publication of the design for the banner, though, Burgess published a letter by a B.Walter, whom he presumed to be a woman, protesting against the absence of female figures.⁹⁸ The result was a modified version, in which two female figures sitting at the feet of the central male figures were introduced. (Figure 5)⁹⁹ The artist had made an effort to portray these women as 'workers': the rolled up sleeves of one

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 31 October 1891. See also 12 December 1891.

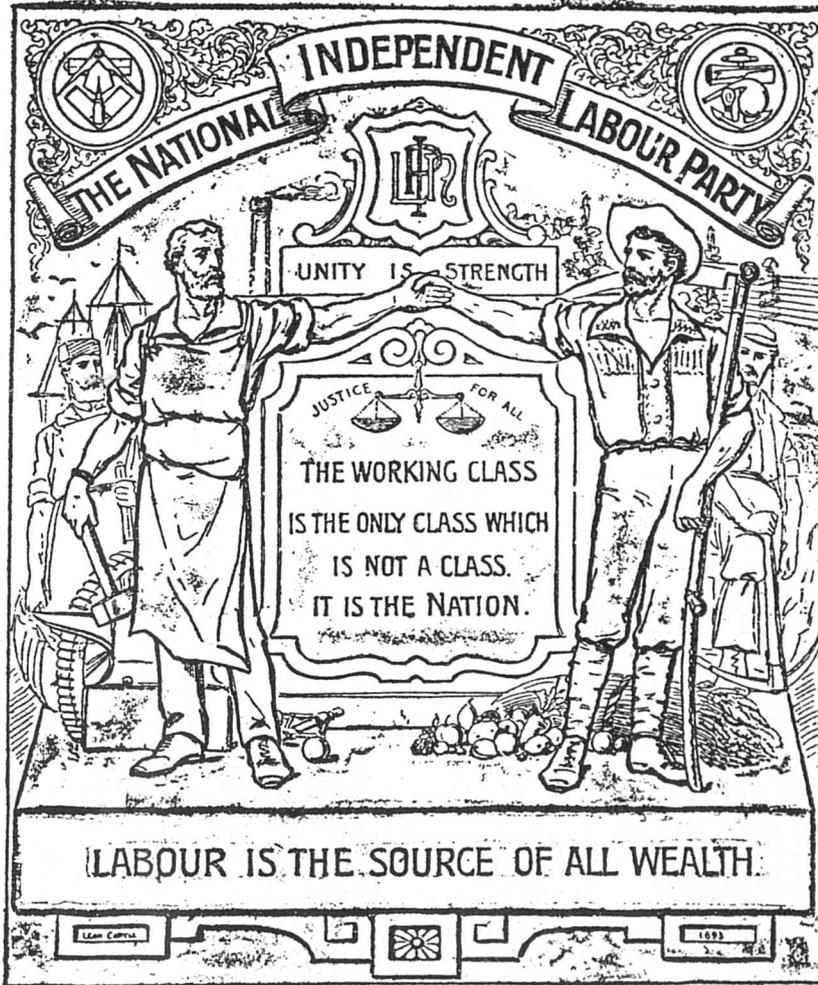
⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 4 November 1893.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 11 November 1893.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 30 December 1893.

LEON CARYLL'S I.L.P. BANNER.

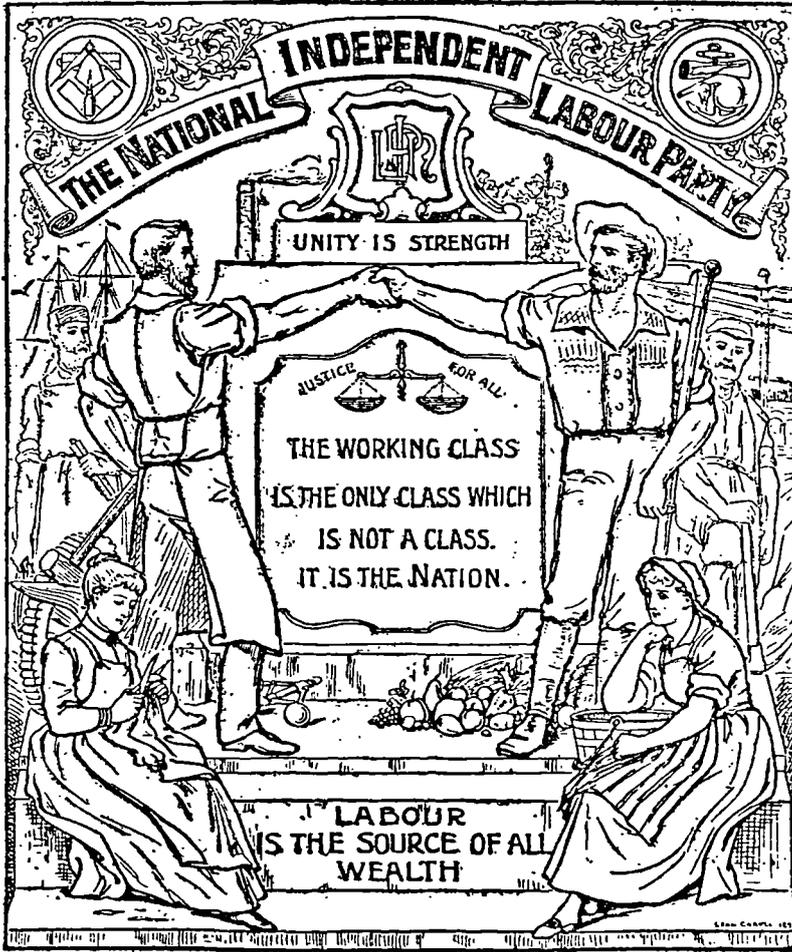
SEE NOTES BY AUTOLYCUS.



MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. Mrs. Hope sang "O rest in the Lord." Full roof
to We have made arrangements to start

FIGURE 4. 'LABOUR IS THE SOURCE OF ALL WEALTH'
(FIRST VERSION).

LEON CARYLL'S I.L.P. BANNER
(AMENDED DESIGN).



WAYSIDE NOTES.

of Saxe-Coburg, and not half as comfortable: his particular £10,000 and Clarence House is an

FIGURE 5. 'LABOUR IS THE SOURCE OF ALL WEALTH'.
(SECOND VERSION).

figure further suggested that such work need not always have been of a delicate character. Yet, these figures were much smaller and daintier than the male ones. Particularly notable is the much reduced emphasis on the size of arms and feet. The impression is that although the women may also have been 'workers', the nature of their work would have been different from the men's, and would not have required the same amount of physical strength: the sewing performed by one of the female figures would thus have been an example of 'suitable' work. Despite these reservations, the second banner shows that it would not have been impossible to elaborate a notion of 'labour' and of 'workers' without the masculine undertones to be found in *The Workman's Times*, and thus, possibly opening the way for women's fuller integration within the party.¹⁰⁰

Among the male contributors to *The Workman's Times* the only radically different position on the subject of women's political power was that taken by H. Halliday Sparling, an old Socialist Leaguer, but at the time a member of the Fabian executive. He did not emphasize the distinctiveness of the position of women within society. Sparling considered it a duty on the part of socialists to aim for the extinction of all privileges of sex, just as much as those of class, women's emancipation laying at the very heart of the Labour movement. From here it could not be dismissed with excuses about expediency. He concluded by stating that '... there must be no whittling away

¹⁰⁰ It is worth noting here that there was no inevitability about waged work as central to the development of a working-class masculinity either. For the development of a different type of masculinity see for example Walker, "I Live But Not Yet I for Christ Liveth In Me", pp. 92-112.

of the Democratic claim of equal political power, as a step towards equal economic freedom'. Of course, it is only too easy to read too much in one phrase, and yet it is possible that Halliday Sparling may not have been too enamoured of the 'domestic' argument in favour of women's political empowerment, and may have favoured a greater integration of 'women' within the ranks of 'workers'. If carried to its logical conclusion, this would then have subverted the notion of independent labour representation as a masculine entity.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, the different rhetoric used by *The Workman's Times* throughout the period under consideration when advocating independent representation and women's suffrage, also lends weight to the argument that most of its male contributors continued to view the emancipation of women and of workers as separate causes. In the latter case, the two most commonly recurrent images were those of war and of slavery. The labour movement was on the one hand portrayed as engaged in battle, a plethora of related images being utilized: banners, marches, armours, strongholds and soldiers all served to lend vividness to the picture. On the other hand, workers were portrayed as slaves who would only finally be able to throw off the chains of bondage through the labour movement. 'Jean Val-Jean' combined both forms of imagery when he called upon the 'Spirit of liberty':

¹⁰¹ *The Workman's Times*, 18 February 1893. 'R.B.C.' also suggested that men and women should work together, in this case in the forthcoming municipal elections, and protect their own interests 'against all would-be representatives of merely class interests'. *Ibid*, 28 October 1893.

Rouse thou the toiler's bands.
Strengthen the toiler's hands
For victory.
Freedom our battle cry
Rending the vaulted sky
Hark! hear the dying sigh
Of slavery.¹⁰²

These images need not necessarily imply gendered overtones, although the language of war may have been more or less consciously associated with masculinity, since, very simply, slavery had never been the exclusively male institution which the army has been in the Western world. Nonetheless, this rhetoric did emphasize once more the masculinity of the workers whose independent representation was being sought. Thus 'The errand boy' stated that he would march under the banner of the 'sons of toil [and]... my brothers, my comrades shall march behind it... [against Capital]', and workers would escape from the condition of slavery in which they had fallen and regain their 'manhood' only through participation in the labour movement.¹⁰³ 'Elihu' accused the landowning classes of having used the power derived from their monopoly of high office and possession of the land '... to crush these men into helpless servitude... generation by generation you have brutalised and destroyed their manhood...'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 7 October 1893. For images of war, see 9 July 1892; 7 October 1893. For images of slavery, see 12 December 1891; 4 February 1893; 10 March 1894.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 9 July 1892.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 4 February 1893. The use of a romanticised and 'heroic' rhetoric of violence by the American labour movement, and in particular by the Section 574 of the Minneapolis General Drivers' Union in the 1930s

These images were not used when the political empowerment of women was discussed. No significant generalization is possible about the rhetoric used when advocating women's suffrage; often the articles dealing with the issue were quite short, while the longer ones differed widely in the arguments used. One only has to think of Halliday Sparling's emphasis on women's suffrage as a democratic right and the arguments put forward by 'C.G.' concerning women's distinctive contribution to political life. Yet it is clear that women were not appealed to as slaves of Capital and were not called upon to prepare themselves for battle.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the image of slavery was not completely absent when women's suffrage was advocated, though such imagery was used to condemn contemporary relations between the sexes, rather than between employers and employees. Women were seen to have become 'the slaves of slaves', the latter often being identified with the figure of the husband. The development of a new type of relationship was advocated, whereby men and women would be 'free comrade(s)', rather than the woman being treated as a 'chattel'. 'C.G.' went further and emphasized how contemporary relations between the sexes were affecting political life, by ensuring the dominance of the masculine element:

Individualism... with its every man for himself maxims... its

provides an interesting comparison. Faue, "The Dynamo of Change", pp. 142-7. As Faue points out, there was no space for women within this rhetoric.

¹⁰⁵ *The Workman's Times*, 18 February 1893; 12 December 1891.

worship of strength and brutal contempt of weakness, is the natural outcome of an extreme development of the male principle in human affairs;... never 'til man vacates his usurped powers,... will the din of battle and confusion of strife cease...¹⁰⁶

Lucy Bland has observed how in the 1890s feminist debates were dominated by the issue of married women, their right to control their bodies and to change male sexual practices. It is possible that *The Workman's Times* was reflecting at least an echo of these debates.¹⁰⁷

The rhetoric employed by the (male) contributors to *The Workman's Times*, thus, not only emphasized the masculine nature of independent labour representation, but also showed the way in which women were perceived to suffer from distinctive problems characteristic of their sex, particularly in their relations with men. But although suffrage could be seen as part of a wider need to reform the unequal relations between the sexes, a coherent critique of such relations did not develop beyond the rhetoric.

Ultimately, the challenge presented to gender power relations by *The Workman's Times* was only limited. First of all, it did not criticise the male dominated nature of the workplace. Neither did it theorise a sphere of power centred in the home, despite women's identification with the 'domestic'. The emphasis placed on the desirability of a 'family wage' is symptomatic of how a family's economic dependence remained central to workers'

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 31 October 1891. See also 10 April 1891; 18 February 1893.

¹⁰⁷ L. Bland, 'The Married Woman, the "New Woman" and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890s', in Rendall, (ed.), *Equal or Different?*, pp. 141-64. See also Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes*, pp. 38-50.

masculinity. In practice, male power was never effectively challenged, neither in the home nor the workplace, the two remaining inextricably linked.¹⁰⁸

On the one hand, women's suffrage was seen by male contributors to the paper as enabling women to contribute their particular brand of expertise to political life and to look after their own interests, while on the other hand it was a means of emancipating themselves from the position of 'slavery' to the other sex. There was an awareness that the desired domestic idyll did not always correspond to reality, although the mechanics of this emancipation were never worked out. On the whole, the challenge to masculine power and the potential for change in the relations between the sexes were both limited. *The Workman's Times* both constructed a masculine identity for the 'independent labour' whose cause it championed and identified men as 'workers' and as family providers. It remains to be seen whether, or to what extent, the ILP absorbed *The Workman's Times'* assumption that 'women' existed as a category separate from that of the 'workers'.

¹⁰⁸ *The Workman's Times*, 10 April 1891; 12 December 1891; 3 December 1892; 18 February 1893. A number of historians have observed the connection between status as male breadwinner and power within the family. See for example J.M. Bennett, 'Misogyny, Popular Culture, and Women's Work', in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 31, (Spring 1991), pp. 166-88.

1-2. 'Human without the woman is the merry devil in politics...'

Contrary to *The Workman's Times'* position, the extent to which male ILPers as a whole accepted women's role as waged workers, is striking. This is particularly true of male contributors to the *Labour Leader*, which in this period was still owned and edited by Hardie. No attempt was made to minimise the bad conditions under which women were forced to work, or the extent to which they were victimised by the contemporary industrial system. Thus 'Bardolph' (the nom de plume used by Tom Maguire, the young Leeds socialist pioneer) in one of his 'Machine-Room Chants', wrote:

... Fast and faster flies the machine,
Treading the soapy seam;
Treading the ends of cloth unclean-
Hark! To its steely scream
All the hopes of your womanhood
Crossed by a fateful star,
All that's best of her pure heart's blood
Sapped by the Minotaur...¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, no attempt was made to condemn women's work per se. In a series of articles published by the *Labour Leader* on women shopworkers, Archibald Hunter made clear the poor pay, long hours and strain on the health of these workers, but did not advocate their abandoning paid employment. Rather, he called upon 'ILP men' to educate and organise

¹⁰⁹ *Labour Leader*, 15 December 1894. For Tom Maguire, see Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', pp. 276-316.

them.¹¹⁰ In a similar vein the *Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour* (of which Tom Mann was one of the signatories, and which was 'endorsed and issued' by the NAC of the ILP)¹¹¹ observed how hundreds of thousands of women, especially those involved in homework, were toiling for wages insufficient to maintain health or decency, often for excessively long hours and in unsanitary conditions. Nevertheless, they did not propose the abolition of such work, or even any special legislation for women. Rather, working-women were to benefit from a more general spread of trade unionism and especially from the extension of state intervention. The unionisation of women-workers was viewed with general approval.¹¹²

Outright hostility towards women's work was rare. There seems to have been a more or less conscious attempt to skim over controversial issues. 'L.G.' (possibly, though, a woman) stated clearly his/her support for married women's work, on the grounds that 'it would be useless to talk about the possibility of achieving the social, ethical, moral, intellectual, equality of the

¹¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 8 September 1894; 22 September 1894; 6 October 1894.

¹¹¹ An engineer by trade and member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Mann had first joined the SDF in 1885. He had become a national figure through his leadership with John Burns of the London dock strike of 1889, becoming president of the dockers' union. In 1894 he was convinced to join the ILP, of which he became general secretary. T. Mann, *Memoirs*, (Labour Publishing Co., London, 1923).

¹¹² W. Abraham (Mabon), M. Austin MP, J. Mawdsley JP, T. Mann, *The Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1894), pp. 18-9. *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1894; 4 August 1894; 16 February 1895; T. Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, p. 12; H. Russell Smart, *The Right to Work*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1895), pp. 9-10.

sexes until they are perfectly free economically'.¹¹³ The general attitude, though, was not so much to accept married women's work as to ignore it, despite the existence of indications of underlying disapproval. This was clearly shown in an article dealing with the vestry elections in Paddington, where the very low rates of wages paid to working-men were exemplified by 'the wives of these men... (having) to go out and sweat all day over a washtub, when they ought to be at home'.¹¹⁴ Most ILPers probably realised that the issues raised by the question of married women's work were not always straightforward. When at the first conference Mr. Hoskins (the representative from Slaithwaite) moved a resolution in favour of the abolition of married women's work, another delegate provoked great laughter by asking whether widows would also be included. Still, the resolution was defeated by the narrow margin of thirty two to forty five.¹¹⁵

The issue of women's competition within the workplace received a similar treatment, although there were exceptions. J.G. Stratton, 'an old Chartist' conjured a powerful image of 'the sturdy man with his hands in his empty pockets, a pensioner upon his wife's and daughters' earnings', the women having been able with the introduction of steam power to increasingly take the place of men within the workplace. The catastrophe of male unemployment was thus seen as directly related to female competition, and

¹¹³ *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1895.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 18 August 1894. See also NAC of the ILP, 'An Appeal', p. 1, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

¹¹⁵ ILP Conference Report, 1893, p. 10.

as operating to the exclusive advantage of employers.¹¹⁶ Usually, though, responses to the issue, when raised at all, were more measured. H. Russell Smart believed that under present conditions women family members took on waged work to bolster the father's earnings, with the result that those fell even lower 'if he is not altogether displaced by their cheaper labour'.¹¹⁷ His solution was equal wages for equal work: 'women may not be the equal of men in physical strength, yet the services she renders are quite as valuable to the community'.¹¹⁸ In one very interesting (but exceptional) instance, in reviewing the sexologist Havelock Ellis' book *Man and Woman* in the *Labour Leader*, Jack Hatchett seemed to accept Ellis' argument about the impossibility (given the contemporary lack of knowledge in the matter), of attributing any particular characteristic to either sex, thus countering arguments about what were the appropriate spheres of action for either men or women. 'The respective fitness of men and women for any kind of work or any kind of privilege can only be ascertained by actual open experimentation'. Although the author may possibly have had in mind contemporary middle-class women's attempts to enter the professions, such arguments could be extended in favour of women's introduction in any male-dominated trade. After all, as Ellis pointed out, women would by 'natural

¹¹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 21 July 1894. See also 17 November 1894.

¹¹⁷ H. Russell Smart, *Trade Unionism and Politics*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1893), p. 6.

¹¹⁸ H. Russell Smart, *The Right to Work*, pp. 9-10. See also J. Leatham, *Was Jesus a Socialist?*, (ILP Publications Dept, London, 7th edition, n.d., c. 1894), p. 3.

selection' be excluded from any occupation for which they were not suited.¹¹⁹

Paralleling such a trend towards portraying women as workers, male ILPers also showed a remarkable lack of emphasis on women as 'domestic' beings, either as wives or mothers. In this, the difference between *The Workman's Times* and the *Labour Leader* is quite striking. Part of the explanation lies in the absence from the *Labour Leader* of those short didactic/entertaining space fillers so beloved by the older paper, and in which the more sentimental images of motherhood and domestic life could be found. If one turns to the *Leader's* fictional pieces, the association of women with maternal feelings in particular, does loom rather larger. Yet even here, the message seems mixed. In 'La Bretonne', a woman just released from prison after serving a sentence for infanticide was portrayed as still possessing tender 'maternal' feelings, despite her old crime. These were reawakened by the child of a woman who had given her shelter for the night.¹²⁰ In the serial 'By shadowed paths', the Anarchist Therese, the 'angel of the revolution' was portrayed as mending children's clothes, implying that even the fiercest woman possessed a degree of maternal feeling.¹²¹ On the other hand, though, maternal feelings were given a rather different meaning in 'The two twins', another short story. Here an Apache woman was portrayed as

¹¹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 19 May 1894. For a rejection of the notion of women as competitors with men, see 12 January 1895.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 21 July 1894. See also 23 March 1895.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 22 June 1895.

murderous enough, despite having shown deep feelings of ‘mother-love’ towards her children, to cold-bloodedly kill the white man who had just saved her sons’ lives.¹²² Fictional pieces show also a rather ambivalent attitude towards the association of women with the ‘domestic sphere’, both physically and emotionally. In ‘The singer mother’, for example, the death of the main character’s child was directly related to her ambition as a singer. In this case, a death seems to have been the punishment for a woman’s quitting domesticity (represented by home and child) for the ‘public’ arena (represented by the stage).¹²³ In ‘The meteor’, though, the protagonist rejected marriage and domesticity to continue her career as an actress. Although such a choice eventually led to her death, this was portrayed as the ultimate proof of her commitment to the stage, rather than as a punishment.¹²⁴

On the whole, outside these short stories, male ILPers showed little interest in women’s domestic experiences, or in their problems. A poem sent by ‘J.R.T.’ to the women columnist Lily Bell was one of the exceptions (assuming that it was in fact a man!) in emphasizing how women’s domestic work outlasted the day, leaving no time for leisure:

Yet women win not daily bread, some say, and consider wives
a plaything if pretty and a drudge if not. Poor, paltry

¹²² *Ibid*, 11 August 1894. Her identity as ‘non-white’ is of course significant.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 4 August 1894.

¹²⁴ *Labour Leader*, 28 July 1894.

quibblers! Does your wage outweigh the toils true wifehood
will for nothing dare?¹²⁵

Edward Carpenter pointed out that men and women's spheres of action within society had become so different that they had lost all sympathy and understanding for each other. He saw no reason why men should not contribute to household labour and women should not 'occasionally' work outside the home to contribute to the family economy and foster their sense of independence. But although the works in which Carpenter examined the 'woman question', the *Love's Coming of Age* series, were published by the ILP, his views do not seem to have been widely shared.¹²⁶

In general, women's domestic problems were not given particular consideration. ILPers were urged to remember their beliefs once they entered their home, and not make the movement 'the excuse for inflicting all sorts of injustices on the helpmate'.¹²⁷ Men who treated their own wives as slaves had no right to complain of the system of economic slavery. Good socialists would steer clear of drink, keep good hours and generally attempt

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 25 August 1894. Lily Bell was the pen name used by Isabella Bream Pearce, a Glasgow socialist, who contributed a regular women's column on the *Labour Leader*. H. Lintell, 'Lily Bell: Socialist and Feminist, 1894-1898', (Unpublished MA Thesis, Bristol Polytechnic, 1990). See also *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1895; 4 May 1895; 8 June 1895; H. Russell Smart, *Municipal Socialism*, (Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c. 1895), pp. 7-9.

¹²⁶ E. Carpenter, *Woman, and Her Place in a Free Society*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1894), pp. 10-1; 29-30. See also S. Rowbotham, J. Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life. The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis*, (Pluto Press, London, 1997).

¹²⁷ *Labour Leader*, 25 August 1894.

to make domestic life brighter. Despite 'Marxian''s discordant assertion that

the delirious *egoisme a deux* between the sexes, with its foundation in physical needs, cannot faintly match the stern and sane joy of comradeship... When a man wants sympathy rather than stupid criticism, the very last person he thinks of consulting is the wife of his bosom...¹²⁸

ILPers were called upon not to make their Socialism the reason for persistent absences from the home.¹²⁹ The emphasis on socialists' conduct left unanswered issues relating to women's domestic work. In 1895, Hardie received a letter demanding that '... you should arrange that women like myself work eight hours in our families and no more'. He, though, effectively managed to evade the issue of domestic drudgery by emphasizing that socialists should be as pleasant at home as they were outside. He also carefully avoided identifying women with the victims by stating that such strictures applied to both male and female socialists.¹³⁰ In a column in the *Labour Leader* on 'Women's movements', (which as it turned out appeared only in two issues), arguments about the importance of involving women

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 4 May 1895. In 1896 'Marxian' (the nom de plume used by A.H. Samuel) described himself as having 'neither manners nor morals nor character. An atheist and a Social Democrat'. A professional journalist who obviously delighted in expressing perverse opinions, his statements should not necessarily be taken at face value. Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1896), p. 219.

¹²⁹ *Labour Leader*, 6 October 1894; 4 May 1895. It is worth noting that when their behaviour in the home was the subject of discussion, socialists were overwhelmingly assumed to be men.

¹³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 27 April 1895.

within the ILP were based on what was perceived as their increasing role as waged workers. The implication was that had women remained 'domestic' beings, however hard they worked within the home, they would have been of little interest to the Labour movement.¹³¹

One aspect of women's domestic experience which attracted some attention was the double shift of work undertaken by many women living in areas where textile industries were predominant, particularly Lancashire and Yorkshire. Here they would be employed full-time both at the mill and in their own home. As Fred Jowett pointed out, the weavers of his native Bradford, 'working at a tense occupation all day, cleaning the home in the evenings until bed time, washing and baking Saturdays and Sundays, they were indeed wage slaves'.¹³² Nevertheless, no specific suggestion was made as to the easing of their domestic burden; rather they were called upon to help themselves and improve their condition by participating in the labour movement.¹³³

Women's confinement to the home was perceived as an obstacle to their

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 23 June 1894; 7 July 1894.

¹³² Jowett, *What Made Me a Socialist*, pp. 4-7. Jowett himself had started working in Bradford's textile mills as a half-timer at eight, eventually becoming an overlooker and later a manager in a textile business. He was involved in the establishment of the Bradford Labour Union in 1891, and one of the delegates at the 1893 conference. In 1892 he was elected to the Bradford City Council, in 1906 becoming an MP for West Bradford. He was one of the ILP's central figures, joining the NAC in 1897. In 1909 he was elected party chairman. F. Brockway, *Socialism over Sixty Years. The Life of Jowett of Bradford (1864-1944)*, (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1946).

¹³³ Anon., 'To the women of the ILP', in ILP Conference Report, 1894, n.p.; Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, p. 12.

participation in the Labour movement. Although 'G.O.M.' recognised that women's anxiety to marry was based on the difficulty for them of earning a decent living,¹³⁴ complaints were frequently voiced that women's obsession with marriage detracted from their commitment to the workplace, and by extension to the Labour movement. Such a complaint can be found in one of Maguire's 'Machine-room Chants'. Here Anne Lee was portrayed as uninterested in improving the working conditions of her fellow textile operatives, while single-mindedly aiming to marry as soon as possible. The result was a disastrous marriage, disease, and an early death for herself and her baby.

... blind, and blinder than eyeless owls,
We bend to our slavish lot, And pile up the wrong, till our
prince comes along,
When we go, arm-in-arm, straight to pot.
You proud women-snobs, who sneer at the union,
What fools in your hearts are ye!
Vain, self-loving slaves! You are bidding for graves
Like the one which holds Sarah Anne Lee-
Rent free.¹³⁵

But if ILPers tended to portray working-class women as 'workers', the same can also be said of working-class men. In this they did not differ from the precedent established by *The Workman's Times*. Where they differed from the paper was in portraying male workers as just as sweated and exploited as the women, thus decidedly shifting away from earlier notions of

¹³⁴ *Labour Leader*, 23 February 1895.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 29 December 1894. See also 2 June 1894; 19 January 1895.

proud, muscular masculinity. References to 'horny-handed sons of toil' became very rare. Joseph Clayton's attempt to emphasize the dignity of labour even under contemporary industrial conditions, clearly ran into difficulties. When considering the gas-workers, he claimed that although the men appeared brutal, or even 'bestial', 'there is a dignity still belonging to the labourer which dirt and roughness cannot really hide, and which the people in drawing-rooms... can never have...'. Even he, though, reluctantly added that 'Perhaps it is wrong that strong men... should give the best of their lives thus: Away from the outer world of joy and light'.¹³⁶ On the whole, references to the ennobling nature of work under the capitalist system were seen as a mockery. Workers were perceived to be the producers of all the country's wealth, but only for the benefit of a fortunate few, who were thus free to spend their lives in luxurious idleness.¹³⁷

Under contemporary conditions, all work was seen as drudgery and exploitation. The increasingly widespread introduction of machinery was considered to have brought no easing of the workers' load, while the central conclusion of the *Minority Report of the Commission on Labour*, published

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 23 June 1894. An Oxford graduate, in 1894 Clayton was secretary of the Leeds ILP. Although still involved within the Labour movement, after this date he seems to disappear from ILP view, his main interest lying in the writing of historical works. Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 442. Bruce Glasier described him in 1896 as 'not very prepossessing as man or speaker, despite his long hair and Oxford training', J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 7 July 1896, Glasier Papers, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

¹³⁷ *Labour Leader*, 24 November 1894; J. Bruce Glasier, *Socialist Songs* (Labour Literature Society, Glasgow, 1893); T. Maguire, *A Remembrance: Being a Selection from the Prose and Verse Writings of a Socialist Pioneer*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1895).

as an ILP pamphlet, was that 'the fundamental cause of disputes between employers and employed is to be found... in the unsatisfactory position occupied by the wage-earning class'. It pointed out that at least thirty per cent of the population lived in poverty because of low wages, while skilled workers also shared the general insecurity of employment, long hours, bad working and living conditions and lack of provisions for old age.¹³⁸ The poems composed to celebrate the 1894 May Day and published by the *Labour Leader* centred on the pathetic figure of the exploited toiler:

My brother suffers, moist with bloody sweat,
Nail'd to the cross of never ending toil,
... A long crushed race bend sullen to their yoke,
And souls that promis'd much in youth's best time,
Are Mammon's slaves; amid the filth and smoke
Of crowded towns they waste their manhood's prime.¹³⁹

Waged work was not considered a possible source of pride for men, even such 'masculine' occupations as mining, whose harshness, dangers and poor rewards were given great prominence. In a *Labour Leader* cartoon by 'Chilli', a miner was thus portrayed as a thin, suffering man, subject to the Capitalist's terms and always on the brink of losing his livelihood or even his life. (Figure 6)¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Abraham, Austin, Mawdsley, Mann, *The Minority Report*, pp. 5-7.

¹³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1894. See also 4 August 1894; 22 September 1894; J. Anderson to J.K. Hardie, 12 February 1894, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 25 August 1894. See also 7 July 1894; 9 February 1895.

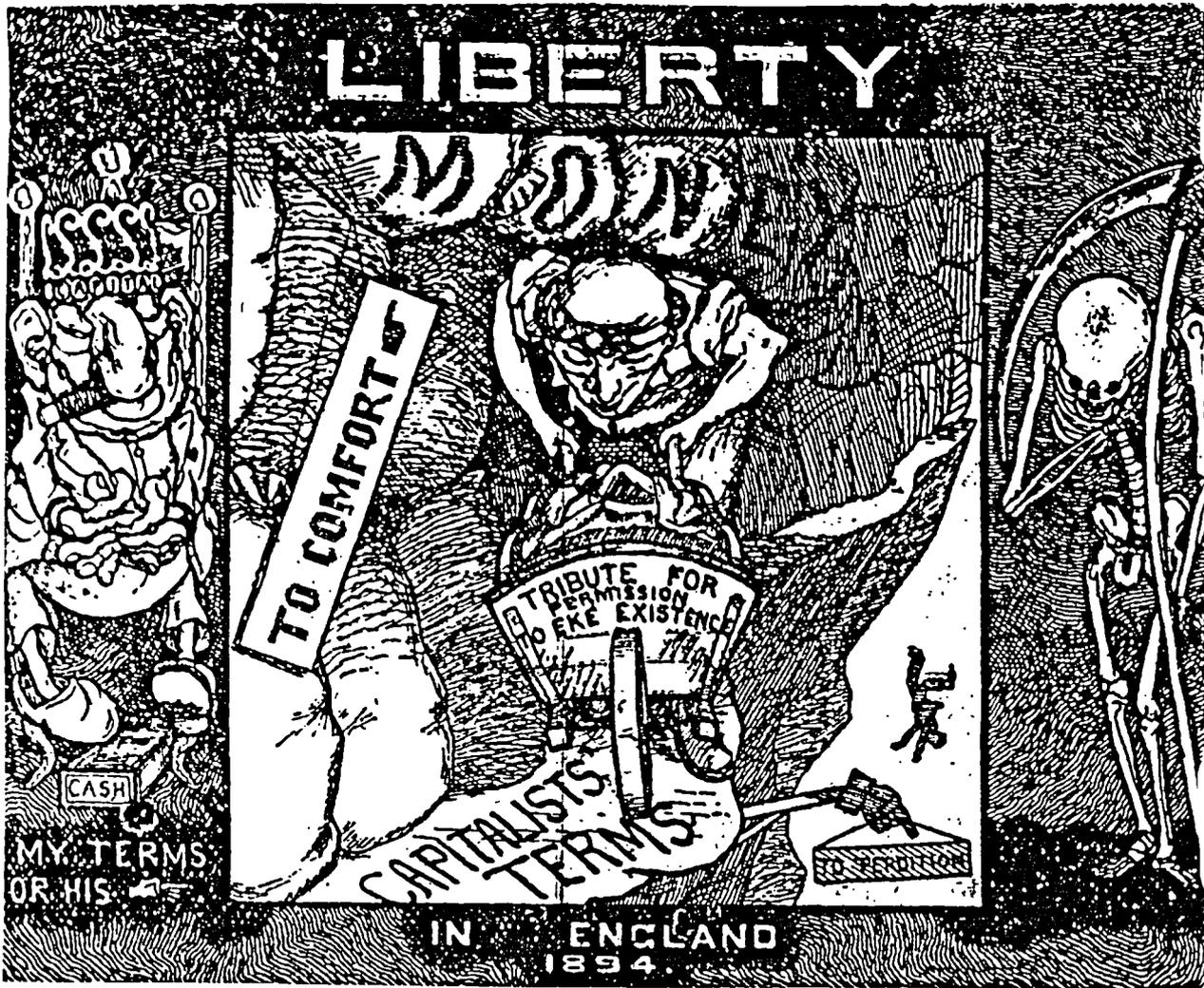


FIGURE 6. 'LIBERTY IN ENGLAND, 1894'.

Labour Leader cartoons portrayed women far less often than men. When they did appear, it was very rarely as 'workers', but rather as subsidiaries to the central male character and as 'mothers', usually with a child in their arms and another hanging on to their skirt (Figure 7. But see also figure 8 for a cartoon which portrayed working-class men and women on the same terms).¹⁴¹ Working-men, though, were by no means portrayed as the proud, muscular labourers of *The Workman's Times*. At best they appeared as healthy and determined, (Figure 9. In this case, the figure of the worker is also identified with the ILP)¹⁴² at worst as downtrodden, pathetic, ragged figures, mercilessly exploited by Capitalists and their allies (Figure 10).¹⁴³

On the whole, ILP men differed from the male contributors to *The Workman's Times* not only in generally portraying waged work for men as no possible source of pride, but also as not necessarily a mark of masculinity. When 'workers' were mentioned, it could by no means always be assumed that only men were being discussed. It was thus possible to perceive men and women's interests as overlapping, given their common experience of exploitation in the workplace: Manchester tramwaymen were compared with 'girl' shopworkers, male miners and engineers to sewing

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 12 May 1894; 16 June 1894.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 9 June 1894. See also 8 December 1894.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 7 July 1894. See also L. Caryll, *Labour Cartoons: Picture Studies for the Workers*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1894). There is a remarkable similarity between the downtrodden workers portrayed here by Caryll and the ones portrayed in the *Labour Leader*. Obviously not all Caryll's masculine figures were muscular, manual workers: these must have been considered as particularly suitable for *The Workman's Times*' readers.

CARTOON.



FIGURE 7. 'THE WHIP HAND'.



THE HEIGHT OF HIS AMBITION.

FIGURE 8. 'THE HEIGHT OF HIS AMBITION'.



DRIVER: "Take that old nag out, and see how I'll make the cart move with this new horse.
 MENY (loquiter): "If he gets the horse in, he may want to throw me out to lighten the load. Wonder if the horse is for sale? Might exchange

THE PARTY NAG.

FIGURE 9. 'THE PARTY NAG'.

THIS IS HOW LABOUR
PERMEATES THE
LIBERAL PARTY.

COULIN THE
FRIEND NOT
SHORT

THIS IS HOW THE TORY
SATISFY THE
CLAIMS OF
LABOUR

TORY
SHORT



SHEFFIELD blades grow keen on the grindstone—
Therefore Sheffield noses ought,
And the party voice bellow "Hobson's choice,"
With "vote for Coulin," and "vote for Short."

There is no room in the House of Commons
For men who are not party bought,
You must take sides when the House divides,
With the Liberal Coulin or Tory Short.

And the partial man, with his nose to the grindstone
Is proud and honoured to consort
With Tory or Whig, though it's safer still,
To the monkey Coulin and hanged Short.

Remember the case of stud,
And how both sides of th'
By voting down an impert
Who is foe to Coulin and

FIGURE 10. 'HOBSON'S CHOICE'.

‘girls’. Their very bodies marked both sexes off from the rest of the population: the man ‘with his bowed and twisted body... his legs bent with much standing and moving about under heavy burdens’, while as for the woman, ‘the good colour fades, the teeth decay, the form becomes scraggy, the voice harsh and quarrelous [sic]’. This way the ‘workers’ which the ILP aimed to represent could have been both men and women, in this differing fundamentally from the position taken by the pioneering *Workman’s Times*.¹⁴⁴

A further indication of a perception that men and women had interests in common based on a shared experience of workplace exploitation, may be found in the way in which legislative intervention on the part of the state, and thus a form of ‘protection’, was advocated in relation to the work of both men and women. Support was given to measures such as the inclusion of laundries within the Factory Acts and the regulation of women’s hours of labour, notwithstanding the recognition that these may well have interfered with women’s ‘right to work’. The Women’s Franchise League’s protests against the restrictions to women’s employment proposed by the Factory and Workshop’s Bill of 1895 were criticised as coming from women who made

no demand for state protection for the least protected, only one frenzied cry against state interference, meaning absolute liberty for every sweater and factory owner to ruin the health

¹⁴⁴ Leatham, *Was Jesus a Socialist?*, pp. 10-11. But note also the different features highlighted for each sex. See also *Labour Leader*, 13 October 1894; 8 December 1894; H. Russell Smart, *Socialism and Drink*, (Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1890), pp. 3, 13-14.

of every unprotected woman.¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, though, the regulation of male labour was also advocated. The belief that state interference in women's and children's labour was admissible, but anathema in men's case, was rejected as the relic of an earlier age.¹⁴⁶ As Russell Smart pointed out, it was understandable that at the beginning of the nineteenth century workers without a vote should have viewed government intervention with horror, as until then it had always been synonymous with oppression. At present though, as labour was no longer denied the franchise, and a new conception of the state had developed, workers had started to realise that parliament could be made to intervene and pass laws in their favour.¹⁴⁷ Intervention in relation to male and female labour was seen as intimately connected: '... we men, who are agitating for a legal eight-hour day, are allowing the mothers of the future to have their whole system weakened and debased by drudgery and excessive hours'.¹⁴⁸

To a large extent, the language of the appeals to labour was still a masculine one. Exhortations to join the Labour movement (in many cases in the form of short poems) were often directed at a masculine audience:

¹⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 4 May 1895. See also 5 January 1895.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 15 September 1894.

¹⁴⁷ Russell Smart, *The Independent Labour Party*, pp. 3-4. See also J.R. MacDonald, *The New Charter. A Programme of Working-Class Politics*, (J.B. Jones, Dover, 1892), n.p..

¹⁴⁸ *Labour Leader*, 19 May 1894.

Let us be men, my brothers, men are more
Than nations; Brotherhood's once loosened tide
Shall sweep away all barriers that divide
Mankind...¹⁴⁹

ILP electoral candidates, leaders or members were simply referred to as 'men'. Figure 11 shows that a masculine discourse was not limited to written language, but extended also to pictorial representations: the ILP army at rest was portrayed as including only the male parliamentary candidates, thus reinforcing the impression of the party as a masculine one.¹⁵⁰ In 1895 Tom Mann wrote in *The Labour Annual* that the majority of ILP members were 'young men' between twenty two and thirty three years of age.¹⁵¹ A *Labour Leader* editorial dealing with the formation of the new party, placed the male worker at the centre of the stage, with woman taking a secondary role as 'the wife':

The poor grimy toiler of mill and forge... Primarily the movement is designed for the benefit of these men and of their weary laden wives... to... restore to them the manhood of which they have been all but bereft.¹⁵²

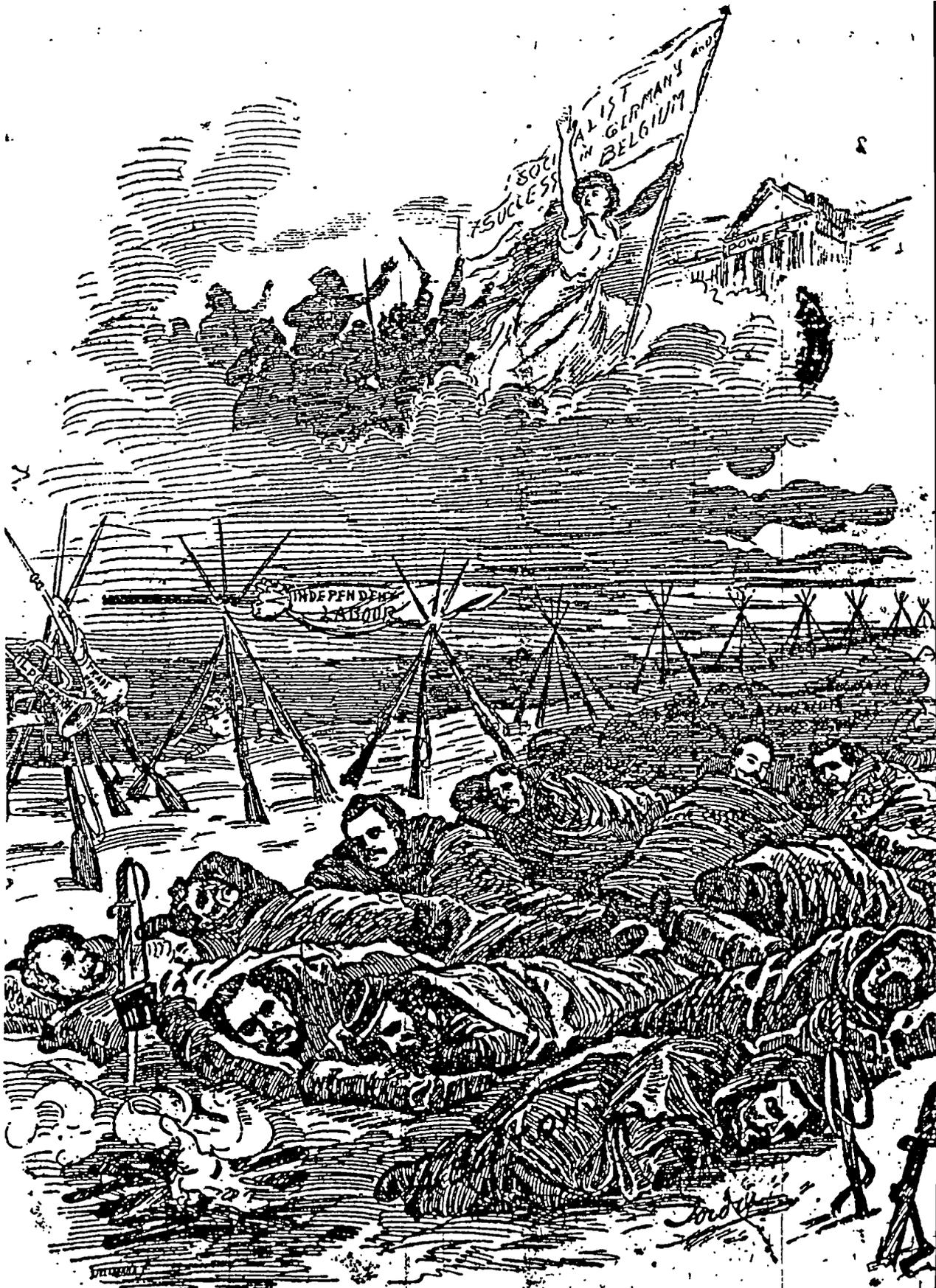
In many cases, though, men and women were both included in rhetorical exhortations, while in others the language was kept studiously gender-neutral.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 9 February 1895.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 5 January 1895.

¹⁵¹ Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1895), p. 40.

¹⁵² *Labour Leader*, 6 October 1894. See also 26 January 1895.



BIVOUAC.

FIGURE 11. 'BIVOUAC'.

Socialists were described for example as ‘... not geniuses or exceptionally brilliant people,... just ordinary men and women inspired by the possibilities of a rational system of working and living’.¹⁵³ Trevor mixed appeals for Labour to demonstrate its ‘manliness’ with other appeals clearly directed also at women: ‘Let the one standard of all your conduct... be Manhood and Womanhood. Keep your Manhood and Womanhood strong and true, and you need fear no consequences’.¹⁵⁴

Labour Leader cartoons continued to portray ‘Labour’ as a male figure, although the imagery was no longer limited to Leon Caryll-type proud, muscular figures. These were by no means absent, as is shown by figures 12 and 13. Figure 12, a commemorative illustration of the 1895 conference by Leon Caryll himself, is one of his typical, muscular, bearded, Saxon warriors. Figure 13, by ‘Jordie’, makes use of a different image of ‘historical’ masculinity, that of a Roman soldier, to suggest the same characteristics of physical strength, power and invincibility.¹⁵⁵ Other representations of ‘Labour’ could be as lusty youngsters (Figure 14)¹⁵⁶ or as pathetic, exploited working-men (Figure 15).¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, there also appeared a number of cartoons which used female figures to portray the

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 6 April 1895.

¹⁵⁴ Trevor, *An Independent Labour Party*, pp. 7-8. See also T. Mann, *The Programme of the ILP and the Unemployed*, (Clarion Newspapers co., London, 1895), pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ *Labour Leader*, 27 April 1895; 19 May 1894.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 2 February 1895.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 24 November 1894.

THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF THE
INDEPENDENT
LABOUR
PARTY

APRIL 15TH
1895



FIGURE 12. 'THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY'.

CARTOON.



GOING FORTH TO BATTLE.

FIGURE 13. 'GOING FORTH TO BATTLE'.

cartoon is almost a year old. We make no apology for reproducing it. It may safely be called "Our Seasonal Cartoon," as party bed has still the same occupants as last year. Still the same babies in stock.]



UNDERTAKER SALISBURY: "When will you have another job for me, marm?"

MRS. ROSEBERRY: "Well, I'm sure I dunno. I've given them some o' this mixture to keep them quiet, but if they do w'll be sure to get them."

UNDERTAKER SALISBURY: "Woll, try and keep this little cuss quiet. He might waken all the others at once, and then would be up."

THE BABY FARM.

FIGURE 14. 'THE BABY FARM'.



TORY:—"United we stand, divided we fall."
LIBERAL:—"LET GO OF THE FELLOW, and both must sprawl."

Three Horny 'Uns.

(With obligations to Gillbert.)

FIGURE 15. 'THREE HORNY 'UNS'.

Labour movement and Socialism. Unlike male ones, though, these figures conformed to a narrow typology, limited between the boundaries of angel and amazon warrior. (Figures 16 and 17)¹⁵⁸ On the whole, there seems to have been a limited, but real shift away from *The Workman's Times'* representation of the Labour movement as 'muscular' and uncompromisingly masculine.

Although the shift from *The Workman's Times'* position is clearly observable, the reasons for it are rather more difficult to establish. Was it the case that male ILPers had become distanced from the trade union world in whose culture *The Workman's Times* was steeped? Carl Levy suggests that 'the professional politicians, the journalists and the professional lecturers became the predominant force in the party's leadership'.¹⁵⁹ This observation is particularly relevant to the background of the 'Big Four' who dominated the pre-war ILP: Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, John Bruce Glasier and Philip Snowden. Even Hardie, whose first entry into politics (via temperance work) had been as a trade union organiser among Ayrshire miners, and who had spent more than ten years of his youth working in mines, was by 1893 earning his living by journalistic and political work.¹⁶⁰ The other three had no connections with trade unions.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 1 December 1894; 3 August 1895. See also 26 May 1894; 20 July 1895. For a fuller discussion of this female iconography, see chapter 2.

¹⁵⁹ C. Levy, 'Education and Self-Education: Staffing the Early ILP', in C. Levy, (ed.), *Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987), pp. 136.

¹⁶⁰ Reid, *Keir Hardie*.



Outcast England.

FIGURE 16. 'OUTCAST ENGLAND'.



FIGURE 17. 'HISTORIC JULY 1895'.

Nevertheless, an attempt to explain the ILP's ideological shift away from *The Workman's Times*' position in terms of a 'change in personnel' is clearly not entirely convincing. Apart from Hardie, none of the other 'big four' were in a position of power within the ILP before 1895. Furthermore, David Howell has observed that the party's early years actually saw a peak in trade unionists' involvement. Among those present at the 1893 conference were the dockers' organiser Charles Sexton, the gasworkers' Pete Curran, the miners' Robert Smillie, the woollen workers' Ben Turner, and so on.¹⁶¹ Many of those who worked for *The Workman's Times* continued to be active in the ILP, including Burgess.

Historians continue to debate the extent of trade unions' involvement in the establishment and growth of local branches, the picture varying considerably between different areas.¹⁶² Nevertheless, it is possible to make the generalisation that alongside a minority of middle-class activists, the party's rank and file was made up mostly of skilled manual workers, often in supervisory positions, (who were also the workers most likely to be members of a trade union) as well as clerks.¹⁶³

The shift does not simply indicate the absence of trade unionists from the

¹⁶¹ Howell, *British Workers*, p. 331.

¹⁶² See for example K. Laybourn, 'The Bradford ILP and Trade Unionism c. 1890-1914', in James, Jowitt, Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History*, pp. 137-62; D. Clark, *Colne Valley. Radicalism to Socialism. The Portrait of a Northern Constituency in the Formative Years of the Labour Party 1890-1910*, (Longman, London, 1981), pp. 19-27.

¹⁶³ D. Hopkin, 'The Membership of the Independent Labour Party', pp. 175-97. See also A.W. Purdue, 'The ILP in the North East of England', in James, Jowitt, Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History*, pp. 22-3.

ILP's ranks. The change was not in the ILP's personnel, but in the 'audience' it wished to attract: in its early years the ILP was concerned to attract 'workers', but made no particular appeal to trade unions. The 'Labour Alliance' was not one of its major preoccupations before 1895, and therefore had no need to accommodate its world-view, and in particular its attitude towards women's role in society, to that of male trade unionists. The younger generation of organised, respectable, mostly skilled workers who made up the early ILP may have been more receptive to the work of organisations such as the Women's Industrial Council, established in 1894 under the direction of Clementina Black, a middle-class Fabian and member of the WTUL. The aim of this body was to provide properly researched information relating to the condition of women workers, as a necessary precondition to its improvement. Although by no means rejecting the role of wifehood and motherhood in women's lives, it endorsed a more positive image of the role of waged work in women's lives than was usually accorded to it.¹⁶⁴

On the whole, it was clearly possible for men and women workers, both perceived to be exploited by the capitalist system, to be included within an ILP ideology which aimed to look after their interests: all workers would benefit from the establishment of a socialist society. Such a framework could lead to a distrusting attitude towards issues of special relevance to women as a sex, beyond their role as 'workers'. It could also lead to male ILPers

¹⁶⁴ E. Mappen, *Helping Women At Work. The Women's Industrial Council 1889-1914*, (Hutchinson in association with the Explorations in Feminism Collective, London, 1985).

being called upon to work actively towards women's emancipation.

There are only rare traces of the first position being taken up within the ILP before the general election of 1895. In a letter published on Lily Bell's column, 'X' for example recognised the injustice of women's lower wages in the workplace and unpaid drudgery in the home, but considered these to be simply side-issues compared to the really important question of workers' industrial emancipation. He considered that women's oppression was one of the consequences of the age-long 'scramble for power and property', with its ideology of aggressive individualism, and that the only effective solution could thus be the establishment of a socialist society.

All wage earners are in a state of 'absolute dependence on the whims' not of men, but of an all-pervading spirit of mutual hostility named 'competitive commercialism' and the sooner we learn this initial lesson the sooner will all wage earners, without distinction of sex, surely and with alacrity join in one solid phalanx to march hand in hand to the dethronement of 'that', being as it is the fruitful source of all our miseries.

He did not mention women's suffrage, but it is unlikely that he would have viewed this with a greater degree of approval than other women's issues: it was only through socialism that workers were to achieve their real emancipation, women being included within their ranks.¹⁶⁵ In another letter to Lily Bell, a man writing from London went further, rejecting the notion that women suffered from any particular 'sex disability'. He considered that they were socially perfectly free, although some of them did

¹⁶⁵ *Labour Leader*, 10 November 1894.

not realise this. On average they earned more than men, and were free to ask and get what they required: he accused Lily Bell of wanting to separate the sexes.¹⁶⁶

The aims of the ILP, though, were not limited to obtaining the control of the means of production, distribution and exchange: socialism was to be accompanied by changes in individuals' life-styles and by wider cultural and social changes. As Stephen Yeo has observed, not only the socialism of the ILP, but to some extent all contemporary socialist organisations were influenced by a denial of the separation between personal and wider structural change, between politics/socialism and the 'rest of life'. He has illustrated the variety of ways in which these beliefs manifested themselves, such as for example in the perceived identity between branch life and socialist endeavour. In addition, though, a belief in the inseparable nature of socialist beliefs with personal and cultural change could also lend the necessary space for the sympathetic discussion of issues of sexual politics and women's rights.¹⁶⁷

Rather than hostility towards women's issues, thus, it is more common to find a belief that if both men and women workers were to be represented and involved in the ILP, socialist moral imperatives and desire for change would also have to be applied to the question of women's emancipation. This was clearly much more conducive to a positive attitude being taken towards issues affecting women specifically, rather than waged workers in general:

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 4 May 1895. See also 2 February 1895.

¹⁶⁷ Yeo, 'A New Life', pp. 8, 14, 35-40.

male ILPers' support for women's suffrage can be placed against this sympathetic background. Archibald Hunter expressed the need felt more generally to actively pursue women's emancipation:

As a humble member of the Labour Party this question of women's social and economical [sic] freedom has often spurred me on to a greater effort on their behalf, because they are *my sisters*, because of the unnatural position the bulk of them occupy in our midst today, because we *must* have the women with us.¹⁶⁸

The ILP aimed not only to establish a society where the burden of work was equally divided, but also one where class domination should be made impossible by the full recognition of 'Social, Economic, and Sexual Equality'.¹⁶⁹ In a letter to Hardie, C.W. Pearce pushed the argument further and placed 'the question of the complementary equality of women with men' at the heart of the society which the ILP wished to establish. 'Human without the woman is the merry devil in politics and works discord and war all around and everywhere'. Men and women were supposed to exercise complementary functions in society: women embodied all noble and good qualities, to which men gave 'external expression'. The country was at present in such a bad condition because 'The womanhood has not been allowed to evolve the qualities that make a man - how can then the man give

¹⁶⁸ *Labour Leader*, 4 August 1894.

¹⁶⁹ Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, pp. 2-3.

expression to them?'¹⁷⁰

The ILP, thus, presented an image of itself as representing both male and female workers, both having an interest in the establishment of a socialist society. The image, though, does not after all represent the full picture. A further analysis of the ideas of male party members reveals that the treatment of male and female workers was not in fact always the same. If one considers the issue of unemployment, which Hardie took up as his battle-cry in the House of Commons, it seems clear that ILPers echoed *The Workman's Times* in considering it an almost exclusively male problem. The unemployed were portrayed as men, very often with dependant wives and children. A *Labour Leader* editorial stated for example that 'if these men were permitted to work they could produce food, raiment and shelter, for themselves, their wives and their children'.¹⁷¹ The same image was also projected by the paper's cartoons. Figure 18, for example, makes clear the woman's dependant and subordinate position, as well as the unemployed man's rugged and stern masculinity.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ C.W. Pearce to J.K. Hardie, 9 March 1894, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. The husband of the *Labour Leader's* 'Lily Bell', Pearce was a close friend of Hardie's. He was a member of the Brotherhood of the New Life, an American organisation which owned a vineyard in California: members acted as agents, swearing to use all profits, except for business and living expenses, for 'theo-social' purposes. Reid, *Keir Hardie*, pp. 138-9.

¹⁷¹ *Labour Leader*, 5 January 1895. See also 4 August 1894; 15 December 1894; D.C. Dallas, *How to Solve the Unemployment Question by Cooperative Organisation of the Unemployed with State Control*, (Twentieth Century Press, London, 1895), p. 3. For exceptional references to unemployed women, see *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1894.

¹⁷² *Labour Leader*, 26 January 1895. See also 9 March 1895.



WORK, OR——

FIGURE 18. 'WORK, OR - '.

A typical image was that of the wife and children of the unemployed man dying of starvation, while the man himself was 'driven to commit suicide because the right to earn bread is denied... [him]', this being seen as preferable to slowly starving to death or entering the hated workhouse.¹⁷³

It seems clear that the image of the man as a bread-winner and provider for his wife and children, and thus the association of waged work with masculinity, persisted within the ILP. Mann for example stated that the ILP believed that 'the unit of earning power to maintain a family should be the man alone...' and that wives and young children should not be required to supplement his earnings by working in mills, factories or elsewhere.¹⁷⁴

On the rare occasions when women were portrayed as unemployed, prostitution was seen as providing them with the only way of surviving. Just as unemployment led '... strong men, driven to desperation, to commit suicide...' it also led '... women to sell themselves into the bondage of shame, because all the pathways to an honest life are barred against them'. ILPers shared with feminists a view of prostitution as based on economic hardship. Nevertheless, while feminists for the most part recognised that 'it was men's sexual demands which created prostitution in the first place',¹⁷⁵ ILPers tended to concentrate on its basis in the exploitation of the labour

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 22 December 1894. See also 20 October 1894; 15 December 1894.

¹⁷⁴ Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, p. 2. See also *Labour Leader*, 1 June 1895; Russell Smart, *The Right to Work*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ L. Bland, *Banishing the Beast. English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914*, (Penguin Books, London, 1995), pp. 116.

market.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, although 'The Octopus' also partly blamed 'the whole bourgeois conception of sexual relations', all commentators made the connection between women's low wages and prostitution.¹⁷⁷ As 'The Octopus' pointed out, the phenomenon would hardly have been as common if purity had paid as well,¹⁷⁸ and Marxian protested 'against the canting outlawry visited upon... [women] if they seek a more defiant and more remunerative occupation'.¹⁷⁹ An attempt was made to distance working-class men from prostitution by stating that those who took advantage of women's poverty were middle-class men: 'Many of them are the sons of men who have amassed fortunes out of the work of underpaid girls... and consequently are able to lead idle, lustful lives'.¹⁸⁰ The influence of ideas relating to female prostitution and male sexuality promoted by campaigners against the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1870s and 1880s seems clear here. In opposition to understandings of male sexuality as aggressive and in regular need of satisfaction embraced by supporters of the Acts, repealers considered men as the 'cause' of prostitution, and as the agents taking advantage of working-women's economic vulnerability. They proposed a new standard of masculine behaviour based on sexual continence and self-

¹⁷⁶ *Labour Leader*, 4 August 1894; 19 January 1895.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 3 November 1894.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 20 October 1894.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 6 April 1895. See also 4 August 1894; 15 December 1894; 16 February 1895; Russell Smart, *Socialism and Drink*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸⁰ *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1894.

control. Male ILPers re-worked these discourses not in order to criticise male sexual practices, but to score a political point against middle-class men by portraying them as promiscuous and exploitative: despite evidence that working-class men were among prostitutes' clients, their sexual innocence was nevertheless emphasized.¹⁸¹

On the whole, although to a certain extent at least, both women and men were viewed as 'workers' and as victims of the contemporary competitive system, the consequences of exploitation were perceived as different for the two sexes. It was considered that men had to face the possibility of unemployment, in extreme circumstances taking the escape route of suicide, while working-women were practically pushed into prostitution. Male ILPers shared *The Workman's Times'* belief that women suffered from distinctive problems which they did not share with the general category of 'workers', and which centred on their sexuality, or rather their sexual relations with men.

Women's sexuality was thus unlike men's, a source of vulnerability. A number of fictional pieces made clear the disastrous consequences for women who followed their passions regardless of conventions. In 'Found and lost', a woman who had abandoned her husband for a lover with whom she had enjoyed love and sexual passion, ended up dying 'a polluted outcast' after

¹⁸¹ E. Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side. Towards a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities*, (Routledge, London, 1993), especially pp. 81-2. See also J.R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society. Women, Class and the State*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980), pp. 34-6 for a parallel with the use made by working-class radicals in the 1830s and 1840s of the image of upper-class seducers to condemn the contemporary social and industrial system's potential for exploitation.

he had left her.¹⁸² Women were not always portrayed as the losers when involved in ‘illicit’ sexual relations with men. In ‘The grave-digger’s daughter. A Russian story’, for example, the ferocious daughter of a grave-digger took her revenge on a lover who had abandoned her by burying him alive. She was, though, in a minority.¹⁸³

At another level, though, there is in these fictional pieces an implied recognition of women’s sexuality. If one turns to Edward Carpenter’s work, such recognition becomes explicit: he was at pains to emphasize the ‘naturalness’ and desirability of sexual relations for both men and women. If women’s sexual needs were weaker than men’s, more intimately connected ‘to the needs of the race’, not so often divorced from love and so on, (in fact, if they were qualitatively different from men’s) they were still recognised as in need of fulfilment.¹⁸⁴ The problem for (upper class) men was the incidence of ‘mere licentiousness’, while for women it was ‘sex starvation and sex-ignorance’.¹⁸⁵ Since his ideas were not discussed openly, it is difficult to assess how influential Carpenter was. A manuscript short story by David Lowe, the Scottish *Labour Leader* manager, though, brings together two strands which can be found in Carpenter’s work, but

¹⁸² *Labour Leader*, 16 June 1894. See also 17 November 1894; 6 April 1895.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 10 November 1894.

¹⁸⁴ Carpenter, *Woman*, pp. 8-9, 32-3.

¹⁸⁵ E. Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, (Labour Press Society, Manchester, 1894), p. 11. See also E. Carpenter, *Sex-Love and its Place in a Free Society*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1894).

which are never brought to their ultimate consequences: the emphases on women's sexual needs and maternal instincts. In 'Born of two mothers', Solomon had married Miriam because he wanted somebody to perform domestic chores and make his house comfortable. He, though, was still in love with a dead lover, and did not feel any sexual desire for his wife. The non-consummation of the marriage was a source of great anguish to her. The nights were particularly painful, as 'her whole body smarted for him, and so tragic nights were spent in her futile pleading and his piteous refusals until the pillows were wet with their mutual anguish'. Then one night he had a vision of his old lover, and woke up the following morning next to his satisfied wife. Eventually a boy was born, making Miriam a happy and proud mother. Thus, the woman's sexual desire was identified with her desire for children: once the latter was satisfied, so was the former. The man's sexuality was radically different from any notion of aggressive and more or less indiscriminate male sexual desire.¹⁸⁶ Lowe, though, seems to have been an exception in explicitly recognising the existence of female sexual desire, even if on limited terms, while I have found no evidence of the story in the ILP press.

At the same time, while it seems clear that male ILPers were not untouched by contemporary preoccupations with male sexuality, in general, issues relating to relations between the sexes were viewed as being of particular interest to women: it was they who were perceived to be its victims. Most

¹⁸⁶ D. Lowe, 'Born of two mothers', undated manuscript, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 18), ILP Archive. The passage I have quoted was in fact crossed out, and substituted with 'desired him greatly'.

of the comments relating to such issues can be found in *Labour Leader* book reviews, especially of works which can be defined as ‘New Woman’ fiction, such as for example Sarah Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins*¹⁸⁷ or Iota’s *A Yellow Aster*.¹⁸⁸ As Lucy Bland and other historians have pointed out, the ‘New Woman’ figure was in some ways a journalistic invention, which nevertheless had its origin in social trends which had opened up new educational and employment opportunities for middle-class women. ‘New Woman’ fiction explored the problems encountered by women who took advantages of such opportunities, but also challenged conventional ideas about marriage and sexual relations.¹⁸⁹ These were mostly warmly welcomed, and their arguments in favour of changes in the relations between the sexes accepted. Reviewers acknowledged the need for openness in discussing sexual matters and welcomed initiatives which aimed at educating young people and especially girls relating to ‘the function they will be by and by be called upon to fulfil in society’.¹⁹⁰ They recognised the importance of changing contemporary marital relations, ‘The Octopus’ questioning whether

anyone really believes that the mere form of legality can make the relation between man and woman pure and good? Does

¹⁸⁷ *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1894.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 23 June 1894.

¹⁸⁹ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 143-9; E. Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy. Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*, (Virago, London, 1992), pp. 38-58.

¹⁹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 16 June 1894. See also 11 May 1895.

anyone see any real difference between the woman who sells herself to a man for a night and the woman who sells herself for position, ease and luxury for life?¹⁹¹

This does not mean that the way forward was seen to lie in free sexual relations. Anything savouring of sexual licence was in fact condemned, although not so much in itself, but as damaging to the whole movement. When John Trevor, the founder of the Labour Church movement, remarried in 1895 only a few months after the death of his first wife, Hardie wrote to him that

You have given the movement such a blow as it will not recover from in a hurry, and if you really desire to serve it you can best do so by resigning all connections with the Labour Church - otherwise that organisation will go to pieces... Perhaps it is the hardest blow I have yet felt in the movement. I value most, as you know, the moral side of our agitation, and it is there you have smitten us heavily.¹⁹²

Marriage and the family were not to be abolished. Bruce Glasier emphasised that although under Toryism these institutions had proved a failure, they were still the place where people's finest feelings were nurtured, and were well worth maintaining as the essential unit of the state.¹⁹³ In the main, ILP men did not follow the example of the Owenite socialists active

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 2 June 1894. See also 2 March 1895.

¹⁹² J.K. Hardie to J. Trevor, 23 April 1895, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹⁹³ J. Bruce Glasier, 'Charles James Fox and votes for women', undated manuscript, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 20), ILP Archive.

in the 1830s and 1840s, who had challenged the institution of marriage as part of a critique of the 'Old Immoral World'.¹⁹⁴

On the whole, while scientists and medical men were warning about the deleterious effects of the 'New Woman's' attempts to gain an autonomous existence outside marriage, upon her health and reproductive capacity,¹⁹⁵ male ILPers expressed a remarkably strong support towards their aspirations, despite the fact that these would have had little relevance to most working-class women's life experience. Such a sympathetic attitude was undoubtedly fostered by the fact that although the figure of the 'worker' was at the centre of the ILP's concerns, there was very little emphasis on class struggle. The existence of a conflict of interests between Capital and Labour was recognised, but the notion of the ILP as a class party was rejected. Bruce Glasier, for example, believed that class conflict was just one of the many forms of warfare that inevitably took place in a non-socialist state of society: just as important were conflicts between the sexes or the generations.¹⁹⁶ More generally, claims were made about the representative nature of Labour:

The labouring community are more than a class, we are the nation. We constitute the overwhelming majority of the State, we produce the wealth of the country, and by this our cause

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, pp. 183-216.

¹⁹⁵ Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, pp. 38-41.

¹⁹⁶ J. Bruce Glasier, Notebook dictated to 'Jeannie' for use in Wilfred Whiteley's Memoir, (1919), Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 13), ILP Archive.

is noble, sacred and dignified.¹⁹⁷

Definitions of who exactly constituted 'the nation' or 'the people' generally remained rather vague, but although 'workers' remained central to the definition, an effort was made to extend the meaning of the term, often obviously battling against preconceived notions (found for example among the general press) about who would be represented by the new party.¹⁹⁸ Carolyn Steedman has observed the uneasiness felt by the ILP towards at least a section of the working-class: that of the unskilled, casual workers, with their 'horrible mode of life', as well as their appreciation of those they described as 'mental' workers. They too were perceived as contributing to the creation of the country's wealth.¹⁹⁹ It is thus perhaps not surprising that the new women University graduates were given such a positive coverage, especially on the pages of the *Labour Leader*.

Admittedly, the paper could not always resist satirising the figure of the 'woman righter'. In one case, an already old stereotype was made use of:

'Do I make myself plain'? Asked the angular lecturer on women's rights, stopping in the middle of her discourse. 'You don't have to mum', replied a voice from the rear, 'providence done it for yoo [sic] long ago'.

¹⁹⁷ Hammill, *The Necessity*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁸ Mann, *What the ILP is Driving At*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Steedman, *Childhood*, pp. 11, 163-72. For a discussion of class struggle in Marxist terms, as an inevitable historical factor in human relations, see Russell Smart, *Trade Unionism and Politics*, p. 1.

This kind of joke was though quite rare.²⁰⁰

A certain degree of wariness towards the figure of the 'New Woman' was present. In a letter to Lily Bell printed in the *Labour Leader* for example 'Mentor' stated that '... of all the horrid creeping things God has created the emancipated woman is the most hateful': he saw her as simply imitating the petty vices and weaknesses of men.²⁰¹ It was though pointed out that the 'morbid organisms' often represented as 'New Women' by contemporary fiction were only literary inventions. The reality was a much more positive challenge to tradition and convention, which generally was warmly welcomed by the *Labour Leader*.²⁰²

When organisations such as the Women's Franchise League opposed legislative interference with women's work, commentators did not hesitate to use a class language to make clear that wealthy ladies could not possibly know anything of the conditions under which working-women laboured.²⁰³ Nevertheless, though, upper-class women such as the bright young university graduates were given a very positive image, not only in relation to their intellectual brilliance, but also to their newly-developed physical prowess. It was stated, quoting the *Pall Mall Gazette*, that

the New Woman has been brought up with her brothers, has

²⁰⁰ *Labour Leader*, 14 July 1894. See also 24 November 1894.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 7 July 1894.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 10 November 1894. See also 27 October 1894.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 4 May 1895; 8 June 1895.

joined in their studies and games, and through it has become bright in intellect, strong in limb, and beautiful to look upon... The New Woman is thought by the 'mad multitude' to be blear-eyed, red-nosed and shapeless; she is exactly the reverse. But instead of being a pretty fool she is a clever and pretty woman.²⁰⁴

On the whole, the conclusion must be that support for women's suffrage among ILP men cannot be traced to a simple motive. Such support could find its origin within two different, but coexisting ideological backgrounds, which also reflected both the ILP's building of a common identity as 'workers' and its limited emphasis on class-struggle. On the one hand, and differing radically from *The Workman's Times'* position, women were identified as 'workers', and as such considered to be involved in and represented by the socialist movement. On such a basis, male ILPers were also called upon to bring their commitment to end all oppression to bear on their attitude towards women's emancipation. On the other hand, adopting an approach rather more similar to that of *The Workman's Times'* contributors, women were also perceived to suffer from distinctive problems, in particular centring on their sexuality, which went beyond their role as 'workers'. There was thus considerable sympathy towards women's aspirations, even those which one would have expected a labour organisation to dismiss as 'middle-class'. It seems clear that the two positions were potentially contradictory. It remains to be seen whether ILP men continued successfully to balance the two in the aftermath of what was to be a

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 13 October 1894. See also 16 June 1894.

traumatic experience for the new party: the 1895 general election.

CHAPTER 2

‘MEN OF LIKE FEELINGS AND ASPIRATIONS’? THE LABOUR ALLIANCE, 1895-1905.

In 1899, the TUC had endorsed, by the relatively narrow margin of 546,000 to 434,000, a resolution submitted by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which proposed the organisation of a conference of socialist, trade union, cooperative, and other working-class bodies in order ‘to devise ways and means to secure the return of an increasing number of labour members to the next Parliament’.¹

Eventually the conference was held in the Memorial Hall, London, in February 1900. Alongside delegates from ILP, SDF and Fabian Society, were present representatives of 570,000 trade unionists (less than half the membership of the TUC). At the end of the day they had committed themselves to the establishment of ‘a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who shall have their own whips’, if not to a recognition of the class war or to socialism. The ILP’s Ramsay MacDonald was elected unopposed to the post of secretary of the new organisation, which took the name of Labour Representation Committee. (LRC).²

The first test of strength for the new organisation came in September 1900, when the Conservative government dissolved Parliament. A general election was held in October. The LRC fielded fifteen candidates, of whom Hardie

¹ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 204-6.

² *Ibid*, pp. 206-11.

and Richard Bell of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants were victorious, though Bell eventually returned to the Liberal fold . In the context of the South African war this was not a bad result, especially since on average ILP candidates doubled the 1895 poll. In the following years the LRC enjoyed a string of by-election victories at Clitheroe in 1902 and Woolwich and Barnard Castle in 1903.³

Although only a limited number of trade unionists were represented at the Memorial Hall meeting, (of the big unions, only the Railway Servants, Gasworkers, Engineers and Shoe and Boot Operatives were present) the fact that this had taken place at all is significant in the increasingly tense industrial climate of the 1890s. Faced with the threat of foreign competition, employers were responding by introducing new machinery and new work practices, which endangered both the status and the wages of sections of the (overwhelmingly male) skilled workforce. Furthermore, there was a feeling in the trade union world that after the workers' victories of the 1880s, employers (who in a number of industries had organised in federations) were on the counter offensive. The defeat of the powerful Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1898, after a six months lock-out, came as a tremendous blow.

Furthermore, it was feared that employers would follow the example of American trusts, and attack the trade unions through the law courts. In 1899 a High Court judgement had already effectively made picketing illegal. Most importantly, though, in July 1901 the House of Lords upheld a claim by the

³ *Ibid*, pp. 212-3; 215.

Taff Vale Railway Company against the Railway Servants for financial losses caused by union members on strike. The result was a strong increase in LRC membership. In February 1900 this had been 375,000. A year later it had increased to 469,000, and to 861,000 in 1903.⁴

The formation of the LRC, though, must be seen not only as a sign of the commitment to the labour alliance on the part of the trade unions, but also of the ILP. The 1895 general election marked an important landmark in the development of support for such an alliance. The 44,000 votes received by thirty two socialist candidates (including four fielded by the SDF) can be defined as 'not an unsatisfactory total'.⁵ The fact remains, though, that not only all the twenty eight ILP candidates were defeated, but Hardie also lost his West Ham South seat.⁶ The ILP's participation in the LRC can thus be seen as part of a strategy to achieve electoral success.

This does not mean, of course, that in the aftermath of 1895 the ILP experienced a sudden mass conversion to the idea of a 'Labour Alliance'. The idea of fusion with other socialist organisations also exerted considerable power. Historians disagree over the extent of support for 'Socialist Unity' within the ILP, but it seems to have enjoyed considerable currency in parts of Lancashire, where ILP and SDF worked closely together, while the West Riding, and particularly Halifax and Bradford, were 'Labour Alliance'

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 192-201; 215.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 167. In Scotland, though, the result was undeniably disastrous, with the five Glasgow candidates averaging a poll of 502. Smyth, 'The ILP in Glasgow', pp. 20-55.

⁶ Pelling, *Origins*, p. 166.

strongholds.⁷ Above all, it is important to note that it was only through the manoeuvrings of an increasingly strong NAC committed to a 'Labour Alliance', that fusion with the SDF was averted in 1897/8.⁸

Another alternative to the alliance with trade unions emerged in the context of the South African war of 1899-1902, when the ILP's unpopular anti-war stance brought it close to a section of the Liberal Party which was also demanding the cessation of hostilities; in Pelling's words, 'the old Little England Radicals' who in many cases had otherwise very little sympathy with the ILP's collectivist ideals. In the 1900 general election the party left its members free to vote for anti-war radicals.⁹ Nevertheless, a radical realignment in support of the LRC did not materialise: agreement over 'immediate issues' did not produce organisational shifts. It is in this context that the secret MacDonald/Gladstone electoral pact between Labour and Liberal Parties of 1903 must be viewed: 'organisational separation was accepted; agreement on a wide range of policy issues was recognised'.¹⁰

It seems clear that the general election defeat of 1895 did not produce an immediate and unanimous commitment to a labour alliance. Support for 'Socialist Unity' remained considerable, while the South African war in

⁷ Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 49-60; M. Crick, "A Call to Arms": the Struggle for Socialist Unity in Britain, 1883-1914', in James, Jowitt, Laybourn, (eds), *The Centennial History*, pp. 181-204.

⁸ Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 314-6; 393-7. See also Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 83-7.

⁹ Pelling, *Origins*, pp. 188-91.

¹⁰ Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 366-73.

particular, produced pressures in support of an understanding with sections of the Liberal Party. Nevertheless, the dominant image of the post-1895 ILP, and one assiduously cultivated by the NAC, (now dominated by the famous 'Big Four') was of a party working closely with trade unions. The present chapter focuses on the ideological shifts which took place within the party as it committed itself to this alliance. Chapter 1 has shown how in the party's earliest years ILP men had been willing to include women within the category of 'workers' whose emancipation they were seeking, while at the same time recognising that they suffered from distinctive disabilities. This introduction will conclude by assessing whether electoral disappointment led ILP men to re-think their attitudes towards 'political' reform. The chapter's section 1 will then focus on the ways in which ideas about the roles of men and women within society shifted, as the ILP sought a closer relation with trade unions. Section 2 will first of all consider the implications of such a shift on ideas about women's enfranchisement, and will conclude by analysing the impact on party men of a group of suffragists, who in these years began to be active within the Lancashire labour movement.

It became clear soon after 1895 that the party's electoral weakness was not to be blamed on the limitations of the contemporary franchise. Only for a brief period immediately after the election did their collective soul-searching lead male ILPers to question whether the party may have been losing essential support among the mass of voteless people.¹¹ Nevertheless, rather

¹¹ *Labour Leader*, 3 August 1895.

than acknowledge the need for electoral reform, it was preferred to emphasize that by the time of the next general election those young men who at present were so prominent among the party's supporters, would have grown older and obtained a vote.¹² As Gilbert Williams, secretary of the Alveston ILP, remarked with satisfaction, 'As our young supporters qualify for votes our opponents' tools are dying off...'.¹³ It was acknowledged that 'Of course the whole wretched complication of the existing electoral machinery ought to be done away with, and simple adult suffrage put in its place' and that the chances of success of ILP by-election candidates were limited by the fact that many of those who provided enthusiastic support at meetings were not then able to vote.¹⁴ Quite simply, though, the franchise question continued to be perceived as low in the list of priorities. Finding himself moving an adult suffrage resolution at a Labour Day demonstration in Glasgow, Bruce Glasier confessed to having 'Made but a perfunctory job of it as I knew little and cared little about the subject'.¹⁵ Eventually, it was the work of registering potential voters which started being urged upon the party members.¹⁶ Even for this measure, though, the sense of urgency was

¹² *Ibid*, 27 July 1895.

¹³ G. Williams to Parliamentary Committee of the ILP, 9 October 1898, Reports from Head Office, 1898-9, ILP Archive.

¹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 31 July 1897. See also 6 March 1897.

¹⁵ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 3 May 1896, Glasier Papers.

¹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 3 August 1895; 10 August 1895; 17 August 1895; NAC Minutes, 13 August 1895, ILP Archive. Expressions of concern about the limitations of the franchise were even rarer during and after the general election of 1900. But see for example *Labour Leader*, 29 September 1900.

hardly overwhelming. Although it was estimated that by precipitating a general election in 1900, before the year's register had been completed, 'several free-born Britons' had been disenfranchised, they would anyway

... have voted with no more wisdom or patriotism than the bulk of the present electorate has done. It is not the quantity, but the thinking quality of the voters that is of account in a nation.¹⁷

By 1897, furthermore, confidence was once more being expressed in the power of the workers at the ballot-box, a power which they were called upon to utilise. (Figure 19)¹⁸ 'As seven tenths of the voting strength of the nation is in the hands of the wage earners, it is self-evident that they can, if united, elect whom they will to Parliament'.¹⁹ Occasionally, in addition, the masculinity of the electorate to whom they were appealing was explicitly recognised and accepted. During a lecture in Glasgow, Hardie told his audience that

Men have won their rights without the vote because they were men; but if you use your vote to perpetuate the system that oppresses you, the vote becomes an instrument for registering your degradation. In Glasgow, in West-Ham, all over the country the people are beginning to use their vote to assert

¹⁷ *ILP News*, October 1900. See also John Edwards, *Politics and the Independent Labour Party*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1897), pp. 5-8.

¹⁸ *Labour Leader*, 16 October 1897. See also 5 March 1898; 8 April 1899.

¹⁹ J.K. Hardie, P. Snowden, D.J. Shackleton, *Labour Politics: a Symposium*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1903), p. 4.



AN OBJECT LESSON TO BARNESLEY WORKERS.

PETE CURRAN: "Look there, my man, that's what your capitalistic would-be M.P. would do for you."

FIGURE 19. 'AN OBJECT LESSON TO BARNESLEY WORKERS'.

their manhood...²⁰

Women's exclusion from the electorate talked about so confidently by male ILPers was in only one instance remarked upon. The Cambridge graduate and NAC member Fred Brocklehurst²¹ had suggested that County and Borough Councils should be made educational authorities, but a 'B.W.' observed in a letter to Lily Bell that women could not vote for these bodies.²² Brocklehurst's response was very revealing. Women's exclusion from county and borough franchises was not allowed to detract from his educational plans. Rather, he hotly contended that women were excluded because of their own apathy. 'Until women show more practical interest in these matters they have little cause to complain if a member of the inferior sex sometimes lapses into forgetfulness regarding them'. Notable for its absence was any statement relating to the need to extend the franchise to women.²³

The aggressive language may have been Brocklehurst's idiosyncrasy, and yet the 'forgetfulness' he expressed seems to have been widespread among

²⁰ *Labour Leader*, 19 November 1898. See also 2 April 1898; 7 May 1898.

²¹ Brocklehurst remained a member of the NAC until 1897. Between 1892 and 1895 he had held the position of Secretary of the Labour Church Union. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. VI, pp. 39-42.

²² *Labour Leader*, 2 May 1896. For the controversies among socialist organisations over the transfer of educational responsibilities to 'omnibus' local authorities, see Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 146-53.

²³ *Labour Leader*, 9 May 1896.

male ILPers. In a speech as Labour parliamentary candidate in Leicester, MacDonald recognised the need for democratic reforms, and mentioned for example the abolition of distinctions between occupier and lodger and of the twelve months residence qualification. It is revealing that only when prodded by a question from the floor, did he remember to declare himself in favour of women's suffrage.²⁴

2-1. 'ECONOMIC FREEDOM IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH A FREE MANHOOD MUST REST'.

Not surprisingly, just as in the party's earlier period, in the aftermath of the 1895 general election, male ILPers did not recognise the need for franchise reform, let alone women's suffrage, as a precondition for the establishment of independent labour representation. The journalist T. Russell Williams put the matter clearly:

although the Labour Party would be even more eager than the Liberal party to endow every adult person of either sex with the full responsibilities of citizenship, we contend that having sufficient working-class voters already to dominate the House

²⁴ J.R. MacDonald, *Speech delivered at the Temperance Hall, Leicester*, (Leicester Cooperative Printing Society, Leicester, 1899), p. 11.

of Commons, the greatest need of the immediate future is to enable working-men to realise the necessity of destroying the private monopoly of the fountains of wealth...²⁵

The period saw the party develop a renewed interest in municipal politics, which provided a certain amount of scope for women's activities as voters and candidates. (see Chapter 3) Laybourn and Reynolds tentatively suggest that in 1896 the ILP had at least 181 representatives in local government, growing to 247 in 1900 and 400 in 1905.²⁶ The commitment to parliamentary politics, though, was never called into question, even if the vote in itself was still perceived to have little significance. In male ILPers' view, their Radical and Chartist 'fathers' had campaigned for political power: this was valuable only in so far as it enabled workers to seek 'economic freedom'.²⁷ 'Marxian' in particular emphasised that under a Capitalist system the act of voting as an end in itself was not necessarily empowering:

A 'Democracy' under Capitalism is ten thousand times a sham - a starveling 'democracy' of ignorant, ill-paid, street bred lackeys and whipsters... Look at the little wretches burrowing and wriggling and crawling. Are they, indeed, men?²⁸

²⁵ T. Russell Williams, *Should the Liberal and Labour Parties Unite?*, (Chronicle Office, Bingley, 1903), pp. 9-10.

²⁶ K. Laybourn, J. Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890-1918*, (Croom Helm, London, 1984), p. 64.

²⁷ Anon, *All about the I.L.P.*, (*Labour Leader*, Glasgow, 1899), p. 2.

²⁸ *Labour Leader*, 2 December 1899. See also 16 January 1897; 2 July 1898; 20 July 1901; 22 February 1902.

Parliament represented simply the instrument through which socialism would be obtained. This view was not a new development, but 'Marxian' was at times prepared to take the argument further and include women's suffrage among those purely political reforms which he considered useless in the absence of social democracy.

... I am in favour of giving women everything they want - votes included... For all merely political reforms Marxian confesses an unbounded contempt. The trouble of the time is not lack of democratic power, but lack of spirit to use that power to effect an economic revolution. Capitalism breeds slaves.²⁹

As Christabel Pankhurst pointed out in the *ILP News*, ILP members were continually emphasising to working-men the value of their votes, 'yet they frequently require advocates of the political enfranchisement of women to prove that the vote will be of practical utility'.³⁰

The solution to the problem of the party's electoral weakness was eventually sought not in franchise reform, but rather in the development of closer links with trade unions and cooperative societies. By 1896 there were already signs that the party was working towards an electoral alliance with these organisations. As Hardie put it,

It must be... evident to everyone that no Labour movement

²⁹ *Ibid*, 13 February 1897. See also 5 June 1897. H. Samuel to J.K. Hardie, 1 May 1897, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

³⁰ *ILP News*, August 1903.

can ever hope to succeed in this country without the cooperation of the trade unionists. Now, rightly or wrongly, some of us have held the opinion from the beginning that it was possible to make trade unionism and ILPism interchangeable terms for electoral purposes, and, on the whole, facts have thus far justified this belief.³¹

‘Workers’ and the workplace continued to be central both to the party’s ideology and rhetoric. Socialists’ ‘task’ and ‘mission’ was to

spread among the workers a sound knowledge of the root-cause of the poverty, misery and oppression which every thinking man deploras... They show how the workers may capture the political machinery and decree legislation to socialise land and capital.³²

Continuity with the earlier years can also be seen in the depiction of toil as life-wasting and a burden to be borne from childhood to old age, rather than a source of pride. In Arthur McEwen’s ‘The tramp’s soliloquy’, a tramp compared his own situation with that of a stonebreaker working for half a crown a day:

He eats, sleeps and wears clothes not much better than mine.
And all the long hours he’s pounding rock and sweating and
straining and shortening his life. What am I doing? Resting -

³¹ *Labour Leader*, 6 March 1897.

³² W.C. Anderson, ‘A Word to the Unattached: A Plea for Organisation’, (Glasgow City Leaflet no 2, n.d., c.1903), pp. 1-2, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive. See also NAC of the ILP, *The Independent Labour Party. Statement of Principles*, (Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1895).

and having beer...³³

‘Workers’ possessed political power in the shape of the vote, but helped to perpetuate their own exploitation by blindly voting into Parliament those employers they had to fight in the workplace. As Glasier caustically put it,

... wherever a strike has taken place, you may be morally certain that the employer of labour who has proposed the hardest terms and has in all ways made himself most obnoxious to his workmen, will be elected Member of Parliament for the locality at the very first vacancy.³⁴

Nevertheless, not all remained the same. An important shift had taken place at some point after 1895 in the representation of those ‘workers’ who made up the ILP’s constituency. The rhetoric had also to a certain extent changed, as appeals to the workers’ ‘manhood’ became more prominent. In a short poem ‘Trapper’ wrote:

I glance down the ages,
I see yet the time,
... when the worker grown wise,
And towering aloft with his manhood sublime.
Erect, with God’s fire in his eyes.
... Bend not ’neath your burden, nor crouch ’neath the lash
with manhood and liberty gone,
... More powerful than cannon or sabre,

³³ *Labour Leader*, 21 June 1902. See also J. Penny, *Socialism and Genius*, (Published by the author, Sheffield, n.d., c.1900).

³⁴ J. Bruce Glasier, *On Strikes*, (Labour Literature Society, Glasgow, n.d., c.1897), p. 5. See also *Labour Leader*, 28 March 1896; 3 September 1898; *ILP News*, April 1901.

Is the ballot as used by the ILP
For the freeing of downtrodden Labour.³⁵

In 1901 Hardie's use of masculine rhetoric was challenged by a Rev. R. A. Armstrong, described as a 'good Liberal', in a sermon preached in Liverpool, and subsequently published in *The Inquirer*. Apparently, when asked what he considered to be the greatest need of the twentieth century, Hardie had responded: 'Men'. To this the Reverend added '... a conjunction and a noun: what we want is Men and Women'. Hardie's response is worth quoting in its entirety:

Somewhere in the opening passages of the Book of Genesis it is written 'God created man, male and female created He them'. It is in this sense I used the word man. Sex is a delusion. The perfect man is he who combines the tenderness of the female with the strength of the male, and in like manner the woman who is not strong as well as tender is imperfectly developed.³⁶

It is interesting to note that behind Hardie's apparent blindness to the importance of gendered language there lay the potential for a radical re-think of gender roles. This does not seem to have been true of most ILP men: the masculinisation of language was symptomatic of a wider ideological shift. 'Workers' still appeared in ILP discourses as exploited victims, but now they were almost exclusively male. By 1896, for example, working women had

³⁵ *Labour Leader*, 4 January 1896. See also 21 December 1895; 3 November 1905; Hardie, Snowden, Shackleton, *Labour Politics*, pp. 8-9.

³⁶ *Labour Leader*, 2 March 1901.

already virtually disappeared from the pages of the *Labour Leader*. Articles appeared as a result of investigations into the working conditions of employees of Army and Navy Stores,³⁷ Prudential Insurance Company,³⁸ Post Office,³⁹ Lord Overtoun's chrome works,⁴⁰ Bethesda⁴¹ and Ballachulish⁴² mines: these workers were invariably portrayed as male.⁴³ *Labour Leader* cartoons continued to portray workers as unmistakably masculine, however thin or exploited. (Figure 20).⁴⁴

I would argue that this shift occurred as a direct result of the ILP's attempts to develop closer links with trade unions. As it did so, it reverted (at least to a certain extent) to the adoption of a world view earlier espoused by *The Workman's Times*. In particular, a rather more critical stance towards women's waged work came once more to the fore. As Eleanor Gordon has shown in relation to Scotland, although by the turn of the century trade

³⁷ *Ibid*, 23 July 1898; 27 August 1898.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 24 September 1898.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 24 December 1898.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1 April 1899.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 4 May 1901.

⁴² *Ibid*, 23 August 1902.

⁴³ This was despite the fact that both Post Office and Prudential had pioneered the employment of lady clerks in the early 1870s. See E. Jordan, 'The Lady Clerks at the Prudential: the Beginning of Vertical Segregation by Sex in Clerical Work in Nineteenth Century Britain, in *Gender & History*, vol. 8, no 1 (April 1996), pp. 65-81. But see also the investigations into the work practices of Lipton Ltd, *Labour Leader*, 14 October 1899; Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 74.

⁴⁴ *Labour Leader*, 11 July 1896. See also 27 July 1895.



FIGURE 20. 'BEFORE'.

unions were rejecting 'old' sectionalist policies, they still gave wholehearted 'support to the exclusive policies pursued by most of the skilled unions which sought to eliminate women from their trades'.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in his study of Preston, Michael Savage observes that it was the unions most threatened by female competition, such as the printers, which showed themselves most enthusiastic about the labour alliance.⁴⁶ As the previous chapter has shown, a strand of thought which emphasized the primacy of men's over women's waged work, and advocated the establishment of a family wage had been present within the ILP before 1895. It now became the dominant one. For most ILPers, this was probably by no means a traumatic shift. R.J. Morris for example suggests that the Glasgow ILP was 'imbued with the ideology of Glasgow's "labour aristocracy"', whose ethos was based on the need to 'keep women out of the labour force, and then earn a family wage to maintain the domestic ideal'.⁴⁷ Even in the West Riding, where Isabella Ford's work among women textile workers, and in particular, Leeds tailoresses, had received throughout the 1890s the support of sympathetic trade unionists and ILPers such as Ben Turner and Allen Gee, there were limits beyond which men were not prepared to go. As June

⁴⁵ Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p. 89. Gordon makes the interesting suggestion that in Scotland's socialist circles it was women (although certainly not all women) who defended women's right to work. *Ibid*, pp. 277-9.

⁴⁶ M. Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics. The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), pp. 152-6.

⁴⁷ R.J. Morris, 'The ILP, 1893-1932: Introduction', in McKinlay, Morris, (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside*, p. 13.

Hannam has observed: 'It was one thing to support a general improvement in women's wages and work conditions, but quite another to challenge their secondary status within industry'.⁴⁸

Working-women did not entirely disappear from the pages of the *Labour Leader*. Efforts to organise them in trade unions were occasionally noticed, always with approval, although at the same time usually relegated to a few lines of small print.⁴⁹ It was still possible to find a short poem in 1898 about 'The shop girl and her brother', which dealt with male and female shop assistants on the same (if rather scathing) terms:

The shop girl and her brother wear garments a la mode
And have hands both soft and white,
And have manners most polite,
And live on fat, and bread, and tea, and sleep in an abode
Where vermin hold their revels through the night,
But in betterment they do not take delight.⁵⁰

Most often, though, when women's waged work was acknowledged, it was seen as standing clearly apart from men's: it was for this reason that the appointment of female factory inspectors was advocated.⁵¹ Women's very

⁴⁸ Hannam, "In the Comradeship of the Sexes", especially pp. 223-5. See also Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 60-82; J. Bornat, 'Lost Leaders: Women, Trade Unionism and the Case of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1875-1914', in John, (ed.), *Unequal Opportunities*, pp. 207-33.

⁴⁹ See for example *Labour Leader*, 14 March 1896; 14 August 1897; 6 May 1899; 17 January 1903; 20 May 1904.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2 July 1898.

⁵¹ *ILP News*, June 1898.

approach to waged work was perceived as different from men's, and as characterised by their 'supine acceptance of a lower standard of life and wage'. They, therefore, needed 'to be protected against themselves' through legislative intervention.⁵²

There were, though, also hints that attitudes towards women's work had hardened. The issue of women's competition was considered only rarely. Nevertheless, figures 21 and 22 show that male ILPers had a clear understanding of who had the prior claim to employment in a dispute caused by printing employers' attempts to introduce girls as linotype machine operators, thus forcing men out of employment.⁵³

By the beginning of the new century, married women's (and in particular mothers') waged work was coming in for increasing condemnation. Concerns about high infant mortality were directly connected to mothers' need to work for wages outside the home. 'Gavroche' (William Stewart, a *Labour Leader* staff member between 1900 and 1904⁵⁴) went further, stating that

Lancashire has long been the byword as the home of a sterile and physically decadent race, where the women have abrogated the natural functions of their sex and taken to the production of cotton cloth, and the birth rate has declined in

⁵² *Labour Leader*, 18 November 1899.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 1 February 1896. See also 22 May 1897; 12 December 1903.

⁵⁴ Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 427.

MEN *versus* MACHINERY.

**THREATENED DISPUTE IN THE
PRINTING TRADE.**

THE engineers' dispute appears to be
practically settled, and in its place up

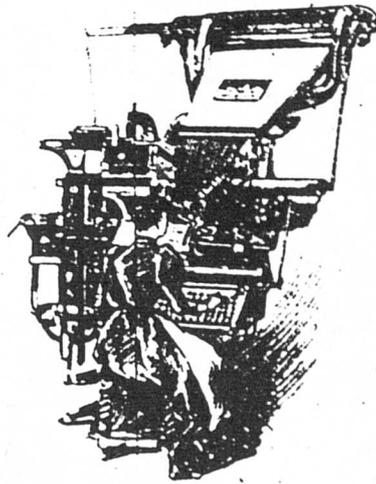


FIGURE 21. 'MEN V MACHINERY'. (1).



FIGURE 22. 'MEN V MACHINERY'. (2).

30 years from 40 per thousand to 25 per thousand.⁵⁵

This did not necessarily mean that even ILPers who obviously viewed married women's work askance, such as Sam Hobson⁵⁶ and Tom Mann, were prepared to advocate its legal restriction.⁵⁷ The real culprits were perceived to be not the women, but the capitalist system. The solution was not legal prohibition, but for male labour to be better rewarded, so that men could truly be the family bread-winners.⁵⁸

There were some types of employment which were perceived as particularly 'unsuitable' for women. The description of a female Cradley Heath chain-maker published by the *Social Gazette* was for example reprinted in the *Labour Leader* with approval: the aim was clearly to show how an inappropriate type of toil had caused a mother of five (therefore, at one level undeniably 'womanly') to lose her feminine attributes. 'Her arms were thin and grimy, but hardened by unceasing toil, her chest flat... her palms and fingers case-hardened by bellows, hammer and rod'.⁵⁹

More significant, though, was a new tendency to condemn women's work

⁵⁵ *Labour Leader*, 18 July 1903. See also Anon, 'The Slaughter of the Innocents', (ILP Platform no 58, 9 August 1902, London), ILP Archive.

⁵⁶ A Quaker Ulsterman, Hobson remained a member of the ILP until 1905, later becoming its harsh critic. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left*.

⁵⁷ L.R. Pears to T. Mann, 16 March 1896; L.R. Pears to T. Mann, 19 March 1896, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

⁵⁸ *Labour Leader*, 2 December 1899. See also 16 June 1900; 8 September 1900; 1 March 1902.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 14 July 1900. See also 3 May 1902; 19 July 1902.

even when it was not threatening male employment. Waged work was now considered by its very nature as 'unsuitable' for women. A strand re-emerged within the party echoing *The Workman's Times'* emphasis on the home as the 'proper' place for women. The acrimonious divorce between May Morris and H. Halliday Sparling, as well as Eleanor Marx's suicide, must have brought home to *Labour Leader* contributors that home life, even among committed socialists, was not always necessarily happy, but did not act as a deterrent.⁶⁰ Even as the *Labour Leader* was commending the establishment of a school to instruct women in the various aspects of domestic service, a certain A. Bell thundered against the way in which labourers' daughters, 'whose natural vocation is (or should be) ministering to their parents' wants, are forced to become wage slaves in alien homes'.⁶¹ Two aspects of this tirade make it particularly interesting: first of all, it asserted that home was the proper place not only for women with family responsibilities, but also for young and presumably unmarried ones. Secondly, it was directed at a type of employment generally considered particularly suitable for young working-class women. The Liverpool socialist John Edwards⁶² was another ILPer who believed that in a socialist society women would not

enter the arena of labour. It is sometimes urged against

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 23 July 1898; 30 July 1898.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 7 August 1897.

⁶² Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. VII, pp. 73-6.

Socialism that it would lead to the break-up of the marriage tie, but it is commercial men who take women away from the home into their offices... The Socialists would leave the women to constitute the home, and let the lighter work now performed by them be given to men beyond forty.⁶³

Such a rigid statement concerning women's role within society was not necessarily the norm, but there certainly had developed after 1895 a general and deep feeling of ambivalence towards women's waged work. A pamphlet on *Labour Laws for Women* published in 1900 by the London City branch of the ILP, illustrates this very clearly. On the one hand, it accepted that women had 'to a large extent, followed... [their] former duties from the home to the mills and shops where they are now done'⁶⁴ and viewed with disfavour women's dependence on a male bread-winner.⁶⁵ It was nonetheless assumed that women's attitudes towards waged work were not the same as men's: '... work is an incident in the life of a woman and the sum of the life of a man'.⁶⁶ It was also assumed that their standards of 'work or of comfort' were not as high⁶⁷ and that their needs as workers were different from men's because of their physical differences (which

⁶³ John Edwards, 'What is Socialism', (ILP Platform leaflet no 25, 21 December 1901), ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 31 October 1896; 24 August 1901.

⁶⁴ City of London ILP Branch, *Labour Laws for Women. Their Reasons and their Results*, (City of London ILP Branch, London, 1900), p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 19.

essentially boiled down to women's capacity to bear children).⁶⁸ All this served to justify the application to women of special legislation. The clinching argument, though, was obviously considered to be women's special responsibility for 'home duties': these were

... not only her own personal affair, but concern the community. The State is interested not only that she should bear healthy children, but also that she should have time to attend to their needs or those of any other member of her family.⁶⁹

On the whole, although concern was seriously expressed about the need to improve the lot of the woman worker, she was still considered to be an essentially different creature from the male worker, and domestic concerns were still perceived to be her special responsibility.

If women as workers were disappearing from ILP discourses, the same cannot be said of women as wives, mothers, and dependents on men. This did not always necessarily imply that their sphere of action was perceived as limited to a domestic setting. During the Boer war for example, Hardie published in the *Labour Leader* an extremely emotional appeal to 'The Mothers of England', calling upon them to protest against the appalling conditions in refugee camps set up in South Africa for Boer women and children. '... the men of England are powerless, or careless, I know not which. It is time now for the mothers to speak out to save this cruel

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 10-1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 12.

massacre from going further'. It was they who could empathise with the suffering of Boer women whose children were dying.

You know the fierce, holy joy of motherhood as the child of your travail digs his fingers into the breast from whence he draws his sustenance. And you know too, many of you... the tug which comes to the heart-strings when the cold hand of death stills for ever the life-beat in the heart of him who was part of your life... You have gone through it all, and therefore you can feel for the mother who is now suffering it.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, in general, the representation of women's status as that of wives or mothers did not lead to their politicisation.⁷¹

This was particularly true of the female figures portrayed in the fictional pieces that continued to appear regularly on the *Labour Leader*. The female characters present in the fiction published by the paper before 1895 had already contained a strongly conservative strand, but the absence of women outside fiction in the post 1895 paper must increase their significance. Female characters in these short stories tended to conform mainly to two types. First of all there were a number whose main interest within the story was their relationship with a man, who could be either a husband, or much more often a lover. Marriage featured prominently, either as the end result of an often troubled relationship or as an objective which was never achieved, mostly because of the woman's behaviour. In 'An episode in

⁷⁰ *Labour Leader*, 12 October 1901.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 11 July 1896; 9 October 1897; 11 December 1897; 10 January 1903; 21 April 1905.

Celtic Park' by David Lowe, a woman lost her lover because she did not behave like a 'woman', but rather indulged in a fit of 'feminine caprice'.⁷² It was only when the lives of fiance/husband and thus, the marriage itself were threatened, that the heroine behaved with what was emphasised as uncustomary decisiveness.⁷³ That marriage and home life were desired goals was not in doubt: in 'No better heaven' a very successful opera singer gave up her career without hesitation to return to domestic life with the husband whom she had left years before after a quarrel.⁷⁴

The other recurrent type of female figure within the paper's fiction was that of the 'fallen' woman, who was either seduced by a man and then abandoned, or who had to turn to prostitution to be able to survive. The notable feature of both kinds of 'fallen woman' was the extent to which they were also portrayed as 'workers'. In the case of the women forced to turn to prostitution, the influence of desperately low wages on the decision was stated explicitly. No outright condemnation of women's work was ever made, but the bleakness of working-women's lives was emphasised. In 'Annie' the heroine was painfully aware that she could not survive on her meagre earnings as an office girl. Marriage represented her means of escape. Failing that, the only other option was another, 'near akin to marriage, of which she was cognisant with shuddering'.⁷⁵

⁷² *Ibid*, 5 August 1899. See also 5 December 1896.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 8 January 1898.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 21 November 1896.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 23 May 1896. See also 25 December 1897; 30 June 1900.

On the whole, after 1895 the role of women within the party's ideology had become more circumscribed. References to working-women became relatively rare. When they appeared in *Labour Leader* fictional pieces, their prospects appeared bleak. Their work was portrayed as making them vulnerable to prostitution and, implicitly, to being seduced and abandoned by unscrupulous lovers. Marriage had become an increasingly attractive proposition for women, and domesticity the area in which their role in life could be fulfilled. Only rarely were the hardships suffered by poor married women touched upon. In 'The wife of a tailor' 'Compo' (F.W. Black) considered the life of Mrs. Markison, who had recently died. By the time he knew her, she had already given birth fourteen times: 'How the frail small body stood the mere physical strain has always been a mystery to me'. He emphasized her skill as a housewife, managing on a small income, and her devotion to the children, while at the same time pointing out the narrowness of her outlook and her fatalistic attitude towards life.

... at 45, tired and wearied of the struggle, the mother laid down her burden of care in this world... Duty done to the letter - according to her lights. But a tragedy all the same.

Perhaps even more interesting was his condemnation of 'the selfishness of her husband and the unthinking neglect of her family', which nevertheless had not made the household in any way atypical.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 29 December 1900. See also 16 June 1900, 14 June 1902. Black, Lowe's successor as *Labour Leader* manager after the latter resigned in 1902, had already had thirty years' experience as a compositor in Dundee

Black's concern was not, though, generally shared. By the beginning of the twentieth century the question of working-class housing was attracting an increasing amount of attention within the party. Notable for its absence, though, was any concern about women's needs, despite the belief in the appropriateness of the domestic environment for women. In his pamphlet dealing with municipal socialism, for example, Russell Smart advocated the erection of municipal housing and artisans' dwellings, but apart from calling for the establishment of municipal laundries, gave no particular thought to the needs of women. His vision was that of an electrical municipal tram conveying

the healthy Municipal working-man, with his trade union wages in the pockets of his well-fitting Municipally-manufactured clothes, after his eight hours of agreeable toil in the Municipal factory, swiftly and cheaply to his Municipal home.⁷⁷

It is now necessary to look more closely at that 'Labour' whose emancipation was being sought. Increasingly after 1895 the terms 'worker' and 'trade unionist' were used as if identical, both being perceived as included within the broad category of 'Labour'. ILPers made explicit the class nature of this new closeness. Reassurances were still uttered that there

before joining the *Labour Leader* staff. Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 82.

⁷⁷ Russell Smart, *Municipal Socialism*, pp. 3-4; 7. See also W.C. Anderson, *Municipal Homes for St. Mungo's Sons: an Appeal to the Workers*, (Glasgow City Branch ILP, Glasgow, 1902); J.A. Fallows, *Facts for Birmingham. The Housing of the Poor*, (Allday, Birmingham, 1899).

was space within socialist ranks for individuals of all classes, including aristocrats such as the Countess of Warwick,⁷⁸ while notions of ‘class war’ were rejected, in favour of a vision of a ‘great commonwealth’.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the proposed alliance between ILP, trade unions and cooperative societies was emphasised as a working-class alliance. As Black put it, trade unionists had discovered that socialists ‘were men of like feelings and aspirations with themselves, working for an employer, earning a weekly wage, and, therefore, bound in the great common circle of the workers’.⁸⁰ Marxian emphasised the contrast was between the ILPer and the Lib-Lab MP, who

gets to Westminster, and sits among gentlemen... becomes ashamed of himself and of his class. He copies his ‘betters’, in their dress and in their manners, and is the tamest of tame lick-spittles.⁸¹

I want to suggest that this shift led not only to a strengthening of the party’s working-class character, but also to a reworking of its gender identity, with ‘Labour’ increasingly understood as a masculine entity. John Edwards’

⁷⁸ *Labour Leader*, 26 August 1899. See also 8 February 1902.

⁷⁹ J. Bruce Glasier, *Labour: its Politics and Ideals*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1903), pp. 12-3. See also Anon, ‘Labour Alert’, (ILP Platform no 31, 1 February 1902, London), ILP Archive.

⁸⁰ *Labour Leader*, 6 December 1902. See also 9 September 1899; 25 January 1902; Hardie, Snowden, Shackleton, *Labour Politics*, p. 4; *ILP News*, June 1899.

⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 2 April 1898.

use of rhetoric reflected this shift, as he emphasised that the way forward for the ILP lay in developing a closer connection with the trade union rank and file, while

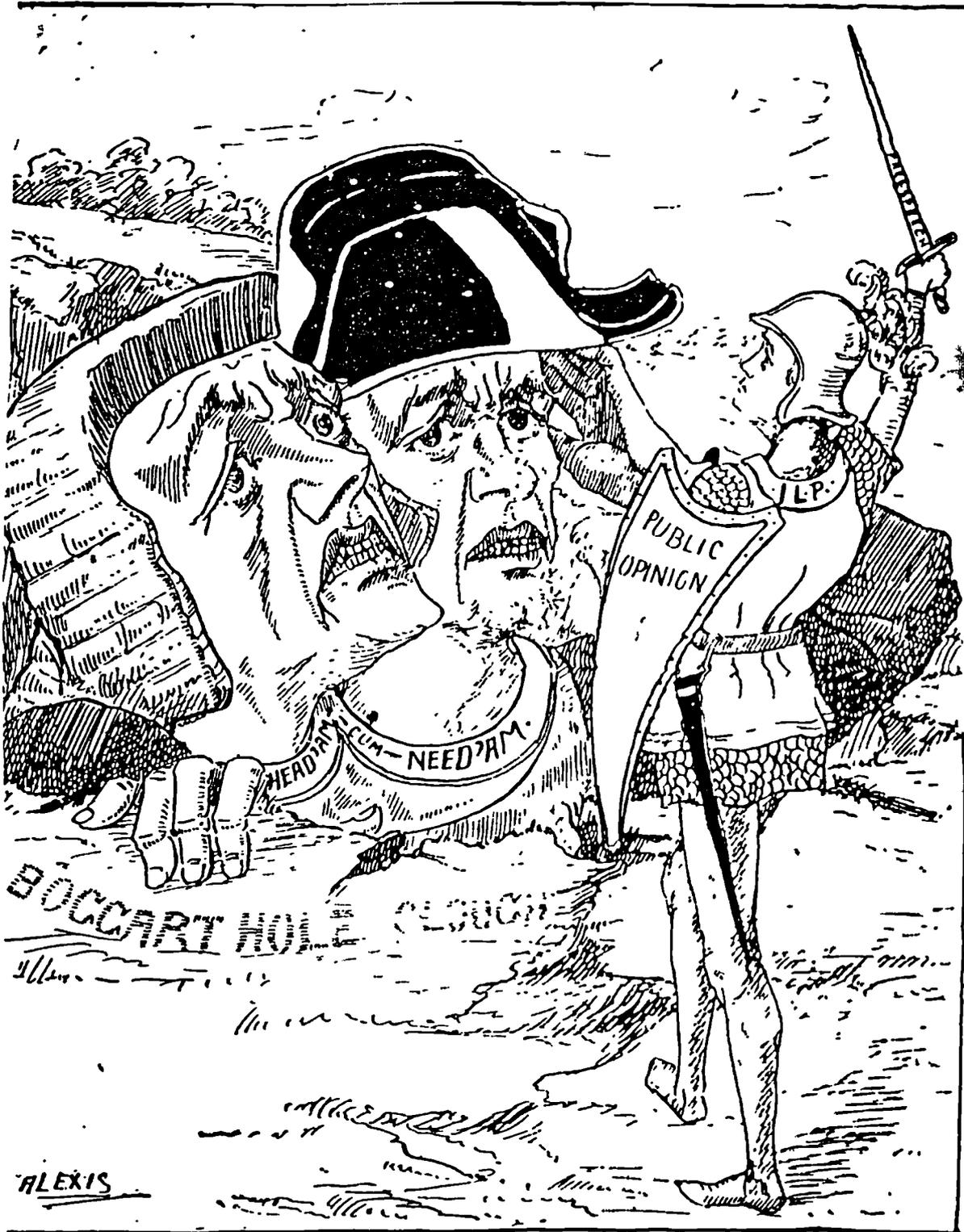
to ask the ILP to join forces with the Radical party is to ask May to wed December, to ask the young and lusty youth to mate with the decrepit old woman tottering on the verge of the grave.⁸²

Pictorial images are particularly useful in illustrating this shift. When masculine figures were used to represent 'Labour' or the party itself, the use of any figure other than that of the 'worker' became rare. Occasionally the figure of a knight clad in medieval armour appeared, (Figure 23)⁸³ but much more often less heroic and more 'realistic' figures of 'workers' were used. The ways in which their facial features and bodies were portrayed could differ considerably; some for example were clean-shaven, others bearded, some muscular, others painfully thin. Nevertheless, their clothing identified them unmistakably as 'workers'. The plain boots, loose trousers and shirts, the soft cap, as well as the rolled up sleeves and unbuttoned collar, clearly marked them as masculine manual workers (Figure 24).⁸⁴

⁸² Edwards, *Politics*, p. 10. See also R.E. Thomas' comparison between the 'sane, sober, sensible socialists' of the ILP with 'the thin brained silly clever Fabian women of both sexes'. R.E. Thomas to J.R. MacDonald, 6 August 1896, Ramsay MacDonald Papers.

⁸³ *Labour Leader*, 4 July 1896. See also 27 February 1897.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 16 April 1898. See also 5 December 1896; 26 June 1897; 30 April 1898.



"THE GOOD 'OLD GIANT-KILLER."

The Two-headed Giant, Head'am-cum-Need'am, slips himself in a (B gar) Hole

FIGURE 23. 'THE GOOD OLD GIANT-KILLER'.



FIGURE 24. 'OUR MODERN ATLAS'.

Particularly significant is the fact that trade unionists were portrayed in exactly the same way. They too wore the type of clothing which set them apart, both as workers and as men: they too were invariably masculine. Consider for example figure 25, which portrayed both an ILPer and a trade unionist, and clearly shows both their fundamental affinity as manual workers and their common masculinity.⁸⁵

It seems that within the ILP's broad constituency of 'Labour', the 'worker' and the 'trade unionist' were drawing closer. They shared not only a class identity, but also a gender one: they were both men. This is not to suggest that female figures completely disappeared from *Labour Leader* imagery. They were present as mothers with children, either as pathetic figures poignantly showing the wretched conditions of the working-class under Capitalism,⁸⁶ or their joyous emancipation under socialism.⁸⁷ In two very interesting instances they were portrayed as the figure of 'Britannia', which colluded with the capitalist to exploit the (male) workers (Figure 26).⁸⁸ More often, though, they too were used to represent the personification of socialism or the cause of Labour (Figures 27 and 28).⁸⁹ But while it was rare for the male figures to be portrayed as other than 'workers', the female

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 4 September 1897.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 4 January 1896.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 1 May 1897.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 21 March 1896. See also 7 March 1896.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 1 May 1897; 19 June 1897. See also 20 July 1895; 25 December 1897; 28 December 1901.

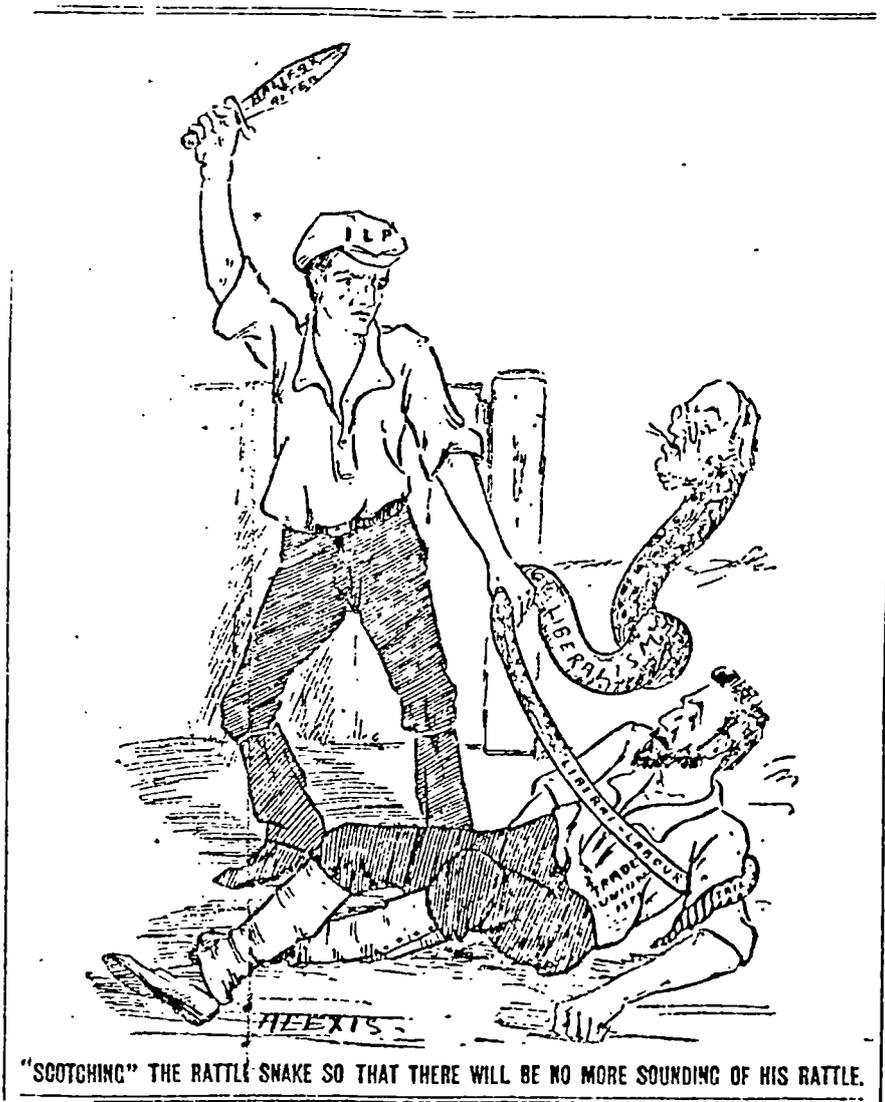


FIGURE 25. 'SCOTCHING THE RATTLE-SNAKE'.



OUR SPLENDID ISOLATION!

FIGURE 26. 'OUR SPLENDID ISOLATION'.



A MODERN PROMETHEUS.

FIGURE 27. 'A MODERN PROMETHEUS'.

FIGURE 28. 'POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE THE KEY TO ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION'.



· POLITICAL · INDEPENDENCE · THE · KEY · TO · ECONOMIC · EMANCIPATION ·

SUPPLEMENT TO THE
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figures' most notable feature was their idealisation. They were not the representation of real women, but rather ethereal figures with flowing hair and robes. They were almost always associated with the figures of male workers, who in contrast were depicted as semi-realistic. A parallel can be drawn with what Marina Warner writes about the British figure of Britannia and the American one of Liberty, as opposed to John Bull and Uncle Sam:

Men are individual, they appear to be in command of their own characters and their own identity, to live inside their own skins, and they do not include women in their symbolic embrace.... But the female form does not refer to particular women, does not describe women as a group, and often does not even presume to evoke their natures.

Even if executed with a high degree of naturalism, female figures representing an ideal or an abstraction hardly ever intersect with real individual women. Devices distinguish them: improbable nudity, heroic scale, wings, unlikely attributes.⁹⁰

At one level, it would be possible to view these figures as representing a degree of 'feminisation' on the part of the party. This is, though, doubtful. First of all, the representations of 'Britannia' show that allegorical female figures were not always positive icons for the ILP in the way that the male worker was. More importantly, these female figures did not necessarily imply a challenge to the party's masculine identity. Although there is not the space here to analyse in detail the various devices used in the representation of

⁹⁰ M. Warner, *Monuments and Maidens. The Allegory of the Female Form*, (Picador, London, 1987, first edition 1985), pp. 12, 28.

these figures, it is possible to suggest that Warner's observations on the figure of Athena, which she sees as symbolically upholding 'father-right', are also valid here: the female 'form' depicted by the *Labour Leader* was not necessarily a site of female power or female 'values'.⁹¹ According to Lisa Tickner, it was only 20th century suffrage imagery which was successful in its efforts to 'reinhabit the empty body of female allegory, to reclaim its meanings on behalf of the female sex'.⁹²

As far as the *Labour Leader* was concerned, the role of a female icon as a catalyst for male power, while remaining marginal itself, was not limited to pictorial images. In a flight of rhetoric, a contributor to the paper (possibly Hardie) asked:

Are not the great Trade Union and Cooperative movements, children of the same great mother as ourselves? Were not they too born of the oppression of the worker? Were not they suckled at the same teats? Did not they also drink into the same milk of misery?... They are our Elder Brothers, and as such must fight with us.⁹³

If the cause of 'Labour' was increasingly portrayed as that of the masculine 'worker' and 'trade unionist',⁹⁴ the effect of this shift on the ILP's wider

⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 104-26.

⁹² L. Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women. Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14*, (Chatto & Windus, London, 1987), pp. 205-13.

⁹³ *Labour Leader*, 6 April 1901.

⁹⁴ See also J. Penny, *The Political Labour Movement*, (Clarion Press, London, n.d., c.1904).

socialist ideology and in particular on attitudes towards women's emancipation remains to be seen.

It surely was no coincidence that this period saw predominantly the expression within the *Labour Leader* of the 'economic' argument in favour of socialism. The workplace increasingly became the site where ILP recruits were to be found, and fundamental changes were to take place.

This is not to say that the personal and spiritual side of the socialist endeavour was completely forgotten. Hardie continued to state his belief that socialism was more than a new economic system, but was rather an ethical and idealistic movement: 'a philosophy altogether beautiful'.⁹⁵

Socialism is but a means to an end - a higher and moral life...
We want an ethical basis for industry, and Socialism supplies
it; we need a moral code for living, and the Socialist code of
Each for All and All for each offers it.⁹⁶

And yet concern themselves with economic matters is exactly what male ILPers, even Hardie to some extent, increasingly did. 'Marxian' saw a positive sign of the times in

the dwindling of rabid antagonisms about hair-cutting, dress
democracy, religion, and other non-economic topics, and the
growth of real perceptions regarding the vital question of a

⁹⁵ J.K. Hardie, *Young Men in a Hurry*, (*Labour Leader*, London, n.d., c.1898), p. 5. See also *Labour Leader*, 9 October 1897; 12 August 1899.

⁹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 4 January 1902. See also 1 August 1896; 21 October 1899; 5 October 1901.

society organised on a just economic basis.⁹⁷

A. R. O. (Alfred Orage, the Leeds socialist and later editor of the *New Age*⁹⁸) pointed out that idealism was not sufficient to convince the average elector to cast his vote for socialists: it was now necessary to 'study economics'.⁹⁹ It was emphasised that socialism would find its fundamental expression in the workplace: industrial machinery would be collectivised,¹⁰⁰ the 'private employer system' would be abolished,¹⁰¹ 'production for profit' would be substituted by 'production for use',¹⁰² 'those who labour' would no longer be 'the thralls and serfs of those who own the land and the capital',¹⁰³ and so on. In his vision of a socialist future, Snowden saw '... the workman educated to take an interest in his work, and the machine minder once more the craftsman whose brain directs and evolves the work of his hands...'.¹⁰⁴

It can hardly have been a coincidence that such a shift should have taken

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 2 September 1899.

⁹⁸ Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 427. In 1907 he was arrested for his part in a WSPU 'rush' on the House of Commons. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 256.

⁹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 20 February 1897.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 4 January 1896.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 18 January 1896.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 25 July 1896.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 5 March 1898.

¹⁰⁴ P. Snowden *The Christ that is to be*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1905), pp. 12-3. See also Bruce Glasier, *Labour*, p. 7.

place at a time when the party was endeavouring to attract the support of cooperative societies and especially trade unions. Trade unionists were to be attracted to socialism by emphasising the improvements in working conditions and material well-being that it would bring. As Hardie emphasised in a speech in Glasgow, the socialist, cooperator, trade unionist and land nationaliser shared a common aim: 'the freeing of the toiling millions from economic bondage'.¹⁰⁵ Particularly in the aftermath of the 1897 engineering lock-out, the powerlessness of trade unions when confronted with 'gigantic combinations of capital' was emphasised.¹⁰⁶ 'The unwisdom of remaining neutral in political contests will be seen and will be remedied: and the trade union movement will become a militant force in municipal and national politics'.¹⁰⁷

On the whole, it seems that at the same time as women's role within the *Labour Leader* became more circumscribed and they almost disappeared as workers, economic issues gained greater prominence. At the same time as the 'worker', now increasingly identified with the male trade unionist, tended to assume a masculine identity, solving his material, workplace problems, became a priority. It remains to be seen how much space this shift left for women and their emancipation, including the right to vote. A *Labour Leader* article by Hardie, in which he emphasised the connection between manliness

¹⁰⁵ *Labour Leader*, 8 October 1898.

¹⁰⁶ Anon, *The Independent Labour Party: its History and Policy*, (Circular no 5, Labour Press Society, Manchester, n.d., c.1897), p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *ILP News*, February 1898. See also *Ibid*, December 1898; Anon, *All About the I.L.P.*, p. 3.

and economic emancipation, illustrates the problems women would have experienced in trying to make their own claims heard.

... the truth is dawning that Economic Freedom is the foundation upon which a Free Manhood must rest. And Socialism is thus the Mother of Freedom. It ensures the right to live to every useful member of the community... today the workers are a subject race... under Socialism they emerge as free men.¹⁰⁸

The imagery suggested by the rhetoric is similar to that of many of the *Labour Leader* illustrations: the masculine worker was emancipated by the idealised female figure of socialism. It is now necessary to consider where women's own emancipation fits within this ideology and rhetoric.

By 1896 a strand of thought had developed among ILPers which condemned as 'fads' all issues unconnected with economics. This did not necessarily imply a lack of sympathy for 'advanced' positions on issues such as marriage, but nevertheless considered them irrelevant to the socialist debate.

The comments published in the *Labour Leader* about a lecture given by Edith Lanchester in Edinburgh, for example, were hardly enthusiastic:

It consisted mainly of frequent repetitions of the obvious enough fact that our competitive system had made family life difficult... and of the opinion that family life would in the future and irrespective of blood relations, group itself around the essential element of affection, and not be compulsory...

¹⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1897.

What Lanchester had to say was neither 'deep or interesting or agreeable', but the real condemnation was reserved for the fact she had used the expression and had sought to speak for 'we Socialists' far too much. On the 'family question' she should have spoken just for herself.¹⁰⁹ As Gordon Holbeck pointed out, issues such as the relations between the sexes, anti-vivisection or Malthusianism were not unimportant, but were quite simply not socialism. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was the economic question that was seen as uniting and setting apart socialists from other pressure groups. 'Are we divided as to the iniquitous workings of the private ownership of land and capital? Do we haggle and dispute over the unemployment problem?'¹¹⁰ Non-economic issues would have to wait. As Hardie himself put it, '... it is necessary that the issue of Socialism should be raised unencumbered by other controversial topics which may be dividing the people into hostile camps'.¹¹¹

There certainly were complaints, particularly on the part of Lily Bell, that male ILPers' commitment to socialism did not necessarily imply support for

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1896. In 1895 Edith Lanchester, a middle-class member of the SDF, had decided to live in a free love union with railway clerk and fellow SDFer James Sullivan. Her family responded by arranging for Dr. George Blandford, a specialist in mental diseases, to visit her at her Battersea lodgings. After he had certified her as 'insane', her father and brothers dragged her to a carriage, which took her to a private lunatic asylum. With the help of fellow socialists, Sullivan applied for a writ of Habeas Corpus, and eventually secured her release. Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 159-61.

¹¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 14 March 1896. See also *ILP News*, June 1898.

¹¹¹ Hardie, *Young Men*, p. 5. See also *Labour Leader*, 31 August 1895; 20 February 1897; 30 August 1902.

women's emancipation. As she pointed out, although...

Socialism involved the idea of equality and freedom for women as for men in its very essence... and therefore all socialists must theoretically accept the principle as their own... Socialists have yet to learn that the women's cause is their cause, which means something more than merely that their cause is women's cause.¹¹²

It surely must be significant that Lily Bell's column in the *Labour Leader* was discontinued in 1898, and that no similar one took its place.¹¹³ Six years later, Christabel Pankhurst was still accusing socialists of being if not actively antagonistic, at least apathetic towards women's emancipation.¹¹⁴ David Lowe also recognised the often lukewarm support granted by male socialists to women's rights.

It is no unusual thing to find in Socialist ranks, and even among the leaders, an intellectual subscription to Woman's Rights almost entirely without enthusiastic belief... As time passes, women will rely less and less upon men intellectually and coldly convinced, for they know that conviction without zeal is easily fatigued... advanced women will be driven to trust increasingly in themselves, and to oppose, if need be, those who affect to be on their side and who are only so in an academic and expedient way.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Labour Leader*, 6 February 1897. See also 20 June 1896; 12 December 1896.

¹¹³ See also Mrs. Pankhurst's praise for the ILP's position on women's rights, *ibid*, 13 April 1901.

¹¹⁴ *ILP News*, August 1903. But see also 'A Mere Woman's' denial the following month of Pankhurst's allegations, *ibid*, September 1903.

¹¹⁵ *Labour Leader*, 8 November 1902.

All this does not mean that after 1895 issues considered to be of special interest to women were suddenly altogether forgotten. 'Marxian' himself, having reiterated that socialism had nothing to do with 'marriage, religion, vegetarianism, hypnotism, cold baths...' conceded that

Mind you, if you rest content with a sham marriage and a sham religion, and you fear Karl Marx to be right in his deduction that our existing conventional wedlock and savage creeds depend for popular support on the economic slavery of the masses, then I can understand the objections to socialism in the interests of marriage and religion.¹¹⁶

The attitude of ILPers was not always serious. Jim Connell for example wrote that the existence of 'female dominance at Leeds' was demonstrated by the actions of a woman who had installed her son at a steelworks in the place of her striking husband, whom she had also 'locked-out' of the home. He concluded therefore that 'women's rights are in full force at Leeds, and so Mr. Faithfull Begg, Herbert Burrows, and other ladies' men need not worry themselves about this particular spot'.¹¹⁷

On the whole, the issue of women's emancipation was taken seriously. Particular attention continued to be devoted to the question of marriage and of the relations between the sexes. There was a clear awareness that something was wrong in both these areas. 'Marxian' blamed the capitalist system for the contemporary state of marriage: 'Capitalism has made the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 9 November 1895.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 20 February 1897. See also J. Connell, *Red Flag Rhymes*, (The Agitators' Press, Huddersfield, n.d., c.1899).

family and the home into unexisting dreams, ideals, lies'. His argument was clearly similar to that proposed by Lanchester, although presumably his was made more acceptable by the fact that he did not advocate free love as a solution.¹¹⁸ Any hint of lax sexual morality continued to be severely frowned upon. When the Lanchester scandal broke out, *Labour Leader* contributors made clear their disapproval of her choice to live in a free union with James Sullivan. This was described as 'an escapade... that... tends to discredit it among all classes'. Although the conduct of her relatives was described as 'indefensible' it was also emphasized that the woman's actions had brought upon her family a 'certain amount of social damage'.¹¹⁹ The family was to remain the central unit of socialist society. Its destruction was in the interest of capital, so, as an anonymous *Labour Leader* contributor pointed out, 'that the income of the working-classes should be a wage for individual consumption, and not one sufficient to maintain a high standard of family life'. The contributor recognised that married women's grievances were real, but considered that once they had obtained 'greater intellectual, economic and political freedom... they will find the organisation of the family a protection rather than a tyranny'.¹²⁰

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the affair between the Hull councillor

¹¹⁸ *Labour Leader*, 10 October 1896. See also 12 December 1896; 22 July 1899.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 2 November 1895; 9 November 1895. But see also the case of the American Professor Herron, 6 July 1901. For SDFers' responses to the case, see Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 99-104. See also Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes*, pp. 58-63.

¹²⁰ *Labour Leader*, 22 July 1904. See also 1 July 1904.

and ILPer George Belt (a working-class married man) and Dora Montefiore (a well-to-do feminist, SDF activist, and later prominent in the suffrage movement) should have caused considerable scandal within the party. And unlike the Lanchester affair, and although Montefiore's own conduct was by no means considered blameless,¹²¹ the individual whose conduct was placed under the spotlight was both a man and an ILPer. At one level, the whole matter centred on issues of sexual conduct. While staying with Montefiore on a visit to London, Belt had suffered a mental breakdown (he had to be interned in a sanatorium for a short period of time). Having travelled to London in order to accompany him back north, Belt's fellow ILPer and friend Hugh Webster had observed that 'things are not square between Mrs. Dora Montefiore and George Belt'.¹²² It was pointed out that Belt's wife had been heavily pregnant at the time, and he was accused (despite the denials of both Montefiore and of his physician¹²³) of suffering from satyriasis.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the whole matter was clearly not perceived to be a 'private' one of personal conduct. Belt's employment as paid organiser for the Hull ILP was discontinued. As the secretary of the branch wrote to Hardie, 'The Hull ILP considers that Belt's conduct has been of such a nature that we could not place any further confidence in him'.¹²⁵

¹²¹ D. Montefiore to J.K. Hardie, 20 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹²² H. Webster to J.K. Hardie, 16 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹²³ D. Montefiore to J.K. Hardie, 20 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ R. Davison to J.K. Hardie, 13 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

Ultimately, Belt was seen as having failed to conduct himself as it was perceived that ILP men should do. Keir Hardie obviously thought that Montefiore was tempting him, by offering to support him financially, 'into a life of indolence'.¹²⁶ Perhaps more fundamentally, his sexual misconduct was seen as symptomatic of a more general corruption of his character, which affected also his 'public' persona. Hugh Webster suggested that 'George Belt after his great success last May in the School Board Election has greatly suffered from "Vanity" and discontent with his material position that is 25s a week'. Thus, not only had he contracted satyriasis, but had also 'lost all sense of right and wrong'.¹²⁷ Bruce Glasier's fulsome praise of Hardie during the 1900 ILP Conference shows just how short Belt had fallen of the ILP manly ideal. Glasier spoke of Hardie's

... rock-like steadfastness, his unceasing toil, his persistency... Hardly in modern time has a man arisen from the common people who, unattracted by the enticements of wealth or pleasure, and unbent either by praise or abuse, has remained so faithful to the class to which he belongs... He was a man of the people, and a leader of the people.¹²⁸

Belt, on the other hand, was (allegedly) being tempted by a life of 'indolence', was discontented with his material position, had involved

¹²⁶ D. Montefiore to J.K. Hardie, 9 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹²⁷ H. Webster to J.K. Hardie, 16 April 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹²⁸ ILP Conference Report, 1900, p. 27.

himself with an upper-class woman, and was a victim of 'vanity'.¹²⁹

As F. C. Wilson wrote to Hardie, men like Belt of Hull and Bland of Bradford (who had fathered an illegitimate child while still married) brought the whole of the socialist movement into disrepute and injured its development.

To me the half-baked Socialist is not the one who cannot pass his exam in collective economics but the one to whom duty and inclination appear one and the same thing.¹³⁰

After all, it was among 'the dull debased trail of kings and oppressors that self-indulgence, libertinage and dishonour has found example and approval',¹³¹ hardly an example ILPers would have been keen to follow.

It was against this background that in 1902 the *Labour Leader* published a short story by David Lowe, entitled 'Worthless Nell', which represented a direct challenge to the sexual morality espoused more generally by the party. The central character was clearly not a 'respectable' one. She left her work at a spinning mill at irregular intervals to go off with men: she had two children whose fathers she was unsure about. Disapproving public opinion

¹²⁹ See also C. Collette, 'Socialism and Scandal. The Sexual Politics of the Early Labour Movement', in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 23, (Spring 1987), pp. 102-11, for the affair's reverberations for the following ten years.

¹³⁰ F.C. Wilson to J.K. Hardie, 3 October 1899, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹³¹ *ILP News*, October 1899. See also Bruce Glasier's account of Mann's resignation from the ILP's secretaryship in 1898, amidst rumours about his personal and particularly sexual conduct, J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 12 May 1897; 30 August 1897; 19 September 1897; 6 December 1897, Glasier Papers.

she simply ignored. Nevertheless, Nell was by no means portrayed as a negative figure: the 'grandeur of her character' was shown by her willingness to support through the winter a Norwegian sailor, her lover, when he missed his boat: '... he had taken her for a holiday to Dondar, and had spent ten pounds on her, and... he was a friendless stranger in this country...'.¹³² There is some evidence that ILPers were aware of the work of sexologists, and particularly of Havelock Ellis, in the pre-war period. Nevertheless, there was no open endorsement of sexologists' emphasis on the existence of women's heterosexual desire.¹³³ Lowe's willingness to explore such matters seems to have been exceptional: after the publication of 'Worthless Nell', he received the complaints of several 'shocked' readers.¹³⁴

Despite their ultimate commitment to the monogamous family unit, male ILPers were still critical of contemporary marital relations. The lack of space and privacy which marriages usually entailed was seen to have repercussions on the peace of mind and good temper of both husband and wife,¹³⁵ although there was a clear perception that it was women who were normally the greatest losers in contemporary marriage relations.¹³⁶ Albeit in a light-hearted way, and in an article meant to extol the virtues of married

¹³² *Labour Leader*, 23 August 1902.

¹³³ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 256-61.

¹³⁴ *Labour Leader*, 13 September 1902. See also 4 December 1897; 20 September 1902.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 19 February 1898; 3 June 1899.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 26 February 1898.

life despite its drawbacks, 'Martha-Ann' (whom Lily Bell knew to be a man¹³⁷) made some telling points in the *Labour Leader* about husbands' often insensitive behaviour. He described for example how...

he comes in and sits down to the little dainties with which I treat him with the air of a lord, and has the usual male idea that they drop from the sky without trouble and expense, and even has the arrogance to assert that he will succeed in training me to cook eventually.¹³⁸

In a more serious vein, an editorial pointed out the little known fact that women could only leave the workhouse with their husband's consent, and would have to leave if the husband requested it. Women's vulnerability to unscrupulous husbands was emphasised.¹³⁹

Except when accepted sexual mores and family patterns were threatened (as in Belt's case), this concern did not lead to any introspection on the part of male socialists about their own domestic practices. Many ILPers were themselves at least theoretically committed to conventional marital relations, based on the assumption of women's domestic role. Robert Smillie, the Scottish miners' leader, recalled in his autobiography that '... wherever my duties called me, however long they kept me away, the children and the home were cared for with uncomplaining devotion'.¹⁴⁰ Although Ben

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 16 October 1897.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 18 September 1897.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 2 July 1898. See also 18 January 1896; 10 December 1898.

¹⁴⁰ Smillie, *My Life for Labour*, pp. 28-9.

Turner emphasised how he had been able to help his wife in performing household chores ‘in times of sickness or domestic difficulty’, he did not reject the notion that domestic matters were ultimately her responsibility. He always handed over all his earnings to his wife, who had left work at the mill a few days before the wedding, and who had then taken charge of the household exchequer.¹⁴¹ There is no indication that male ILPers generally undertook their wives’ household chores in order to enable them to pursue their own political interests: Turner’s wife, for example, was involved in the suffrage movement and in the 1920s became one of the country’s first women magistrates.¹⁴²

The problem of contemporary relations between the sexes was the subject of criticism not only when they occurred within marriage. ‘Carolus’, like ‘Marxian’, blamed the capitalist system. While discussing a recent scandal, when a young girl had been made pregnant by a married man, and then had died while trying to have an abortion, he stated:

Whilst this society in which we live today follows its Gods of Money, Position and Respectability, its fruits cannot be other than murder, shame and lewdness... The environment of modern society does not breed many men and women who

¹⁴¹ Turner, *About Myself*, pp. 38-9; 67. See also Clynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 50-1. For a rather different approach to marriage see Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 211-2.

¹⁴² Turner, *About Myself*, pp. 73-4; 276-6. See also Lansbury, *My Life*, pp. 76-9; Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, pp. 96-9. Ideals and personal conduct did not of course always coincide, as Hardie’s affairs with Sylvia Pankhurst, and earlier with the Oxford Fabian Annie Hines demonstrate. Morgan, *Keir Hardie*, pp. 58-9, 164-6.

can withstand temptation.¹⁴³

The introduction of the Cantonment Acts in India in 1897 (based upon the Contagious Diseases Acts) raised important questions about female, but especially male sexualities: the issue was considered important enough for the Leeds ILP to require the NAC to instruct the branches to pass resolutions against it¹⁴⁴ and the London executive of the party to convene a meeting of women members to discuss possible lines of action.¹⁴⁵ A number of male party members wrote to Lily Bell to express their concern about her opposition to the Acts. She was accused of ‘going entirely against the desire of the Indian government to prevent gonorrhoea and syphilis’ and scorn was poured over ‘the stained glass angel idea of morality’ and the efforts of ‘hysterical but well-meaning females’.¹⁴⁶ Soon, though, these very letters produced a different response. The understandings of male sexuality which lay at the foundation of the Acts were criticised, and it was emphasised that men should be subject to the same standard of morality as women. William Platt was not somebody likely to condemn sex as an evil in itself. In his book *Women, Love and Life* he emphasised that what were known as ‘the grosser passions are gross because men choose to make them so by

¹⁴³ *Labour Leader*, 3 April 1897. See also 4 March 1899.

¹⁴⁴ NAC Minutes, 3 July 1897, ILP Archive. See also Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 10 July 1897.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 12 February 1898.

prostituting them to the slavery of animal instincts'.¹⁴⁷ He, though, pointed out the unfairness of the present moral system:

While male libertinage boasts of its vileness, an unhappy girl, if she trust her honour to her lover and be betrayed, is hounded down, and has no chance left her save the living death serving as general receptacles for men's lust.¹⁴⁸

Another correspondent believed that it was men who should be punished (including through castration) for spreading the disease, if the offence was repeated. Men should have the 'manliness' to control their instincts:

Speaking from my own experience, it is just as easy for a man to keep himself clean as a woman: if he has only the manliness and the courage to do so; but, unfortunately... it is considered manly to yield to vice instead of to avoid it...¹⁴⁹

Charles Bream-Pearce used the opportunity provided by the discussion of the Cantonment Acts to launch a wholesale attack upon what he defined as 'wrong sex-relations', by which he meant 'fornication and adultery, and the looking upon a woman - any woman, including one's wife - to lust after'. He saw the only *raison d'être* of sexual relations in reproduction, while what he termed 'disorderly bodily sex-relations' led to 'the organic withdrawal of

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 4 December 1897. See also Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1900), p. 155.

¹⁴⁸ *Labour Leader*, 12 March 1898.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 26 February 1898. See also 3 April 1897.

the feminine qualities from those of the masculine, and the consequent withering of the virility of the race'.¹⁵⁰

On the whole, male ILPers still showed a considerable amount of concern about the problems of relations between the sexes, both within and outside marriage. They were aware that women were the losers under present arrangements, and were at times even prepared to call into question accepted understandings of male sexuality. Suggested solutions to perceived problems were, though, much thinner on the ground. The observation made in a *Labour Leader* editorial after a discussion of marriage, that 'It is time surely that women had a share in the making of laws which can so unjustly oppress them'¹⁵¹ was very much an exception. The closer ILPers generally came to a solution was a vague and often only implied belief that once established, socialism would right all wrongs. How it would do so was not stated.¹⁵²

The way in which the issue of 'physical degeneration' was treated shows both the potential and the limitations of male ILPers' approach to the problem of the relations between the sexes. By 1901 concern was being expressed within the party as in the country at large about what was perceived as the 'physical degeneration' of the British race, following revelations about the poor state of health of army recruits during the South

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 12 March 1898. For feminist debates over the issue of sexual self-control, see Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 283-7.

¹⁵¹ *Labour Leader*, 2 July 1898.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 10 October 1896; 3 April 1897; 22 July 1899.

African war.¹⁵³ Anna Davin has shown how ‘expert opinion’ focused attention on the role of motherhood in the improvement of racial stock.¹⁵⁴ There were criticisms within the ILP of what was perceived as women’s ‘abdication’ of their maternal role, although male members concentrated on working-class women, rather than the middle-class women who in eugenic discourses were usually perceived as having abandoned motherhood in favour of higher education and a career.¹⁵⁵ High infant mortality in Accrington for example was attributed to women’s practice of continuing to work in factories after having borne children. Nevertheless, it was emphasized that they were forced to do so by the present economic system: ‘It is always an economic question at bottom. If the male parent had more wages these horrors would not be continually cropping up’.¹⁵⁶ Eleanor Gordon’s observations relating to the Women’s Labour League are also valid in connection with male ILPers:

Whereas medical and official bodies tended to deposit the responsibility for infant welfare with the mother and strove to promote improved child care by advocating greater maternal efficiency, Labour League women were more likely to

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 13 April 1901; 13 July 1901. Eugenics, or the ‘science of selective breeding’, flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the British empire’s supremacy was challenged by new powers, and social investigators highlighted the widespread nature of poverty at home. Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 222-8.

¹⁵⁴ A. Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 5, (Spring 1978), pp. 9-65.

¹⁵⁵ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 225-6.

¹⁵⁶ *Labour Leader*, 6 February 1904.

advocate environmental solutions and social reform...¹⁵⁷

Under the heading of 'physical degeneration', the 1904 ILP Conference passed a resolution stating that the only 'effective cure' to the problem was 'the abolition of the present system of Capitalistic production', while at the same time advocating immediate relief measures such as free maintenance in schools.¹⁵⁸

The solution to the problem of 'physical deterioration' was found in the economic reorganisation of society. This meant that working-class mothers were not subject to a barrage of criticism, although the association of womanhood with motherhood and domesticity remained not only unquestioned, but was actually reinforced. Prostitution also continued overwhelmingly to be perceived as the outcome of the economic exploitation of women-workers, which while fostering an understanding attitude towards 'fallen' women, resulted in a lack of any consistent attempt to question contemporary relations between the sexes and beliefs about men and women's sexual natures. (Figure 29)¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, interest in exploring issues centring on the relations between the sexes did not remain constant throughout the period, but rather seems to have decreased. In the *Labour Leader* for example, as attention to these issues diminished, there was a significant increase in the number of short

¹⁵⁷ Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p. 272.

¹⁵⁸ ILP Conference Report, 1904, p. 33-4.

¹⁵⁹ *Labour Leader*, 24 October 1896.



THE WAGES OF VIRTUE.

FIGURE 29. 'THE WAGES OF VIRTUE'.

pieces, usually without comment, describing the often successful efforts of women in different parts of the world to enter various professions, achieve particular educational qualifications or election to office, (especially in local government) and so on. Increasingly, notices were introduced of Canadian women barristers,¹⁶⁰ French doctors,¹⁶¹ British sanitary inspectors,¹⁶² relieving officers,¹⁶³ health visitors,¹⁶⁴ an American woman mayor,¹⁶⁵ British parish council 'chairmen',¹⁶⁶ School Board members,¹⁶⁷ a Cambridge fifth wrangler,¹⁶⁸ a Scottish entomologist,¹⁶⁹ and so on.

Since these achievements would have involved almost exclusively middle-class women, this development would seem rather strange, especially if one considers the effort the party was making in this period to present itself as a workers' and working-class party. It is possible to suggest, nevertheless, that this development made good sense. Since devoting too much space to the question of women's emancipation, rather than concentrating on the 'real'

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 3 October 1896.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 19 September 1903.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 28 October 1899.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 13 February 1900.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 27 October 1905.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 14 May 1898.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 6 May 1899.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 25 October 1902.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 2 July 1898.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 17 March 1900.

business of socialism could be construed as 'faddistic', these short pieces represented a working compromise. On the one hand, they demonstrated the paper's and ILPers' continued commitment to women's emancipation. On the other, they could be presumed not to impinge upon the interests of working-class and especially trade unionist members. Of course, statements such as 'The alliance of chivalry to slavery becomes too palpable when chivalry is seen to be mainly bent on securing immunity for its own bread and butter' (made when discussing women's entry into the professions) could have wider implications for working-class trades' exclusive practices.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, care was taken never to mention these in this particular context. Also, the issues involved in these pieces could be perceived as straight-forward, and not requiring a reworking of socialist priorities or personal politics.

In addition, by 1900 serious discussion within the paper of the relations between the sexes had been largely substituted by jokey pieces, usually at the expense of wives, and usually relegated to the paper's last page. 'Many a woman marries just because it makes her mad to see a man enjoying himself without a wife',¹⁷¹ is only one of many examples.

Middle-class feminist organisations were generally mentioned with equanimity, if not particularly often or enthusiastically. A forthcoming suffrage meeting in Manchester in November 1898 for example was described as 'expected to be of very representative character, as it is largely

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 8 October 1898.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 26 January 1901.

supported by various political and philanthropic societies in the district'. The presence of Enid Stacy, 'one of the best speakers in England', and one of the most popular of ILP propagandists, may serve to explain at least partly the interest, but other speakers, such as Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Wynford Philipps were also mentioned with obvious respect.¹⁷²

Class hostility did at times make itself felt. In 1902 Glasgow magistrates had decided to refuse licenses to public-houses which employed women as barmaids. David Lowe believed that 'The Crusade was initiated by a society of ladies of position and of wealth, who wished to protect their poorer sisters - the bargirls'. He made clear, though, that he considered the claims of sisterhood to be simply a cover for what in reality was 'a cute move in sex competition on the part of ladies of position', since it could only have been their brothers, husbands and sons who had enough money to lead barmaids into 'temptation'. 'Ladies' were just as much implicated by the exploitativeness of the capitalist system as their male relatives were.

No class can abuse another without suffering for it, and so it comes to pass that the wives, sisters and daughters who do not pay girls a living wage find that these underpaid girls compete with them in sex.¹⁷³

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 19 November 1898. See also 24 October 1896; 6 April 1901; 14 December 1901; 10 June 1904.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 21 June 1902. For a study of the involvement of feminist organisations in the agitation over barmaids' employment, see L. Ugolini, 'The Barmaid Agitation and Suffrage', (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Wales, College of Cardiff, 1993).

Although attitudes were rarely so aggressive, commentators could not always restrain themselves from drawing attention to the middle-class nature of feminist gatherings. Revealingly, they did so obliquely, by drawing attention to the audiences' style of dress. A correspondent, commenting on the 1899 Women's International Conference, pointed out that

as long as they show themselves slaves to their milliners by wearing big hats that are a nuisance to others... and to their dressmakers by wearing long trains... so long... as they are fashion slaves to other women, so long they must expect men should also regard them as only fit for Law's slaves.¹⁷⁴

2-2. 'IT IS ONLY JUSTICE TO GRANT WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ALL ROUND...'

It is within this larger context that attitudes towards women's suffrage must be placed. Although this period saw the development of a strand of opinion which was critical towards the issue, it is also in this period that I have found the first evidence of action being taken in support of the cause. In 1899 the Central Finsbury branch passed a resolution urging their MP, who was a supporter of women's suffrage, to ballot for a bill in the forthcoming

¹⁷⁴ *Labour Leader*, 8 July 1899. See also 5 June 1897.

parliamentary session.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, nevertheless, there also appeared a number of serious arguments against the extension of the franchise to women. Their rationale could differ considerably, but I would suggest that they found their common origin from the ideological shift which was taking place within the party, as it emphasized its working-class status and at the same time the economic basis of its socialism.

There were still plenty of cases in which the justice of women's claims to the vote was accepted without discussion. In 1897 Pete Curran¹⁷⁶ for example in an election speech expressed his

most absolute belief in Adult Suffrage, because I have arrived at the conclusion that it is a wrong and a tyranny to convict a full-grown man or woman under a law which they have had no voice in the making of.¹⁷⁷

Just as women's educational achievements, entry into the professions, and so on, were celebrated, so the progress of women's suffrage all over the

¹⁷⁵ *Labour Leader*, 4 February 1899.

¹⁷⁶ A Glaswegian of Irish extraction, Curran had first become involved in politics through Irish land reform and later the SDF. Between 1888 and 1889 he helped to organise the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union, of which he was appointed West of England district secretary. A Fabian since the early 1890s, he attended the 1893 Bradford Conference, where he was elected to the NAC (a member of which he remained until 1898). An extremely able propagandist, in 1906 he was elected Labour MP for Jarrow. In January 1910 he lost his seat, dying not long afterwards. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. IV, pp. 65-9.

¹⁷⁷ P. Curran, *Speech by Pete Curran*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1897). See also *Labour Leader*, 13 March 1897; 22 September 1900; 30 November 1901; *ILP News*, March 1903; P. Snowden, *An Election Address*, (ILP Platform, no 38, 22 March 1902), ILP Archive.

world was followed approvingly. In the Spring of 1901 for example the *Labour Leader* reported the vicissitudes of suffrage within the Norwegian Storting, culminating with the granting of the communal franchise.¹⁷⁸ And just as women's progress in other fields, suffrage could also be perceived as being of no particular interest to workers, but at the same time as not threatening to them or to their cause. It could even be seen as advantageous to society at large. Thus, for example, the State of Wyoming, where women had been enfranchised for nearly thirty years, was believed to have a smaller number of 'idiots' and 'defectives' in proportion to its population than any of the surrounding states.¹⁷⁹

It seems clear, though, that such an easy-going attitude was not satisfactory to everyone. Suffrage bills such as the one before Parliament in the Spring of 1897, which would have enfranchised women house-holders or occupiers,¹⁸⁰ were condemned as 'middle-class'.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, despite the presence of a lonely voice emphasizing the educational influence of the vote and its importance in breeding a sense of political responsibility,¹⁸² fears were expressed that women would use their votes to impede the establishment of socialism. In a letter to Lily Bell, for example, 'C.H.' asked

¹⁷⁸ *Labour Leader*, 30 March 1901; 18 May 1901; 25 May 1901; 8 June 1901.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 26 November 1898. See also 8 June 1901.

¹⁸⁰ Rover, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 213.

¹⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 13 February 1897; 5 June 1897.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 18 June 1898.

rhetorically whether women were not naturally more conservative than men. Giving them a vote would retard the establishment of socialism.¹⁸³ It seems clear that for party members such as 'C.H.', votes for women and women's emancipation in general were no longer themselves part of the socialist enterprise.

Attacks were not limited to women's supposed conservatism. 'Marxian' went as far as to equate women's suffrage with the influence in politics of West End hostesses,¹⁸⁴ while others emphasized that a rise in wages would improve women's position much more dramatically than the vote: "a sixpence advance in wages" will not emancipate women from margarine to butter?¹⁸⁵ If one considers the lack of interest in general among male ILPers towards the problems of working-women, except when rebutting suggestions that women should be enfranchised, it seems likely that these issues were raised in this context as part of a wider trend which emphasized the importance of economic, rather than political reforms.

Within the context of a party (or, of its male section) which chose for the most part to ignore women's role as 'workers' while emphasizing their domestic role, and which did not question the existence of essential differences between the natures of men and women, it is hardly surprising to find a Robert M. stating that for women 'domestic' emancipation was more important than the political: the 'emancipation of women - domestic,

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 5 December 1896. See also 27 February 1897; 5 June 1897.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 17 July 1897.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 27 February 1897. See also 5 December 1896; 5 June 1897.

will be brought about domestically... not politically'. What he meant exactly by 'domestically' is unclear, except for a suggestion that large families should be 'checked', but his belief that women did not need the vote was on the other hand made perfectly clear.¹⁸⁶

This argument could easily be turned round, and suffrage be justified in terms of women's domestic role and separate interests. Thus, women's suffrage could be advocated for the very reason of women's separate social role and interests as wives and mothers. As the poet and lecturer Edwin Markham¹⁸⁷ pointed out, reflecting suffrage activists' own frequent use of 'essentialist' arguments,¹⁸⁸ good government was after all '... nothing but good house-keeping. The larger house-keeping of the people'.¹⁸⁹ A man in 1897 wrote to Lily Bell

expressing his surprise that the mother who gave him birth and to whom he owed his education in all that was good, who virtually made him what he is, should be regarded by any as other than the equal of man... it is only justice to grant women's suffrage all round...¹⁹⁰

Only a few months later, a *Labour Leader* editorial quoted with 'feelings

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 27 February 1897.

¹⁸⁷ Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1900), p. 154.

¹⁸⁸ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 9-28; C. Spring, 'The Political Platform and the Language of Support for Women's Suffrage, 1890-1920', in John, Eustance, (eds), *The Men's Share?*, pp. 158-81.

¹⁸⁹ *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1902.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 2 October 1897.

akin to shame' Henry Broadhurst's condemnation of suffrage measures which would have enfranchised only middle-class women. 'Mr. Broadhurst belongs to the school of those who go on the assumption that right can come to some by perpetuating wrong upon others'. It was emphasized that suffrage was justified for the sake of the 'mothers of the race': 'The surest, truest and best way of elevating the race is by developing the higher, truer feeling of womanhood, and that is only possible under freedom, economic and political'.¹⁹¹

Finally, women's suffrage provided the paper with an excellent stick with which to beat both Liberal and Tory parties: their cavalier attitude towards votes for women was compared to that they adopted towards the workers.

The general experience is that in matters affecting their relation to women, men sink their politics for the time being, and combine for the purpose of hindering progress - just as in Labour questions Liberals and Tories are at one in the matter of protecting their own capitalist class against any seeming invasion.¹⁹²

See also figure 30, which suggests a connection between the Radical MP Henry Labouchere's opposition to women's suffrage and his having joined 'official Liberalism'.¹⁹³ Liberal women came in for particular

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 18 December 1897. See also 11 July 1896; 13 February 1897; 20 December 1902. Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp. 271-3.

¹⁹² *Labour Leader*, 7 March 1896. See also 26 March 1904; 19 May 1905.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 6 February 1897.



FIGURE 30. 'LABBY TRIES TO STOP THE PROGRESS OF MISS FEMALE SUFFRAGE'.

condemnation for not being assertive enough in demanding that the party adopt women's suffrage in its programme. Hardie for example pointed out that as long as both they and Tory women were 'content to be the charwomen of Liberal and Tory parties', and supported their party candidate irrespective of his opinions on women's questions, they were not in earnest about the franchise.¹⁹⁴

On the whole, by the beginning of the new century, support for women's suffrage among male ILPers, although still widespread, lay on shaky ideological foundations, which also made possible the development of 'anti' positions. Women could no longer be counted among the 'workers' whose independent representation was being sought. Their role was now more properly domestic, although as such, and because of their special role, they were still perceived as having a claim to political representation. As socialism was increasingly seen as a matter of economics, rather than spiritual and personal renewal, women's emancipation could no longer be justified so easily as central to the endeavour. Fears began to be expressed about women's supposed conservatism and about the 'middle-class' nature of suffrage bills and feminist organisations. It was within this rather uncertain context that things started to change between 1901-2.

It was in these years that the party began to take notice of the activities among women-workers of a group of Lancashire suffragists. Other historians have already chronicled the campaigns of those which Liddington and Norris have termed 'radical suffragists', a group of activists which included the

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 5 June 1897. See also 18 June 1898; 10 June 1904.

Manchester graduate Esther Roper and the Irish poet Eva Gore-Booth, as well as a number of working-class women, such as Selina Cooper, Sarah Dickenson and Sarah Reddish, whose political background lay in socialism, trade unionism and the WCG. Until the Summer of 1903 these activists worked within the North of England Society for Women's Suffrage (NESWS), (of which Roper had become secretary in 1893) one of the suffrage societies affiliated to the NUWSS, an umbrella organisation established in 1897 under the leadership of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the widow of a Liberal Cabinet minister and a veteran of the women's movement. In 1868 she had been one of the first women to make a speech in support of the demand for the vote.¹⁹⁵

The radical suffragists' aim was to establish a mass movement of women workers, based on the strength of the Lancashire cotton unions. They organised open-air and factory gates meetings and worked through trade union branches, trades councils and other working-class organisations. In 1903 they formed their own organisation: the Lancashire and Cheshire Women Textile and other Workers' Representation Committee (LCWTOWRC). Two years later Christabel Pankhurst, the eldest daughter of Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst, had become involved in their activities, and developed a close friendship with Eva Gore-Booth. It was Roper who

¹⁹⁵ The reorganisation of suffrage societies had been given impetus by the passage of the Local Government Act in 1894, which had opened to married women all the local government franchises available to single or widowed women, effectively ending coverture in relation to electoral law. S. Stanley Holton, 'Women and the Vote', in J. Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History in Britain 1850-1945*, (UCL Press, London, 1995), p. 285.

suggested to Christabel that she should study law; eventually she enrolled at Manchester University, where she graduated in 1906 with a first class honours degree.

Sylvia Pankhurst, Christabel's younger sister, later suggested that Mrs. Pankhurst's jealousy of her daughter's new friendships played an important part in her decision to establish yet another suffrage society in Manchester in October 1903. After she and her husband had joined the ILP in 1894, Mrs. Pankhurst had thrown her energies into the socialist movement. In 1894 she had been elected to the Chorlton Board of Guardians as an ILP candidate, and a few months later had come to national prominence for her part in the free speech fight in Manchester's Boggart Hole Clough. After Richard's sudden death in 1898, she seems temporarily to have lost interest in political activity, only in 1900 becoming once more involved in the ILP, and standing successfully as candidate for the Manchester School Board. Beyond the supposed jealousy of her daughter's new friendships, the mechanics which led her to increasingly concentrate attention on the suffrage issue remain uncertain.

It seems clear first of all that the WSPU first came into existence as a group within the ILP, and secondly, that its *raison d'être* was a deep discontent with the attitude of Labour men towards women's suffrage. As Rachel Scott, the WSPU's first secretary, wrote to the *Labour Leader*,

As in the other political parties, so in the Labour Party, the help of women is welcome in the work of elections, but when our leaders and male members... are asked for efforts... to secure the enfranchisement of women they express, at the best,

vague sympathy.

Socialist women were called upon to join the Union in order to 'press upon' not only the Labour Party, but also 'the community', 'the urgent need of giving to women the vote'.¹⁹⁶

The initiatives of radical suffragists, first noticed at the time of the first petition to Parliament of Lancashire mill-workers in March 1901,¹⁹⁷ were obviously followed with approval by the party press, although disapproval was quickly voiced when they seemed to threaten the party's interests. After losing a by-election in Preston in 1903, John Hodge, the steelworkers' organiser and recent convert to the ILP,¹⁹⁸ wrote to the *Labour Leader* of

... the effort of Miss Pankhurst and her friends to damage my candidature by the poster they issued notwithstanding the fact that my opponents refer to the enfranchisement of women with derision, while I have been a staunch advocate of it for

¹⁹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 31 October 1903. For the radical suffragists' campaigns, as well as the WSPU's early years, see Liddington, Norris, *One hand Tied Behind Us*. See also Liddington, *The Life and Times*; Gifford Lewis, *Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper. A Biography*, (Pandora Press, London, 1988); Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, especially pp. 119-88; Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*, pp. 14-94.

¹⁹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 23 March 1901. See also Lewis, *Eva Gore-Booth*, p. 87; Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 146-9. The *Labour Leader* also noticed with interest for example the LCWTOWRC's decision in November 1903 to run a women's suffrage candidate for Wigan. See *Labour Leader* 28 November 1903; 12 March 1904. Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 164-6.

¹⁹⁸ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. III, pp. 109-15.

twenty years... I freely forgive them...¹⁹⁹

Such criticisms were, though, rare before 1905: Hodge himself does seem truly to have 'forgiven' the suffragists, although Hardie had thought him 'very bitter' towards Christabel.²⁰⁰ Six months later he pledged to a WSPU deputation his support for a suffrage measure.²⁰¹ The Halifax Town Councillor James Parker, an early member of the Halifax ILP,²⁰² also pledged himself to support, if elected to Parliament 'to put the vote for women first on his programme'.²⁰³ The following year, a deputation of radical suffragists found Snowden's attitude towards women's enfranchisement 'exceedingly satisfactory'.²⁰⁴ At a national level, in September 1902, it was decided that the chairman and the secretary of the party should sign a petition in favour of women's suffrage on behalf of the NAC.²⁰⁵ Approval also took more active forms. In February 1902 Hardie was one of only eight MPs who met the representatives of Yorkshire and Cheshire textile workers presenting their petition to Parliament, while in the

¹⁹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 23 May 1903. The poster apparently pointed out that Hodge had made no reference to women's suffrage in his election address. *Ibid*, 30 May 1903.

²⁰⁰ J.K. Hardie to J. Bruce Glasier, 18 May 1903, Glasier Papers.

²⁰¹ *Labour Leader*, 28 November 1903.

²⁰² Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. II, pp. 289-91.

²⁰³ *Labour Leader*, 28 November 1903.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 29 July 1904.

²⁰⁵ NAC Minutes, 29-30 September 1902, ILP Archive.

evening he presided over a public meeting at the Chelsea Town Hall.²⁰⁶

Radical suffragists' significance lay not simply in the fact that they galvanised a number of ILP men into a more active stance towards suffrage, but rather in the fact that they came from and were active within the labour movement. A number of them, such as Selina Cooper and Ethel Derbyshire, were actually members of the ILP.²⁰⁷ It is also important to emphasize, and this point is obviously connected to the first, the extent to which they adopted and adapted the ILP's own rhetoric and ideology in order to demand the extension of the franchise to working-class women. Just as the ILP advocated independent representation for 'workers' in order to improve their industrial position, so these activists advocated women's suffrage so that women waged workers could obtain their own independent representation, and improve their own economic and industrial position. In 1902 David Shackleton, the secretary of the Darwen weavers, had won a by-election victory as Labour candidate for the Clitheroe division. In response, Emmeline Pankhurst wrote to the *Labour Leader* that the women textile workers and trade unionists in the constituency, without whose financial support Shackleton could not have been elected, 'understand quite as clearly as does any Labour leader in the country how necessary it is to the workers to have direct representation in Parliament'.²⁰⁸ The emphasis on both sides

²⁰⁶ *Labour Leader*, 8 February 1902; 22 February 1902; Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 152-3.

²⁰⁷ Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p. 125.

²⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 2 August 1902. The arguments in favour of women's suffrage expressed by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst in this period were

was on the identification of working-class men and women with waged workers.²⁰⁹ This is not to suggest that all ILP women who supported women's suffrage limited themselves to arguing simply the economic, or 'industrial' side of the question. For example, in Christabel Pankhurst's pamphlet *The Parliamentary Vote for Women* and Isabella Ford's *Women and Socialism*, women's need for the vote was explored from a variety of different angles, but the question of women waged-workers had a central place in both.²¹⁰

The challenge this new strand of thought provided male ILPers is obvious. If they were to endorse it, the result would have been a subversion of accepted gender identities within ILP ideology. The association of Labour with masculine workers could no longer have been taken for granted, as well as the identification of women as domestic beings. The question is: how many male contributors to the paper were prepared to take this step? Very few. 'Gavroche' did point out that

political equality is an essential corollary to economic equality. Labour is one and indivisible. The degradation of a part involves the degradation of the whole... the claim for

similar to those of the group of suffragists centred around Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth. I have found evidence that Emmeline was directly involved in their campaigns, although see Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 123-4.

²⁰⁹ *Labour Leader*, 8 March 1902; 1 November 1902; 30 May 1903; 9 January 1904. But see also 24 June 1904.

²¹⁰ C. Pankhurst, *The Parliamentary Vote for Women*, (Abel Heywood & Son, Manchester, n.d., c.1902); I. Ford, *Women and Socialism*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1904). See also Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 98-107.

woman suffrage is, at bottom, the claim of the wage-earning woman for the opportunity to work out her economic emancipation on a footing of equality with wage-earning man.

For 'Gavroche', Labour was composed of both male and female wage-earners, while still recognising that the latter suffered also from the consequences of traditional assumptions of inferiority.²¹¹

Attitudes, though, were generally rather more ambivalent. A leaflet of 1904, for example, suggested that men and women's aspirations and interests were identical, while women's need for equal wages and improved factory legislation were included among the reasons why they were demanding the vote. The author of the pamphlet then went on calmly to forget all about women as wage-earners by emphasizing 'mothers'' need for the franchise:

We want a nation of free men and women. Can we have such a nation while its mothers live in political silence, neglected and unheeded... Can we have a race of men rejoicing in their citizenship and fulfilling it wisely, so long as their mothers know nothing and care nothing for such matters?²¹²

As we shall see, this was by no means an isolated example of such arguments.

Other ILP men rejected radical suffragists' arguments outright. Snowden pointed out in 1904 that 'The claim that the inferior industrial condition of

²¹¹ *Labour Leader*, 9 January 1904. See also 31 August 1901; 21 March 1903; 3 February 1905.

²¹² Anon, 'What Socialism Means for Women', (ILP Platform, London, 2 January 1904), ILP Archive.

women is through the lack of voting power is absurd. Where women have organised, their condition is the same as the men's'.²¹³ From a rather different perspective, Hardie criticised suffragists' tendency to emphasize the economic, 'bread and butter' motives for emancipation:

Man, after all, does not crawl on his belly all the time, and if there be those who make a god thereof let them wallow in their mire. But those who would see the race uplifted, with or without the aid of the vote, must seek inspiration in some nobler theme than an appeal to the grosser appetites.²¹⁴

Very occasionally, male ILPers did accept women's role as wage-earners, but then refused to make the distinction between male and female toilers, echoing those few voices who before 1895 had rejected women's suffrage in favour of the need to achieve the 'economic emancipation' of all workers. In reviewing Mrs. Woolsey's *Republics versus Woman*, 'M.T.S.' stressed that only socialism would bring about the 'emancipation of all toilers' and that only by 'putting aside the mere hope of the franchise of their sex for the grander work of the redemption of humanity' will the author and her associates 'become free... the economic emancipation of women is of the first importance'.²¹⁵

In general, though, discomfort with radical suffragists' ideas (and possibly,

²¹³ *Labour Leader*, 16 April 1904. See also 18 November 1904.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 29 July 1904. For Eva Gore-Booth's response, see 12 August 1904.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 16 May 1903. See also 2 April 1904.

actions!) did not lead ILPers to reject the urgent need for women's suffrage. Both Hardie and Snowden were notably supportive, although in 1904 the latter was still advocating adult, rather than equal suffrage. Their strategy was rather to avoid the association of women with waged work. As we have seen above, they rather emphasized the special role that women could play within society, by putting across what F.J. Sheur in a letter to the *Labour Leader* defined as 'the feminine point of view'.²¹⁶ It was pointed out that 'Wherever women have gained seats on public bodies an improved administration and a higher ideal of social life has been realized'.²¹⁷ Once enfranchised, women would also become fit mothers for the socialist citizens of the future. After all, '... the woman who is a drudge only, will produce sons unworthy of the fathers who have gone before them'.²¹⁸

A leaflet published by the party in 1903, shows to what extent the home had by then become politicised:

Of what use is it to the housewife to be scrupulously clean when the house is poisoned by foul air from the drains, and how can she cure such an evil unless she knows how to approach the public authority which looks after sanitation? Of what use is it for her to be a good cook if the materials she buys are adulterated?.. how by her own isolated efforts is she

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 30 April 1904. See also 13 May 1904.

²¹⁷ *ILP News*, June 1899.

²¹⁸ 'Speech by Mr. Keir Hardie, M. P., at Chelsea, February, 1902', in National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, *What Labour Leaders think of Women's Suffrage*, (National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, London, 1909), p. 3. See also *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1905.

to reach the shopkeepers or the manufacturers who make their profits out of such dishonour?

But it went beyond this: it was also women's duty to ensure that the society they sent their children out in was 'bright' and 'pure'.²¹⁹

At the same time, women's claim to the vote can be found expressed in terms reminiscent of an older, radical tradition, which ILP men had seemingly rejected when they had chosen to place greater prominence on the importance of economic, rather than political reforms. And although there was considerable debate about the relative value and expediency of adult versus equal suffrage, both equal and adult suffragists shared a rejection, sometimes explicit, of the radical suffragists' emphasis on women's role as waged workers, and both used similar language to justify why women should be enfranchised.

Adult suffragists chose to emphasize that equal suffrage would enfranchise only propertied women. As William Anderson put it in a letter to the *Labour Leader*

It is inconsistent for a Socialist party to favour a limited bill, which would extend the vote to middle-class and rich women, while the vast majority of working-women would not qualify even as lodgers... It is inconsistent for a socialist to bolster up a class disability under the guise of removing a sex one.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Anon, 'Women and Socialism', (ILP Platform no 104, London, 27 June 1903), ILP Archive.

²²⁰ *Labour Leader*, 18 November 1904. See also 16 April 1904; 25 November 1904; 27 January 1905; 28 April 1905. For a discussion of the adult versus equal suffrage debate, which, though, underestimates the extent

At times adult suffragist men did betray a certain impatience for a measure which they considered to be hardly vital. As Albert Mitchell, the Stockton representative at the 1905 ILP Conference put it, ‘... there were other measures of much greater importance than... the Enfranchisement Bill’.²²¹

But more significantly, there was also a reluctance to place ‘sex’ issues at the forefront of the ILP Agenda.

Every industrial evil which afflicts women afflicts men to a greater or lesser degree. The evils we want to remove are not confined to one sex... The conviction of the unity of the sexes in the Human Family so completely possess the Socialist that he cannot separate the family into two classes.²²²

Equal suffragists responded to the challenge in two ways. First of all, they pointed out that equal suffrage had nothing to do with property, but was a measure to eliminate a ‘sex disability’. As such, it was a necessary preliminary step towards adult suffrage.²²³ In response to adult suffragists’ dislike for the emphasis on ‘sex’ issues, they pointed out that sex disabilities did exist: ‘The great historical subjection of women is a wrong that must be

of support for adult suffrage within the ILP, see Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 53-66 See also Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 152-84.

²²¹ *Labour Leader*, 28 April 1905.

²²² *Ibid*, 16 April 1904. See also 18 November 1904; Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 108-9.

²²³ *Labour Leader*, 7 October 1904; 25 November 1904; 9 December 1904; 3 February 1905; 17 February 1905; 28 April 1905.

righted...'.²²⁴ Furthermore, the emancipation of women was in the party's own interest. At present, Labour was divided between enfranchised male workers and unenfranchised female ones, and 'the effect of this inequality between men and women is... to engender conflicting interests, and to produce discussion instead of unity'.²²⁵ Secondly, equal suffragists rejected the notion that only a tiny minority of working-class women would have been enfranchised by an equal suffrage measure.²²⁶ The 1904 ILP conference had (unanimously) resolved to introduce an equal suffrage measure in Parliament. 'Some opposition having been raised against the Bill on the allegation that it will chiefly enfranchise middle and upper class women',²²⁷ at a NAC meeting in January 1905 it was decided to send a questionnaire to branches in order to assess the proportion of working women (defined as 'those who work for wages, who are domestically employed, or who are supported by the earnings of wage-earning children'²²⁸) on municipal registers.²²⁹ Although less than fifty out of three hundred branches completed the questionnaire, they were used as evidence that working-class women numbered more than eighty per cent of

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 3 February 1905.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 7 October 1904.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 9 December 1904; 3 February 1905.

²²⁷ P. Snowden, F. Johnson, 'Census of Women Municipal Voters', 4 March 1905, NAC and Related Records, ILP Archive.

²²⁸ *Ibid*.

²²⁹ NAC Minutes, 28 January 1905, ILP Archive.

a female electorate of 1,250,000.²³⁰

Nevertheless, what these male equal and adult suffragists had in common was, in a way, as significant as their differences. In the pieces and letters dealing with the issue of women's suffrage, the term 'citizen' replaced the term 'worker' as men's and women's equal rights and responsibilities within civil society were emphasized. This is not to suggest that when the emancipation of working-men was being advocated, notions of 'citizenship' were not made use of. Despite Hardie and MacDonald's claims that words dear to Liberals such as 'right' and 'liberty', 'give no guidance in solving present-day problems',²³¹ ILPers by no means entirely abandoned this rhetoric. Bruce Glasier for example reminded ILPers of what '... could be done in the course of a year or two, by availing ourselves of our rights and performing our public duties as citizens...'.²³² Nevertheless, there was no substitution of the 'worker' by the 'citizen'. Citizenship, founded on the possession of a vote, was rather an added dimension to working men's identity, and an additional weapon in their fight for economic emancipation. 'If Capitalism is to be overthrown, not only must the workers use their power of combination as employees, but their immeasurably greater

²³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 7 April 1905; 5 May 1905. J.K. Hardie, *The Citizenship of Women. A Plea for Women's Suffrage*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1906, first edition 1905), pp. 12-3. The questionnaire's methodology was the subject of controversy. See for example *Labour Leader*, 7 April 1905.

²³¹ J.K. Hardie, J.R. MacDonald, 'The Independent Labour Party's Programme', in *The Nineteenth Century*, no 263, January 1899, p. 21.

²³² J. Bruce Glasier, *On Strikes*, (Labour Literature Society, Glasgow, n.d., c.1897), p. 19.

legislative power as citizens'.²³³ The mere exercise of 'political' power was perceived to have no particular value: economic emancipation maintained its primacy.

The man who has no property in his own labour, who has no guarantee that an honest day's work will always bring him an honest day's wage, is a stranger in his own land, and no right to vote will ever make him a citizen.²³⁴

As Pat Thane has observed, twentieth century labour activists reworked 'quintessentially radical notions of rights, justice, "fairness", independence, dignity and individual freedom', although for them 'rights were no longer natural, but were to be earned through active participation in state and society, including through work'.²³⁵ In addition, though, it is necessary to note that such notions of 'rights' were also deeply gendered.

For women, waged work was not a component of their 'citizenship': their role as 'citizens' took the place of that of waged workers. Adult suffragists believed that both men and women should be entitled to vote on the basis of their 'citizenship', not their property, or as they called it, 'bricks and mortar'.²³⁶ Equal suffragists agreed, but believed that at present women

²³³ *ILP News*, August 1897. See also City of London ILP Branch, *The Independent Labour Party. What it Is, and Where it Stands*, (City of London ILP Branch, London, 1900), p. 28; G.N. Barnes, *Verbatim Report of a Public Meeting of Electors*, (Civic Press, Glasgow, 1902), p. 20.

²³⁴ MacDonald, *Speech*, p. 10.

²³⁵ Thane, 'Labour and Local Politics', pp. 269-70.

²³⁶ *Labour Leader*, 28 April 1905. See also 16 April 1904.

were in fact excluded by law from citizenship. As Hardie never tired of pointing out,

the law... presumes a man to be a potential citizen upon whom the vote may be conferred. With him, the franchise is but the concession of a right already possessed but hitherto withheld. In the case of women, no such right exists, and must be created.²³⁷

Women's claims to an equal franchise were based on their intellectual equality, as well as on notions of abstract 'justice'.²³⁸ Old slogans such as 'taxation without representation is tyranny',²³⁹ and all those 'who have to submit to the laws of the country should have a voice in shaping those laws'²⁴⁰ were once more put to use. In retrospect, Harry Snell asserted that he had never been

a believer in the chivalrous fiction that women were the special guardians of moral treasure for mankind... I... approached the question of votes for women solely from the standpoint of citizenship...²⁴¹

To ILP men, masculinity was not a subject of discussion in the same way

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 9 December 1904. See also Hardie, *The Citizenship of Women*, p. 10, *Labour Leader*, 9 December 1904; 3 February 1905; 19 May 1905.

²³⁸ *Labour Leader*, 26 March 1904; 16 April 1904.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 20 May 1904.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 18 November 1904; 17 February 1905.

²⁴¹ Snell, *Men*, p. 182.

that class issues were. This was particularly true of the period after 1895, as the gendered nature of the party's ideology became more entrenched. Masculinity itself was rarely seen as a problem. By the beginning of the new century, the labour whose independent representation was being sought was a masculine, trade unionist one. It was femininity and the 'woman question' which were the subject of discussion. Out of the recognition that women suffered from special disabilities, and at the same time possessed distinctive qualities, developed positive attitudes towards women's suffrage. Nevertheless, support for women's suffrage was made to fit within the background of a strongly masculine socialism, rather than to challenge it. In a trend similar to *The Workman's Times*' attempt to position women's suffrage as a cause separate from that of the 'workers', male ILPers for the most part rejected radical suffragists' advocacy of votes for women in their guise of waged workers. Instead, male ILPers, both adult and equal suffragists, elaborated an older, 'radical' language in order to emphasise women's claims to citizenship. Even if the radical suffragists were unable ultimately to subvert the gendered nature of male ILPers' socialism, they were nevertheless successful in raising enormously the profile of suffrage within the party, and were central in ensuring its support for the extension of the franchise to women on the same basis as men's.

Since the 1895 Annual Conference, the ILP's programme had included a clause stating that 'The ILP is in favour of every proposal for extending Electoral rights to both men and women, and democratising the system of government'. (See above, chapter 1) Women's suffrage did not again come

up for discussion until 1902, when Emmeline Pankhurst proposed and Jowett seconded an equal suffrage resolution from Chorlton-on-Medlock. Both this, and an adult suffrage motion from Openshaw were carried, although only the former by an unanimous vote.²⁴² The adult suffrage motion from Openshaw was passed (this time unanimously) once again by the 1903 Conference.²⁴³

By the time of the 1904 conference, things had become more exciting. Eventually a resolution was passed, calling for equal suffrage, as well as the election of women to local government and their appointment as Sanitary Inspectors 'and... other official positions'. The NAC was called upon to draft a bill 'that will so amend the Representation of the People Acts that word importing the masculine gender shall include women'.²⁴⁴ The resolution 'that we promote legislation for universal suffrage' was also passed without discussion. But this was not all: motions to amend the clause in the party programme relating to electoral rights were similarly carried. Now it read:

The Independent Labour Party is in favour of adult suffrage with full political rights and privileges for women, and the immediate extension of the franchise on the same terms as granted to men, also triennial Parliaments and second

²⁴² ILP Conference Report, 1902, p. 27. See also *ILP News*, April 1902.

²⁴³ ILP Conference Report, 1903, p. 29.

²⁴⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1904, p. 30. See also *Labour Leader*, 9 April 1904; 16 April 1904.

ballot.²⁴⁵

At a NAC meeting in July 1904, it was decided that Mrs. Pankhurst should draft a suffrage bill 'on the lines of the Conference Resolution'. Hardie would then introduce it in Parliament.²⁴⁶ In August, on the last day of the Parliamentary session, Will Crooks²⁴⁷ introduced the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, 'to enable women to vote at all Parliamentary elections'. Among the supporters were David Shackleton, Richard Bell, Arthur Henderson and Hardie.²⁴⁸ Amidst 'the intense amusement of the few members present' the Second Reading was set for the following day. An editorial in the *Labour Leader* voiced its disapproval of such tactics:

Mr. Crooks ought to restrain his inclination for practical joking in cases where the intent may be misunderstood, or those on whom it is exercised are unusually sensitive... Mr. Crooks may have been quite serious, but on the face of it, we are afraid the women will regard such a treatment of their cause as neither respectful nor complimentary.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ ILP Conference Report, 1904, p. 43.

²⁴⁶ NAC Minutes, 1-2 July 1904, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 8 July 1904.

²⁴⁷ A veteran of East London politics and between 1892 and 1910 a member of the London County Council, he had been elected in 1903 as LRC representative for Woolwich. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. II, pp. 107-12.

²⁴⁸ Hansard Commons Debates, 15 August 1904, 4th series, vol. 140, col. 562.

²⁴⁹ *Labour Leader*, 19 August 1904.

The following week, both MacDonald and Hardie wrote in Crooks' defence. Apparently, he had acted in conjunction with other Labour MPs. The bill was to have been introduced earlier by Hardie, who had, though, been unavoidably absent.²⁵⁰ Before this date, Crooks had voted in favour of a motion moved by Charles McLaren 'to remove women's disabilities in respect to Parliamentary franchise' (the only other ILP MP, Hardie, had not been present) in March 1904.²⁵¹ He had not spoken on the motion although, apparently, both he and Shackleton had tried and failed to catch the Speaker's eye.²⁵²

The next chance for a suffrage bill came in 1905. Hardie was to introduce an equal suffrage measure in the new session,²⁵³ but was unlucky in the balloting for private members' bills. Nonetheless, Bamford Slack, who had obtained fourteenth place, agreed to take charge of a bill to enfranchise women on the same basis as men.²⁵⁴ The Women's Enfranchisement Bill was introduced on 17 February 1905, with Shackleton and Hardie among its supporters. Interestingly, on the same day there also appeared Charles Dilke's annual adult suffrage measure. Hardie and Shackleton (as well as

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 26 August 1904.

²⁵¹ Hansard Commons Debates, 16 March 1904, 4th series, vol. 131, cols 1331-1368.

²⁵² *Labour Leader*, 9 April 1904.

²⁵³ *Labour Leader*, 7 October 1904.

²⁵⁴ Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p. 187. See also J. Bamford Slack to J.K. Hardie, 18 May 1905, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

Richard Bell and John Burns) were also among its supporters.²⁵⁵ Dilke's offer, 'under present circumstances', to take Hardie's name off,²⁵⁶ (although he had been one of its sponsors since 1902), had obviously not been taken up.

The Women's Enfranchisement Bill was read for the second time on 12 May, only to be talked out.²⁵⁷

Not merely had these women to bear the mortification of seeing the Bill swept out of sight by a cowardly device, but they had to suffer the openly shown insult of crowds of members of Parliament whose instinct of manliness does not yet surmount their sense of ridicule at the idea of women entering into the citizenship of the nation.

A hopeful sign was the changed spirit of the women. 'For the first time there is an insurrectionary ring in their demand. Their cause is now becoming part of the Socialist agitation of Britain'.²⁵⁸

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the Women's Enfranchisement Bill did cause a considerable stir of interest on the issue among ILP men. The first six months of 1905 saw Hardie in particular busy advocating women's suffrage. In February, together with James Parker and Allen Gee, the

²⁵⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 17 February 1905, 4th series, vol. 141, col. 479.

²⁵⁶ C. Dilke to J.K. Hardie, 2 February 1905, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²⁵⁷ Hansard Commons Debates, 12 May 1905, 4th series, vol. 141. col. 479; 2 June 1905, 4th series, vol. 147, cols 613-20.

²⁵⁸ *Labour Leader*, 19 May 1905.

Huddersfield-based textile workers' leader and ILPer,²⁵⁹ Hardie had been one of the speakers at an enthusiastic meeting held by the LCWTOWRC in connection with the LRC Conference at Liverpool.²⁶⁰ Later on in the month, he and Snowden addressed a meeting in the Manchester Free Trade Hall organized by the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council.²⁶¹ In March he was included among an impressive array of speakers, such as Leonard Courtney and John Morley at 'a big demonstration in support of Women's Suffrage' at the Queen's Hall, in London.²⁶² In May, he defended with Miss Palliser (the NUWSS secretary) the Women's Enfranchisement Bill at a meeting of adult suffragists in Holborn Town Hall.²⁶³ On the whole, as the NESWS Annual Report put it, 'Mr. Keir Hardie has done splendid service to the cause'.²⁶⁴

In the name of the party as a whole, the NAC placed on the 1905 LRC

²⁵⁹ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. III, pp. 81-4.

²⁶⁰ *Labour Leader*, 3 February 1905.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 17 February 1905; NESWS Annual Report, 1904-5, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

²⁶² *Labour Leader*, 10 March 1905; 17 March 1905.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 5 May 1905. See also E. Palliser to J.K. Hardie, 30 May 1905, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. The adult suffragists included the ILPer Frank Rose, an ex engineer and Amalgamated Society of Engineers organiser, who since the mid '80s had been earning a livelihood as a journalist, and Pete Curran.

²⁶⁴ NESWS Annual Report, 1906, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library. See also for example the American social reformer and Ethical Society activist Dr. Stanton Coit's activities in support of women's suffrage, *Labour Leader*, 11 November 1904; 2 December 1904. Stanton Coit was later to become one of the founding members of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage and its first treasurer. I am grateful to Angela V. John for the information.

Conference Agenda a resolution in favour of the immediate extension of the franchise to women.²⁶⁵ At the 1904 Conference a resolution advocating women's suffrage on the same basis as parochial elections, moved by the Burnley Weavers' Secretary and seconded by Isabella Ford, had been endorsed by a large majority.²⁶⁶ In 1905, though, the equal suffrage resolution, calling for support for the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, was defeated by an adult suffrage one.²⁶⁷ Ramsay MacDonald considered this

... the one unworthy debate of the whole Conference, and was settled solely on the question whether the measure was good or bad from the point of view of party tactics. Justice, however, is much greater than party tactics.²⁶⁸

This is not to suggest that, unlike the situation in the LRC, unanimity reigned within the male section of the ILP in favour of women's suffrage. It seems clear that intensive lobbying had been undertaken within the party, most notably by Mrs. Pankhurst. Behind the scenes, this had led to considerable discontent. Writing to his sister in April 1904, Bruce Glasier expressed his belief that Mrs. Pankhurst (who had just been elected to the NAC) was 'quite hysterical just now and is interested only in one thing -

²⁶⁵ *Labour Leader*, 4 November 1904.

²⁶⁶ Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p. 160.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 184-6.

²⁶⁸ *Labour Leader*, 3 February 1905.

woman suffrage'.²⁶⁹ Five months earlier, Snowden had privately described her as 'simply a monomaniac at present'.²⁷⁰

As we have seen earlier, a number of ILP men declared in favour of adult suffrage. During the Trade Union Congress of September 1904 in Leeds, an Adult Suffrage League was formed, and women such as the Stockton ILPer H. Jennie Baker and Ada Neild Chew became involved in it.²⁷¹ I have found no firm evidence of male ILPers being members, but despite the disapproval of the *Labour Leader* editor²⁷² William Anderson²⁷³ and Pete Curran (as well as his wife)²⁷⁴ were, to say the least, sympathetic to it.

A very similar picture emerges when the focus is shifted from the national to the local level: here too, can be found a good deal of support for equal suffrage, together with some for adult suffrage, all within the context of considerable interest for the issue. After the first solitary suffrage resolution in 1899 from the Finsbury branch, a spate of them followed between 1904

²⁶⁹ J. Bruce Glasier to E.G. Foster, 13 April 1904, Glasier Papers.

²⁷⁰ P. Snowden to J.R. MacDonald, 13 November 1903, Ramsay MacDonald Papers. See also Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p. 136.

²⁷¹ *Labour Leader*, 4 November 1904; 11 November 1904; 18 November 1904; 25 November 1904. Ada Neild Chew had first made a name for herself in 1894 when she had publicised, through a series of letters to a local newspaper, the appalling conditions in which she and other tailoresses in Crewe were forced to work. She eventually joined the ILP, and in 1900 was appointed organiser for the WTUL. By 1911 her position had shifted to one of support for equal suffrage, and she became a NUWSS organiser. Neild Chew, (ed.), *Ada Neild Chew*.

²⁷² *Labour Leader*, 4 November 1904.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 25 November 1904.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 5 May 1905.

and 1905. Many were obviously the outcome of a visit from a suffrage speaker. In March 1904 for example, Christabel Pankhurst spoke to the Liverpool ILP on 'Labour Representation for Women'. At the end of her talk, 'A resolution was passed calling on local and Labour MPs to support Sir Charles M'Laren's motion in the House of Commons... for extending the franchise to women'.²⁷⁵ Most interest, though, was raised by the introduction in Parliament of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill in 1905. Among the branches which sent resolutions of support were Normanton,²⁷⁶ Leicester,²⁷⁷ Middleton,²⁷⁸ North Manchester,²⁷⁹ Manchester Central,²⁸⁰ Brixton²⁸¹ and Glasgow City.²⁸²

This does not necessarily mean that branches had not come into contact with the demand for women's suffrage before 1904. The Annual Reports of the NESWS show them to have been popular venues for suffrage speakers in the years between 1898 and 1905 the years in which radical suffragists

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 12 March 1904. See also for example 20 May 1904; 19 March 1904.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 17 March 1905. This branch had been addressed by Katherine Bruce Glasier, who is not usually associated with the advocacy of women's suffrage.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 24 March 1905.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 21 April 1905.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁰ Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 7 February 1905; 2 May 1905, Manchester Central Library.

²⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 28 April 1905.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 12 May 1905.

were active within its ranks. A peak was reached in 1899, when eleven Lancashire branches were addressed, mostly by Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper, as they collected signatures for the textile workers' petition. At least one branch, though, was addressed every year until 1905, the most active speaker being Christabel Pankhurst.²⁸³

Not all branches were necessarily keen on the issue. Comments made by secretaries on returning the 'Census of Women Municipal Voters' varied considerably. Harry Harding, honorary secretary of Sunderland ILP for example, wrote: '(The Census) was duly placed before our members... and it was found that no one had either the time or the inclination to go into the matter...'²⁸⁴ while William Wordell, the obviously harassed secretary of the Sheerness ILP, returned the Census form with apologies for its lateness and incomplete nature. He pointed out '... search was made last night...'²⁸⁵

The 1905 conference also showed in stark relief the points of opposition, rather than contact, between the adultist and equal suffrage positions. The Woolwich branch proposed the equal suffrage resolution. In moving it, H.S. Wishart pointed out that it did not matter whether the Women's Enfranchisement Bill would enfranchise middle or working-class women, since its aim was to remove a 'sex disability'. Until this was done,

²⁸³ NESWS Annual Reports, 1898-1905, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

²⁸⁴ H. Harding to F. Johnson, 20 March 1905, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²⁸⁵ W.H. Wordell to F. Johnson, 29 April 1905. See also T. Clegg (Rochdale) to F. Johnson, 17 April 1905; A. George Burton (Goole) to F. Johnson, 28 April 1905, all F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

the organisation of the workers on class-conscious lines would be hindered by the cross current of women's interests which were not confined to class, but were common to the whole sex.²⁸⁶

The Walthamstow representative, Paul Campbell, in moving the adult suffrage amendment, explicitly expressed his belief, 'as a Labour man and a Socialist', of the primacy of class over sex issues. He could not accept a measure which would not benefit workers. 'He looked upon this matter from a class point of view, and refused to look at it from the point of view of sex'.²⁸⁷ Ultimately, though, Campbell's turned out to be a minority (although a significant) one, as the amendment was defeated by 29 to 126, and the substantive resolution was carried with only six or seven dissentients.²⁸⁸

But if the branches demonstrated their support for equal suffrage by forwarding supportive resolutions, by voting favourably at conference time and by the completing the 'Census of Women Municipal Voters' form, one branch in particular distinguished itself by the enthusiasm of its commitment: Manchester Central. This is not surprising, if we consider that it counted among its members the Pankhursts, as well as Teresa Billington.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ ILP Conference Report, 1905, p. 35. See also *Labour Leader*, 28 April 1905.

²⁸⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1905, p. 36.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 38.

²⁸⁹ Manchester Central ILP Minutes, October 1903 to October 1905. Teresa Billington had escaped an unhappy, impoverished middle-class home at seventeen, to eventually become a pupil-teacher in Manchester. There she

Furthermore, Manchester was the centre of radical suffragists' activities, as well as of the WSPU.

It is hardly surprising, thus, to find the Manchester Central ILP in May 1905 organising a meeting in support of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill. The speakers, alongside Christabel Pankhurst and the Lancashire-based suffragist and ILPer Hannah Mitchell, were Victor Grayson, W.F. Black and H. Dean.²⁹⁰ The whole event was described as 'one to be proud of'.²⁹¹ In the Summer, the branch joined forces with the WSPU in organising Sunday propaganda meetings in favour of women's suffrage all over the Greater Manchester area. Among those involved was one whose name was shortly to become well-known within the labour movement: Victor Grayson.²⁹² In August, the branch's propaganda secretary, Sam Robinson, wrote to the *Labour Leader*, urging

branch secretaries and speakers, that special reference to the case for the immediate enfranchisement of women be now

had joined the Manchester Central ILP, and at Mrs Pankhurst's instigation, in 1905 had been appointed the ILP's first woman organiser. A year later she resigned to work full-time for the WSPU, of which she had been one of the earliest members. McPhee, A FitzGerald, (eds), *The Non-Violent Militant*.

²⁹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 5 May 1905; 12 May 1905.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 12 May 1905.

²⁹² *Ibid*, 12 May 1905. See also 7 July 1905. Born and brought up in a respectable working-class area of Liverpool, in 1904 Grayson had enrolled in the Home Missionary College in Manchester, where he had become involved in the socialist movement, and had started to make a name for his oratorical skills. D. Clark, *Victor Grayson: Labour's Lost Leader*, (Quartet Books, London, 1985).

made at all public meetings convened by the branches... Having seen the absolute unanimity in favour of the principles of the Bill at many meetings, I am convinced it only requires systematic persistent agitation during the time the House is not sitting to secure the passing of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill when it is introduced in the House next session.²⁹³

As things turned out, Robinson's estimate was too optimistic. But as we have seen, this does not mean that the efforts of radical suffragists and WSPU had been fruitless. They had ensured that by 1905 Brocklehurst's 'forgetfulness' of 1896 had become impossible. As early as 1902, when the Tory government introduced an Education Bill which transferred responsibilities for education from School Boards to Town and City Councils, it was no longer possible for male ILPers to ignore the fact that women were not eligible for these bodies.²⁹⁴ The 1902 ILP Conference passed a resolution condemning the bill not only because it 'withdraws education from public control' and 'subsidises denominational education', but also because it 'deprives women of their right to be directly elected or even to sit on the education authorities, except at the discretion of municipal councils, upon which women are not represented...'.²⁹⁵ It remains to be seen whether suffragists and ILPers continued to provide a mutual spur: this will be the subject of the next chapter.

²⁹³ *Labour Leader*, 11 August 1905.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 5 April 1902.

²⁹⁵ ILP Conference Report, 1902, pp. 24-5.

CHAPTER 3

‘WOMEN’S ENFRANCHISEMENT... HAS BEEN SPRUNG UPON US WITH ALARMING SUDDENNESS’. THE CHALLENGE OF SUFFRAGE, 1905-1911.

Even after the revival of interest in women’s suffrage, with the radical suffragists’ campaigns, and later the establishment of the WSPU, the issue of the franchise in general continued to provoke little interest among male ILPers. It was hardly surprising, perhaps, that with nineteen members of the ILP elected, the aftermath of the 1906 general election should see no concern being voiced about the size of the electorate. The election, a landslide victory for the Liberals, had witnessed the entry into Parliament of twenty nine LRC candidates. Of these, seven were directly sponsored by the ILP. Among them were Hardie, Snowden, MacDonald, Clynes and Jowett.¹ Nevertheless, the suffragists’ campaign had clearly had an impact: when the ‘thousand incongruous institutions in our government system’ were mentioned, the one which was particularly emphasised was ‘the exclusion of women from citizenship and Parliament’.² In 1910, the year of two general elections, ‘R.H.P.’ pointed out that at the present stage, the priority was to extend to women the franchise which men had already obtained.

¹ Howell, *British Workers*, p. 325. The other two ILP MPs were Tom Summerbell and James Parker. Thanks to the secret Gladstone/MacDonald electoral pact, twenty four of the seats had been won without Liberal opposition.

² *Labour Leader*, 20 November 1908.

O England! Great Mother of Justice!
That might is not right you proclaim:
You trusted your sons with the franchise
Your daughters but ask for the same...³

The success of the 1906 general election can be seen as a vindication of the ILP's policy of alliance with trade unions. Nevertheless, critical voices continued to be heard within the party. Some lost faith in the usefulness of the parliamentary machinery as a whole. Writing to Hardie in 1908, T.D. Benson (the ILP's treasurer since 1902) expressed his feeling that socialism had little to gain from parliamentary representation.

I put all my trust in the agitation in the country and in the formation of public opinion. Parliament cannot lag behind that whether we have men there or not.⁴

Nevertheless, most ILP men's commitment to electoral politics remained unchanged. In his introduction to the so-called 'Green Manifesto', an influential pamphlet criticising the policy of the Parliamentary Labour Party and signed by four members of the NAC, the ex-navvies' organiser Leonard Hall,⁵ echoed Benson's belief that 'the ILP would be far more fruitfully

³ *Ibid*, 29 July 1910.

⁴ T.D. Benson to J.K. Hardie, 6 April 1908, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also East Ham ILP Minutes, 28 October 1909, ILP Archive.

⁵ Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1895), p. 172. In 1914 his wife and two daughters were to be arrested for their militant suffrage activities. Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, pp. 231-3.

engaged as a purely propagandist force'⁶ The other contributors did not, though, reject either parliamentary methods or the Labour alliance: the issue at stake was the relationship between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Liberal government.

Critics feared that the ILP's socialist objectives were being swamped by the Labour Party's reluctance to endanger the Liberal government. In 1907 they found a focus in Victor Grayson, who was elected as socialist MP for Colne Valley. After three tumultuous years in parliament, characterised by an increasingly distant relationship with his Labour colleagues, he was the driving force behind the establishment of the British Socialist Party (BSP) in 1911. At its foundation conference, forty one ILP branches were represented, alongside Clarion Clubs, Social Democratic Party (the re-named SDF) branches, and other socialist organisations.⁷ Even within the BSP, some disapproved of parliamentary methods, others simply felt uncomfortable in an alliance with trade unions. Whatever disillusionment with parliament he may have felt as an MP, in the year of his election Grayson was committed to representative government, and emphasised his support for the extension of the franchise to women.⁸ Duncan Tanner suggests that discontent with the commitment of Hardie and other socialists to 'middle-class' measures such as women's suffrage was one of the factors

⁶ L. Hall, J.M. McLachlan, C.T. Douthwaite, J.M. Belcher, *Let Us Reform the Labour Party*, (The Fellowship Press, Manchester, 1910), p. 4.

⁷ Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 57-60.

⁸ Clark, *Colne Valley*, pp. 152, 157.

that led to the establishment of the BSP. It is certainly not accurate, nevertheless, to suggest that ILPers such as Lansbury or James O'Grady experienced such dissatisfaction.⁹

Ultimately, although the continued attractiveness of the call for socialist unity among many ILPers should not be underestimated, as well as the impatience with what was seen as the Labour Party's supine attitude towards the government,¹⁰ the ILP's dominant image continued to be that of a party committed to an alliance with trade unions, as well as to parliamentary methods.¹¹ Syndicalism, with its 'bitter antagonism to political action and to Parliamentary methods' and its 'grotesque obsession' with the general strike and 'direct action', was generally dismissed by ILPers.¹² As John Edwards put it, 'Politics and Parliaments do not spell perfection by long chalks, but they are the methods of civilised men'.¹³

Voices continued to be raised throughout the period, calling upon the party to waste no time on purely 'political' reforms. In his address as chairman to the 1907 ILP Conference MacDonald reminded the delegates of the

⁹ Tanner, *Political Change*, pp. 51-6.

¹⁰ For a useful overview of the Liberal government reform programme, which places the Labour Party's difficulties in its parliamentary context, see D. Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis. Britain, 1901-1914*, (MacMillan Press, Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 98-130.

¹¹ For an analysis of the ILP's commitment to notions of 'representative government', rather than 'direct democracy', see Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 290-300.

¹² *Labour Leader*, 24 June 1910.

¹³ *Ibid*, 12 July 1907. See also Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 162-5.

party's early years, when they had vigorously denied the value of 'mere political changes'. He still believed that they should not 'tinker with political machinery'. Nevertheless, they were still bound to support political reforms such as women's suffrage 'because we claim to be civilised people and cannot continue to insult our women forever'.¹⁴

At least a number of male ILPers had come to realise that an easy dismissal of 'constitutional tinkering' was no longer possible at a time of increasingly visible suffrage agitation, as well as concern over the future of the House of Lords.¹⁵ As H. Russell Smart perceptively observed, although choosing to forget the suffrage campaigns of the past forty years

The ILP has hitherto deliberately ignored constitutional tinkering and political reform in order to concentrate popular attention upon economic questions. Political fruit has, however, a habit of ripening suddenly... Women's enfranchisement, for example, has been sprung upon us, with alarming suddenness...

He suggested placing before the country 'The Socialist ideal of political

¹⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1907, p. 34. See also *Labour Leader*, 24 November 1905.

¹⁵ The crisis, which had been sparked off by the Lords' rejection of Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' in November 1909, was eventually resolved by the passage of a Parliament Act in August 1911. This limited the Lords' power of veto to one of delay, and deprived them of the right to amend or reject money bills. Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis*, pp. 39-67. For the position of male ILPers, see *Labour Leader*, 3 December 1909; 10 December 1909; 12 January 1910; 'The Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1909, p. 807.

democracy'.¹⁶ In 1906, in a letter published in 'Iona's' page, Mrs. Pankhurst had boldly abandoned ILP orthodoxy on the subject of political reform, and declared herself not only a socialist, but also a 'democrat': '... human freedom should precede social organisation, ... no social state deserves to succeed unless it is established with the consent of all sections of the community'.¹⁷

Only a few months later Hardie followed her example, and took at least a step towards shedding the ambiguity of ILP men's position on political, and in particular franchise reform, with its contradiction between a stress on the importance of workers exercising their electoral power and the reluctance to actively campaign in order to strengthen this. Speaking in Gateshead, he emphasized the importance of women's suffrage as a necessary step towards the achievement of socialism.

Political freedom must precede economic freedom. If working-men were still fighting for the franchise, the Socialist movement would scarcely have had a look-in among them... and what would've been true of them was equally true of women. The strength of a chain was the weakest link in it.¹⁸

He never ceased to warn the party against an excessive concern for 'merely' political reforms. Women's political enfranchisement, though, was the

¹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 9 August 1907. See also H. Russell Smart, *Lords, Commons and the People*, (The National Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1910).

¹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 24 August 1906.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 21 December 1906. See also 1 February 1907.

exception, since the socialist movement would be 'lop-sided until women take their place with men as comrades and political equals in our great world-wide agitation'.¹⁹

A shift in attitudes towards 'political' reform was apparent also among other male ILPers. Reforms which earlier would have been dismissed as irrelevant were now advocated: payment of MPs,²⁰ proportional representation,²¹ the abolition of the Cabinet system,²² as well as of course the abolition of the House of Lords. (Figure 31)²³ Prominent ILPers such as Fred Jowett campaigned for the abolition of the system of Cabinet government and of Ministerial control.²⁴ MacDonald's attitude was at times pragmatic, rather than enthusiastic.

In politics, every now and again, in order to get our aim, we have got, as it were, to throw our tools aside and pay attention to some troublesome side issue, which must be settled, because it is an essential part in the evolution we are trying to work out...²⁵

¹⁹ J.K. Hardie, *My Confession of Faith in the Labour Alliance*, (ILP Publication Dept, London, n.d., c.1909), p. 3. See also *Labour Leader*, 1 January 1909.

²⁰ *Labour Leader*, 9 March 1906.

²¹ *Ibid*, 14 December 1906; *The Socialist Review*, August 1909, pp. 473-6.

²² *Labour Leader*, 30 August 1907.

²³ *Ibid*, 1 July 1910.

²⁴ F.W. Jowett, *What is the Use of Parliament?* (The Clarion Press, London, n.d., c.1908).

²⁵ *Labour Leader*, 6 May 1910.

THE CLOSED DOOR.



FIGURE 31. 'THE CLOSED DOOR'.

The Socialist Review, a monthly magazine established by the party in 1908 under the direction of MacDonald, reflected its editor's increasing interest in issues of political democracy.²⁶ Writing in an editorial, he pointed out that socialists had developed a theory of economic and industrial relations radically different from that embraced by 19th century radicals, but had taken 'without much question, from these same Radicals... [their] ideas of political relationships'.²⁷ They should also devise a series of reforms which would 'smooth the way for economic liberty'. He therefore advocated women's suffrage, followed quickly by adult suffrage, shorter Parliaments and payment of MPs.²⁸

It seems, therefore, that a significant section of the male membership had come to accept political and franchise reform not as irrelevant, but as part of the socialist advance. To some extent, this view was given official backing by the 1909 Conference, which ordered a 'Statement of Political Methods' to be sent to the branches. This included the clause that 'Democracy must be established, all political privileges of class and sex removed, and equal rights conferred'.²⁹

The extent of this shift is clearly shown by the reasons given by the NAC

²⁶ See especially J.R. MacDonald, *Socialism and Government*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1909) and *The Socialist Movement*, (Williams and Norgate, London, 1911).

²⁷ 'The Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, June 1908, pp. 246-7.

²⁸ *Labour Leader*, 1 March 1907. See also 16 April 1909; 24 September 1909.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 16 April 1909. See also ILP Conference Report, 1909, p. 73.

(and supported by Bruce Glasier in the *Labour Leader*) for refusing to participate in a conference organised by the SDP, whose object was to start an agitation in favour of adult suffrage and other 'political' reforms. When in 1893 Hardie had refused to speak at an adult suffrage demonstration organised by the SDF, he had done so on the grounds that the latter was 'thus placing itself in line with mere Radicalism'.³⁰ In 1908, the NAC offered no criticism of the conference's concern for 'political' reforms, but refused to participate on the grounds that only adult suffrage was to be discussed (no amendment was to be in order). It restated the ILP's support for 'the immediate extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as men', a principle which had 'been carried by large majorities at the last four Conferences of the Party'.³¹

Although space had been created where a more positive approach to purely 'political' reforms could develop, at least partly under the influence of the suffrage campaign, the economic emancipation of the workers remained the ILP's ultimate aim. Writing to the Rev. J.A. Beaumont, Francis Johnson³² emphasized that his party constantly looked forward to a time when both land and capital were communally owned, 'and the whole of our work is the

³⁰ *Justice*, 7 October 1893. See also 14 October 1893.

³¹ *Labour Leader*, 10 July 1908. See also 17 July 1908; H.W. Lee to J.R. MacDonald, 27 May 1908, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive; NAC Minutes, 23, 24, 25 July 1908, ILP Archive; Southwark ILP Minutes, 14 July 1908, ILP Archive.

³² A bookshop manager, he left the trade in 1900 to join the ILP office. He was elected general secretary in 1904. Pethick Lawrence, Edwards, (eds), *The Reformers' Year Book*, (1907), p. 238.

promulgation of such ideas as will lead to that end'.³³

Nevertheless, a number of ILP men had begun to emphasize that socialist appeals to action were not exclusively the concern of masculine 'workers' or 'toilers'. In a *Labour Leader* editorial, Bruce Glasier emphasized that Parliament should make its influence felt in '... every factory, warehouse, field, or mine', but also that it should stand

behind the women - men and women equal in all things! Its power must be strong to rescue the seamstress from the hovel, the factory girl from her unequal wages, the toiling mother struggling to clothe and feed her children...³⁴

Rhetorical appeals to both 'men and women' became more common. A *Labour Leader* editorial in 1908 emphasized that the use of the word 'man' when 'woman' was also meant to be included was, at the very least, a 'blunder... especially in these days of militant womanhood'.³⁵

The extent of this shift must not be exaggerated. Figure 32 is an illustration which appeared every week at the head of the *Labour Leader's* 'Our cycle scouts column'. This reveals exclusively masculine propagandists, as well as potential adherents, although cycling was by no

³³ F. Johnson to Rev. J.A. Beaumont, 6 December 1910, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 6 September 1907; F. Henderson, *The ABC of Socialism*, (ILP Publication Department, Manchester, n.d., c.1909).

³⁴ *Labour Leader*, 5 January 1909. See also 24 July 1908.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 14 February 1908. See also E.T. Garner, 'From Chaos to Order', (Common Sense Politics no 20, ILP, London, 1909); Anon, 'What Socialism Means', (Common Sense Politics no 15, ILP, London, 1909), both Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.



FIGURE 32. 'OUR CYCLE SCOUTS'.

means a wholly masculine pursuit.³⁶ It was still far from rare to find ILPers (including Hardie) exclusively appealing to and writing of 'men'.³⁷ The Farsley ILP's programme for the Winter of 1907-1908 included this appeal:

Be men! Stand no longer while the iron hand of Profit forces your wives, your sisters and your little ones back into the bottomless pit of ignorance, poverty, despair and sorrow.³⁸

More importantly, this new sensitivity to language did not necessarily mean that male ILPers had radically changed their stance on women's role within society. Women's identity was not necessarily seen as the same as men's. A letter by John A. Coote to the *Labour Leader* illustrates this point. He stated that

Appeals on behalf of Socialism are made almost exclusively to the 'horny-handed sons of toil'... a much greater proportion of these appeals should be addressed to the quick feminine understanding. Women, generally speaking, have a quicker perception on social issues than men...³⁹

³⁶ *Labour Leader*, 6 May 1910. See for example Sylvia Pankhurst's description of Christabel and her jaunts with the Clarion Cycling Club. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 139-40.

³⁷ See for example J.K. Hardie *The Party Pledge and the Osborne Judgement*, (The National Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1911); C.A. Lister, *Riches and Poverty. A Statement of Socialism*, (Independent Labour Party, London, n.d., c.1907).

³⁸ J.W. Allerton, 'Farsley Branch of the ILP. Our Winter's Work, 1907-8', p. 35, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 7 June 1907.

He made clear that women should be addressed by socialist propaganda, but not as 'horny-handed daughters of toil'.

An understanding of 'workers' as including both workers 'by hand and by brain' could provide space for the inclusion of women. Sid Treeby, one of the *Labour Leader* illustrators, included in his 'A Pageant of Socialism' (Figure 33) both male and female figures, and blurred (although did not erase) class distinctions by utilising historical costumes. Although the central masculine figure was certainly meant to represent a labourer, the illustration as a whole was not a depiction of manual or waged work: both banners and costumes were almost exclusively those of 'workers by brain'.⁴⁰

More fundamentally, when male ILPers actually came to deal with specific waged-workers, these turned out to be overwhelmingly male: gas-stokers,⁴¹ miners,⁴² shop assistants, or rather 'shop-men',⁴³ tramwaymen,⁴⁴ Scots fishermen,⁴⁵ iron moulders,⁴⁶ and so on⁴⁷. Overwhelmingly, workers

⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 29 April 1910. See also 14 September 1906.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 7 August 1908.

⁴² *Ibid*, 25 November 1911; 12 May 1911.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 9 March 1906; 16 March 1906. But see also 16 February 1906.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 8 June 1906.

⁴⁵ Joe Duncan, 'Capitalism and the Scots fisherman', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1909, pp. 826-33.

⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, 16 April 1909.

⁴⁷ See also J.R. Clynes, *What are you Worth? A Question for the Workers*, (ILP Publication Department, London, n.d., c.1909); F. Rose, *The Machine Monster! A Warning to Skilled Workers*, (ILP Publication Department, London, 1909).

A PAGEANT OF SOCIALISM.



FIGURE 33. 'A PAGEANT OF SOCIALISM'.

continued to be portrayed in *Labour Leader* illustrations as male: Figure 34 is an example.⁴⁸ Equally, the figure of 'Labour' continued to be portrayed as a semi-realistic working-man, (Figure 35)⁴⁹ while the representation of socialists and trade unionists served to emphasize their common masculinity (Figure 36).⁵⁰

Just as in the earlier period, female figures were not completely absent from illustrations. In figure 37 they were portrayed by Treeby as 'realistic' figures, although almost caricatured, in the artist's effort to convey an impression of anguish. Nevertheless, their role was not that of waged workers, but of members of a family.⁵¹ Idealised female figures continued to be used as personifications of 'Socialism' (Figure 38)⁵² or other ideals. In the case of figure 39, that of 'freedom'.⁵³

All this was not new. Although at a time of 'militant womanhood' it was found imperative to include 'women' in rhetorical appeals to socialism, this by no means meant they were to any great extent assimilated within the

⁴⁸ *Labour Leader*, 3 June 1910.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 7 January 1910.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 25 November 1910. The connection between socialism and trade unionism continued to be emphasized as essential to the achievement of workers' emancipation, particularly after the blow of the Osborne Judgement, which found the levying of fees by trade unions for political purposes illegal. See for example *Labour Leader*, 4 February 1910; 10 June 1910; 4 November 1910.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 16 December 1910.

⁵² *Ibid*, 14 April 1911.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 28 January 1910.

CHORUS.

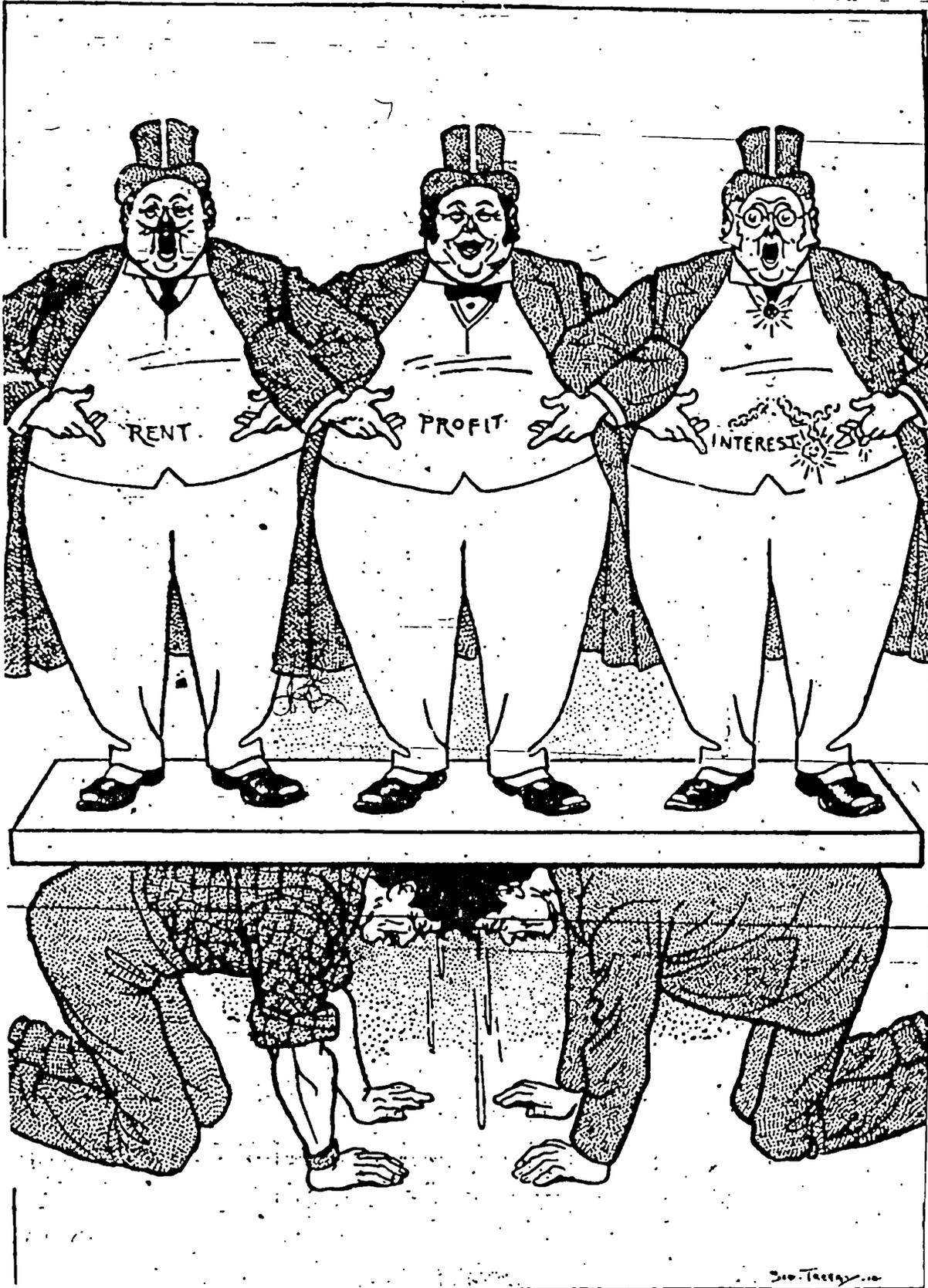


FIGURE 34. 'CHORUS'.

THE FIGHT WITH APOLLYON



FIGURE 35. 'THE FIGHT WITH APOLLYON'.

IN THE FIRING LINE.



FIGURE 36. 'IN THE FIRING LINE'.

THE HOG OF THE FAMILY.



FIGURE 37. 'THE HOG OF THE FAMILY'.

THE NEW VISION.



"And the People that Dwell in Darkness have seen a Great Light."

FIGURE 38. 'THE NEW VISION'.

FOILED!

Although the Liberals have suffered defeat, the addition of the Labour and Nationalist Parties gives a working majority against the Lords.



FIGURE 39. 'FOILED!'

ranks of the ILP's prime constituency: that of waged workers. The rest of this chapter's introductory section will be devoted to an assessment of the role accorded to women within ILP ideology, and of whether any change had taken place since the outbreak of suffrage militancy. Section 1 will then turn more specifically to the issue of suffrage, and will consider whether arguments used in the debate, including that between equal and adult suffragists, changed in the period under consideration. Section 2 will then focus on attempts by ILP men to come to terms with the new phenomenon of suffrage militancy, in all its different forms.

As in the earlier period, women as waged workers were not entirely absent from ILP men's discourses. It is revealing, though, that attention was devoted to them when they behaved in a 'militant' way, most obviously and commonly by going on strike. Thus, it is possible to find occasional mentions of the hardships of underpaid glove-stitchers,⁵⁴ or unemployed teachers,⁵⁵ but a much greater degree of interest was shown in striking Belfast linen workers,⁵⁶ London box makers,⁵⁷ Mansfield mill-girls,⁵⁸ Cradley Heath chain-makers,⁵⁹ Manchester mantle-makers,⁶⁰ Swansea

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 12 October 1906.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 7 October 1910.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 8 June 1906.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 10 January 1908; 17 January 1908.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 24 June 1906.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 23 September 1910.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 18 November 1911

dress-makers,⁶¹ and so on. The perception of 'W.C.A.' (probably William Anderson) was of a

general dissatisfaction spreading among women workers against their industrial position. Within the past two years there has been a series of outbreaks and revolts in different parts of the country, which indicates a forward movement for betterment and reform.⁶²

'Enjorlas' explicitly connected this perceived new spirit with the suffrage campaign: 'These are the days of the woman: the woman voter, the woman worker, and the woman striker'.⁶³ The solitary representation of a woman-worker in a *Labour Leader* illustration is also very interesting. Figure 40 shows no downtrodden or exploited worker (compare it, for example, with the male workers of figure 34) but a bottle-washer on strike and actively ('militantly') hammering against injustice.⁶⁴ It remains to be seen whether this represented an acceptance of women's role as waged workers.

A number of ILP men did make a serious attempt to place women's waged work on the same basis as men's. An ILP leaflet published in 1909 touched upon the conditions of women workers such as tailoresses, paper bag makers,

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 10 March 1911. But see also Pete Curran's assumption that during strikes women's role would be that of wives of striking male workers, in P. Curran, *Human Documents. Character Sketches*, (ILP, London, n.d., c.1908), p. 8.

⁶² *Labour Leader*, 8 June 1906.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 19 November 1906.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 28 April 1911.

ANOTHER BLOW!



FIGURE 40. 'ANOTHER BLOW!'

laundry workers, charwomen, and so on, all of whom found it impossible to earn a living wage, and lived in continual fear of illness, debt and poverty in old age, a condition from which 'they can never rise'. It emphasized that the capitalist system 'treats women even worse than it does men, and is more unjust to them, and pays them less'. Although it also expressed concern for the ability of these women to perform their future role as mothers, it concluded by suggesting that women workers had the same interest as male workers in the establishment of socialism. Women would

... no longer be at the mercy of the private owner of this or that sweating place... the managers and directors of industries will be but as stewards to the *real* owners, that is the men and women workers - The People.⁶⁵

In a letter to the *Labour Leader* in which he advocated women's greater participation in the activities of their trade unions, Robert Cooper (husband of the Lancashire suffragist and ILP activist Selina Cooper) called for

... an agitation to bring about a state of things where women would receive an equal wage with men for the equal work performed, and the right to enter any trade or profession with any man...⁶⁶

Male ILPers also advocated the inclusion of women in legislative proposals

⁶⁵ Anon, 'Women and Capitalism', (Common Sense Politics no 14, ILP, London, 1909). See also *Labour Leader*, 10 June 1910; 6 January 1911.

⁶⁶ *Labour Leader*, 21 June 1907. See also 3 August 1906; J.K. Hardie, *The ILP. All About It*, (ILP, London, n.d., c.1908), p. 12.

introduced in Parliament for the protection of waged workers in general.⁶⁷ Following the introduction in Parliament of a Labour Party motion in favour of a national minimum wage of thirty shillings for all adult workers,⁶⁸ Will Crooks defended the decision to demand the same minimum for men and women. 'Why should a woman receive less because she is a woman when she performs the same task as a man?' His motivation was not, though, a straightforward commitment to women workers' rights. 'You may say' he continued

that a man generally has a family dependent upon him, but if you are going to admit that an employer is right in paying women less, you will find that men will be ousted right along the line, and even in trades unsuitable for women... Of course a family needs more than a single woman, but it is for the state to realise that, not the employer.⁶⁹

Considering that even those ILP men who supported women's equal wages were often rather less than whole-hearted in their recognition of women's equal status as 'workers' with men, it is hardly surprising to find also expressed by male ILPers far more negative views of women's waged work, occasionally by the very same men. Some forms of employment were more strongly disapproved of than others, although there was no straightforward

⁶⁷ *Labour Leader*, 12 May 1911. See also 16 June 1911.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 5 May 1911.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 7 July 1911.

definition of what constituted 'unsuitable' work.⁷⁰ Snowden for example wrote vaguely, if compellingly, that in his vision of socialism, he saw '... no women at unwomanly toil; but I see woman raised to her rightful sphere - "gained in mental breadth nor failed in childward care".⁷¹

When it was mentioned, women's competition for 'men's' work continued to be viewed with disapproval, and its evil consequences emphasized. The introduction of machinery in Long Eaton workshops, and the displacement of highly paid men by cheaper women was portrayed as having had far-reaching consequences in the locality:

... on Saturday morning no fewer than 25 homes were sold up; mostly of young married people who had started housekeeping three or four years back, when trade was good and the husband had every prospect of maintaining a home in comfort...⁷²

The image of man as the family wage-earner retained considerable power. Russell Smart justified a lower minimum wage for women on the ground that 'the average man has to support wife and family as well as himself; the average working woman has only herself to support'.⁷³ Writing about the

⁷⁰ Compare for example *Labour Leader*, 20 November 1908; 4 December 1908, for rather different views on female herring workers.

⁷¹ Snowden, *The Christ that is to be*, p. 15. See also *Labour Leader*, 14 October 1910.

⁷² *Labour Leader*, 21 February 1908. See also 12 March 1909; 16 June 1911.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 12 April 1907. See also 1 December 1905.

problem of prostitution in Cardiff, George Bibbings, the organiser of the South Wales ILP Federation, emphasized that ‘... economic pressure most directly account for the prostitute...’.⁷⁴ More unusually, he recognised the negative influence of women’s economic dependence on men, and emphasised that under socialism every woman ‘will have suitable employment given her’.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, he still lamented what he perceived as the break-down of traditional patterns of authority within the family, based upon the father’s role as bread-winner.

In many of the large towns devoted to special industries, such as Leicester and boots... young girls are found employed oftentimes to the exclusion of their own fathers... In order that dividends shall be higher and profits larger, we penalise fathers by enforcing idleness and destroying their authority in vital matters. Small wonder is it... to see some fine girls entering the workhouse maternity ward with the child of her downfall as a result of this unnatural system.⁷⁶

Behind arguments about men’s role as family wage-earner still lay a belief that waged work occupied a different (invariably a lesser) role in women’s lives. O.E. Post brought these ideas to their extreme consequences. Reflecting on the outcome of the introduction of state employment, his vision relegated women to their ‘special sexual function’: ‘Child labour and female labour will be withdrawn from the labour market in considerable amounts

⁷⁴ G. Bibbings, *The Martyrdom of the Magdalene*, (South Wales ILP Federation, Cardiff, 1909), p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 8.

when once adult men have a secure income'.⁷⁷

Such explicit appeals for the abolition of women's waged work were rare, but the extent of the belief in women's labour as secondary to men's should not be underestimated. T.F. Richards, the Leicester ILPer and boot and shoe operatives' leader,⁷⁸ for example, when advocating the establishment of a minimum wage for women in the boot and shoe trade, did not feel it necessary to explain why this should have been almost a third lower than men's.⁷⁹

It is hardly surprising to find that married women's, and especially mothers' waged work, continued to be viewed with particular disapproval; the only instance in which this could be tolerated was the case where the natural bread-winner (the husband) could not provide for the family.⁸⁰ Ernst Spencer, a veteran of the Rochester ILP, recalled in the 1980s that the wife of the branch secretary in the early years of the century used to take in washing. Spencer gave this as one of the reasons why the man lost the municipal election of 1908.⁸¹

ILPers regularly used pathetic images of neglected children of working

⁷⁷ *Labour Leader*, 14 April 1911. See also 7 July 1911.

⁷⁸ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol, III, pp. 151-3.

⁷⁹ *Labour Leader*, 2 August 1907. See also H. Willmott, 'Sweating in the textile trades', in *The Socialist Review*, July 1909, pp. 364-80.

⁸⁰ *Labour Leader*, 11 September 1908. See also 10 August 1906; 18 October 1907.

⁸¹ E. Spencer to R.E. Dowse, 23 May 1958, ILP Members' Papers, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 10 August 1906; 18 October 1907; 11 September 1908.

mothers. Norman Tiptoft wrote of a child with

little arms... like matchsticks, its pale face wearing already the darkness of the great sorrow... it was just the damnable tragedy of the every day. The mother compelled to work for her living, having no time, perhaps no inclination, to study such a subject as the scientific feeding of babies...⁸²

Nevertheless, blame was still generally not placed on the mother's shoulders, but rather on the capitalist system, which made it necessary for women to work for wages outside the home.⁸³

The position of women waged workers within ILP ideology had become even more ambiguous than had been the case in earlier years. The unacceptable nature of purely masculine rhetorical appeals had been to a considerable extent realised, at least partly under the influence of an increasingly vociferous suffrage movement, but ultimately the waged workers to whom the party continued to appeal, remained masculine ones. Women's identity continued to be bound by their association with a domestic role, although male ILPers' attention these years did not focus on women's role as 'wives' or 'mothers' as much as on what was perceived as the crucial (and controversial) issue of 'the family'.

Of course, discussions of marriage and relations between the sexes was anything but new, despite Bruce Glasier's claim that 'Only in very rare

⁸² *Labour Leader*, 10 September 1909. See also 29 May 1908; 23 September 1910.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 19 May 1911. See also 19 March 1909; 23 July 1909.

instances has the theoretical question of sex relations ever been discussed at Socialist meetings'.⁸⁴ It is true that male ILPers continued to emphasise the ethical basis of socialism.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, economics still occupied an overwhelming proportion of ILPers' attention. Voices were still raised lamenting the amount of space devoted to non-economic issues. F. Montague's was one of them:

... marriage laws may not be perfect... The plain Socialist, however, can see that much of the misery and unfairness of marriage conditions today would disappear if women had free economic choice. Therefore, instead of discussing erotic philosophy, he works for Socialism...⁸⁶

Nevertheless, a number of articles appeared in the *Labour Leader* dealing with the continuing relevance of the family under socialism, particularly in the wake of an onslaught against the supposed atheism and adherence to ideals of 'free love' of socialists which appeared in the Tory press in 1907.⁸⁷

Invariably, the contributors emphasized their commitment to a monogamous union, even if they recognised the necessity of a reform of contemporary

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1 November 1907.

⁸⁵ R.J. Campbell, *Socialism*, (ILP, London, n.d., c.1907), pp. 4-5. See also *Labour Leader*, 3 May 1907; 30 March 1906; 22 February 1907; W.G. Peck, 'The Ethical Root of Socialism', in *The Socialist Review*, April 1909, pp. 132-8.

⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 19 March 1909.

⁸⁷ Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 111-5.

marriage arrangements. As the editor put it in response to a reader's enquiry:

there is no conception of Socialism which predicates the disintegration of mankind into a loose mob of men and women, constantly pairing off with fresh fancies like flies and beetles.⁸⁸

In October 1907 the NAC forwarded a resolution to the press which repudiated the charge that socialism was antagonistic to the family, and emphasized that the disintegration of this institution was due

... to the creation of slums, the employment of children in factories, the dragging of mothers into workshops and factories through economic pressures created by the low wages of men, and sweating, and other operations of capitalism...⁸⁹

The establishment of socialism was seen as making possible the development of 'true' marriage relations. Opinions about how this was to be brought about, as well as what constituted a desirable marriage varied considerably. An anonymous *Labour Leader* contributor could comment

⁸⁸ *Labour Leader*, 4 January 1907. See also 8 November 1907; 8 May 1908.

⁸⁹ NAC Minutes, 4, 5 October 1907, ILP Archive. Though ILPers by no means escaped the influence of eugenic ideas, they continued to emphasise not the importance of maternal responsibility, but of wider societal change. See for example S. Herbert, 'Socialism and the New Science', in *The Socialist Review*, June 1908, pp. 305-9; F.C. Constable, 'Socialism and the New Science, Another View', in *ibid*, October 1908, pp. 598-608; F.H. Minett, 'Socialism and Sham Science', in *ibid*, June 1909, pp. 292-8.

vaguely that it was

... highly probable that when the economic and class conditions that mar and misdirect not only love and marriage, but all our other sentiments... have disappeared, the perplexity of marriage and family organisation will to a great extent disappear also.⁹⁰

Bruce Glasier, on the other hand, had obviously given the issue some thought. He believed that under socialism, young men would be able to support their families and educate their children, while there would no longer be ‘... the depraved contempt of women except as a toy of lust, which Toryism has sustained through all the ages of history’.⁹¹

For Hardie, the ‘Woman Question’ ultimately resolved itself in the problem of women’s economic dependence on men. Socialism could provide the only real solution, although details of how it would do so were not spelt out, beyond a vision of ‘woman’ claiming ‘in her own right to share in the national wealth’.⁹² In a pamphlet written for the ILP, the writer H.G. Wells rejected the notion of a family based on the man’s patriarchal power, but rather advocated a system where the woman ‘... must cease to be in any sense or degree private property. The man must desist from tyrannising in the nursery and do his proper work in the world’. He still assumed that men

⁹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 19 October 1906.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15 November 1907. See also J. Bruce Glasier to K. Bruce Glasier, 29 August 1908, Glasier Papers.

⁹² J.K. Hardie, *From Serfdom to Socialism*, (George Allen, London, 1907), pp. 61-70.

and women played distinctive roles within the family, with the man 'naturally' tending to be 'the guide and supporter and helper and the woman playing her natural part as mother and teacher'.⁹³

The discussions over the question of state endowment for the support of children show how few ILPers suggested radical changes to the roles of men and women within marriage. The *Labour Leader* editor (Bruce Glasier) uncompromisingly stated his disapproval of a measure which seemed to free parents from responsibility for their children, and in particular, fathers, from the responsibility of maintaining their family.

we... hold that the function of the state is to provide the means whereby the father, by his work, will be held as amply earning the upkeep of his family.⁹⁴

J.B. Askew's ideas were, on the other hand, rather more radical. He first of all questioned whether the mother was, in fact, 'the best educator of the young children... It must be admitted that some women are absolutely unfitted by temperament for such a responsibility...'. Even granted that this was the case, he denied that the way in which children were brought up could be improved by prohibiting married women's work in factories, or by 'chaining women down to the home'. He chose rather to champion state

⁹³ H.G. Wells, *Will Socialism Destroy the Home?*, (ILP, London, n.d., c.1907), p. 14. See also *Labour Leader*, 14 September 1906; 16 October 1908.

⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 29 January 1909. See also 19 March 1909.

endowment of childhood.⁹⁵

On the whole, supporters of state endowment may have mentioned married women's 'economic independence', which a number of feminists, and in particular the Fabian Women's Group (established in 1908) were demanding,⁹⁶ but did not attempt to challenge the belief in women's responsibilities for their children or married women's place in the home.⁹⁷ The Rev. R.J. Campbell, for example, a Congregational minister and member of the Fabian executive,⁹⁸ advocated the endowment of motherhood both because it would mean that children would be 'physically fit' and thus later able to contribute to the community rather than to be a drain on it, and because it would mean that mothers would no longer have to engage in manual labour for wages outside the home.⁹⁹

Male ILPers did not challenge assumptions which identified men with waged workers and breadwinners, and saw women as essentially domestic

⁹⁵ *Labour Leader*, 12 March 1909.

⁹⁶ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 183-4.

⁹⁷ See for example *Labour Leader*, 23 October 1908. Interestingly, the Women's Labour League never supported endowment of motherhood. According to Christine Collette, this was because they did not see women's role as restricted to the home, although paradoxically, they found themselves on the same side of the argument as supporters of a 'family wage'. C. Collette, *For Labour and for Women: the Women's Labour League, 1906-1913*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989).

⁹⁸ C.D. Sharp, (ed.), *The Reformers' Year Book*, (The New Age Press, London, 1909), p. 218.

⁹⁹ R.J. Campbell, *Some Economic Aspects of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Women's Freedom League, London, 1909), pp. 6-7. See also *Labour Leader*, 19 May 1911; 26 May 1911; 2 June 1911.

beings. The belief in the different interests of men and women was shown in relief in February 1906, when the *Labour Leader* introduced a separate women's section.¹⁰⁰ This initiative took the shape of a column, entitled 'Our Women's Outlook', and written by 'Iona' (Katherine Bruce Glasier). Soon, though, all the pieces that were considered to be of interest to women tended to concentrate on this page. After John and Katherine Bruce Glasier left the paper in May 1909¹⁰¹, page 13 continued to be dedicated to women, with a number of different (mostly female) authors contributing pieces 'dealing with topics specially interesting to the women of the socialist movement'. At the same time, a promise was made to introduce 'a special feature for the men... a fortnightly column of notes... dealing with finance, commerce and industry, from inside knowledge'.¹⁰² In February 1910 page 13 effectively became the 'Women's Page'.¹⁰³

This page provided women, including suffrage activists, with an established basis from which to express their views, but, with a few exceptions, new issues were not tackled, and gendered understandings of male and female identities were not seriously challenged.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, although debates concerning the future of the family, and by extension, the position of women

¹⁰⁰ *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1906.

¹⁰¹ J.F. Mills was appointed editor a year later. In 1910 Fenner Brockway joined the editorial staff, and soon was appointed sub-editor.

¹⁰² *Labour Leader*, 28 May 1909.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 11 February 1910.

¹⁰⁴ The contrast with Lily Bell's trenchant column is striking.

within it, continued to attract attention throughout the period within the paper as a whole, the introduction of page 13 meant the establishment of a trend whereby 'women's issues' acquired a largely separate status. The main exception to the rule, alongside discussions of the family, was the issue of women's suffrage, which was never confined to the boundaries of page 13.

3-1. 'THE INCOMING OF THE MOTHER ELEMENT INTO POLITICS'.

Although their tone was not always serious, ILP men saw themselves as committed to women's equality.¹⁰⁵ And although they were never reluctant to point out what they perceived as the shortcomings of the suffrage movement,¹⁰⁶ they welcomed women's attempts to emancipate themselves. 'M.E.M.' described ILPers as having

a wider outlook and more trust in women of every nation and of every class, and we see in the stirring of enthusiasm amongst women of the most various types the true hope of

¹⁰⁵ *Labour Leader*, 15 December 1905.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 15 July 1910.

advance of their sex, and concurrently for the race.¹⁰⁷

In 1905, while the Labour Party conference had voted overwhelmingly for adult suffrage, the ILP conference had committed itself to equal suffrage. The 1906 conference continued a pattern established in the preceding years. A 'lively debate' took place on the issue of adult versus equal suffrage, although to a large extent an academic one, since the chairman (Snowden) ruled that the two resolutions should not be placed in opposition.¹⁰⁸ As a result, the conference both 'boldly reaffirmed its championship of the women's cause by an overwhelming majority'¹⁰⁹ and voted unanimously in favour of adult suffrage.¹¹⁰ This comfortable arrangement was interrupted by the 1907 conference. On this occasion the debate was dominated by the issue of the WSPU's election policy, but despite discontent with the latter, Stockton's amendment to an equal suffrage resolution was lost, and the resolution carried by 236 votes to 24.¹¹¹ It is possible that with a Labour Party now in Parliament, it had become necessary to decide between the two options. The pattern was repeated throughout the period, debates being characterised by a

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 23 February 1906. See also ILP Conference Report, 1906, p. 30; 'The Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, April 1908, p. 83.

¹⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 13 April 1906.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁰ ILP Conference Report, 1906, pp. 44-5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 1907, pp. 45-7. Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 178-9.

tug of war... between those who advocate the extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as men, and on the other hand those who support an Adult Suffrage amendment pure and simple.¹¹²

Although the party maintained its commitment to equal suffrage, the continued strength of support for adult suffrage should not be underestimated. Well-worn arguments were used by both sides in the debate. Adult suffragists emphasized that a limited measure would only enfranchise 'propertied ladies'.¹¹³ In 1910 C. Higham angrily reminded conference delegates that

there were women in this country who were working fourteen hours a day for a miserable pittance. The 'Limited Bill' would give votes to their employers, but not to them.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, equal suffragists made extensive use of more or less reliable statistics in an attempt to deny these accusations. In 1911, defending the Conciliation Bill, Snowden pointed out that a survey carried out by the Conciliation Committee of women householders in Bangor and Caernarfon had shown that 'the working-class element' represented seventy five per cent

¹¹² *Labour Leader*, 1 April 1910. See also ILP Conference Report, 1908, pp. 71-2; *ibid*, 1911, pp. 10-23; *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1911; 28 April 1911.

¹¹³ *Labour Leader*, 12 November 1909. The issue of the explicit inclusion of married women in suffrage measures also continued to prove controversial.

¹¹⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1910, pp. 88-9.

of the population. He characterised the Conciliation Bill as ‘... a Bill to give votes mainly to the widows and mothers of the working-classes and to spinsters who have to work to support themselves’.¹¹⁵

Equal suffragists seem to have been more generous than adultists in their assessment of the effects of granting middle-class women the vote. Snowden spoke warmly in Parliament of an equal suffrage petition received from Lancashire textile workers. Despite the fact that the majority of them would not be enfranchised by the measure, their support was ‘... wise, because they recognised that for all practical purposes the granting of the vote to a few women was the enfranchisement of the whole sex’.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, G. Saunders Jacobs believed that ‘If the rich and "educated" women once obtain the vote, they will never give it to their poorer sisters’.¹¹⁷

On a different tack, equal suffragists still emphasized that the measure they supported was not concerned with any extension of the franchise, but rather with the elimination of a ‘sex disability’. As Hardie stated, women’s ‘fight is for equality, and until their claim has been admitted they cannot take part in any agitation for a reform of the franchise or the registration laws’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ P. Snowden, *In Defence of the Conciliation Bill*, (Wadsworth & Co., Keighley, 1911), pp. 6-7. See also T. Johnston, *The Case for Women’s Suffrage and Objections Answered*, (The Forward Printing and Publishing Co., Glasgow, N.D., c.1906), pp. 13-5; *Labour Leader*, 28 September 1906; 7 February 1908.

¹¹⁶ Hansard Commons Debates, 28 February 1908, 4th series, vol. 185, col. 270.

¹¹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 8 March 1907.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1 February 1907.

Although the adultist Councillor Mitchell warned that the passage of an adult suffrage measure into law would have the effect of postponing adult suffrage,¹¹⁹ Snowden believed that 'adult suffrage can only come by stages'.¹²⁰

Equal suffragists pointed out that there was no great demand for adult suffrage in the country, while there was 'a fifty year old women's enfranchisement agitation'.¹²¹ There were a 'great many people' who supported adult suffrage, but

... the support is academic. It is not felt to be a burning question. And the simple and sufficient explanation is that the men who have no votes do not feel any strong resentment at the fact, because they are potential voters and expect to qualify by and by.¹²²

The belief of a Stockton adultist, J. Smith, that '... there are half a dozen questions crying louder for our immediate attention than does women's enfranchisement',¹²³ would have only served to fuel equal suffragists' suspicions.

Both the equal and the adult suffragists' position were to some extent

¹¹⁹ ILP Conference Report, 1906, p. 44.

¹²⁰ *The Vote*, 9 April 1910. See also *Labour Leader*, 8 December 1905; 15 March 1907.

¹²¹ *Labour Leader*, 1 February 1907. See also Hansard Commons Debates, 19 March 1909, vol. 2, col. 1384.

¹²² Snowden, *In Defence*, p. 9.

¹²³ *Labour Leader*, 17 August 1906.

coherent with the ILP's ideology. Adult suffragists could see themselves as operating within the context of a party concerned primarily with the emancipation of the working-class. Equal suffragists could appeal to the ILP's continued commitment to wider, 'cultural' change, as well as its rejection of notions of class-war, while at the same time emphasising the 'working-class friendly' nature of even a limited measure of women's enfranchisement. At the same time, equal suffragists were also clearly influenced by discourses which had been developed in the past fifty years within the suffrage movement.

This can be seen particularly clearly in the way ILP men responded to the arguments of anti-suffragists. In a pamphlet probably published in 1906, the Glasgow ILPer and editor of the socialist paper the *Forward*,¹²⁴ Thomas Johnston rebutted a series of objections frequently levelled against women's suffrage. He denied that the vote would 'unsex' woman, and believed that in fact it would make her 'a more intelligent woman, a more womanly woman, and less of a coddled doll'.¹²⁵ Concerning the antis' argument that women's place should be the home, he pointed out that economic circumstances already forced many women to work outside the domestic sphere, and asked why domestic labour should anyway be an electoral disqualification. Finally, he asked by what right should men 'perform the thinking processes for the other half of the human race'?¹²⁶ He

¹²⁴ Leneman, *A Guid Cause*, p. 43.

¹²⁵ Johnston, *The Case*, p. 10.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 10-1.

emphasized the extent of the desire for the vote, while observing that voting was not compulsory,¹²⁷ and denied that women lacked the necessary intelligence to vote.¹²⁸ In Parliament, Hardie and Snowden (the ILP MPs who spoke most frequently on the issue of women's suffrage) were particularly keen to respond to the argument that women did not desire the vote. Speaking in support of the Second Reading of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill in 1907, Snowden pointed out that '... there was no agitation of to-day which was so great, so vigorous and so widespread as the agitation of women for votes'. But even supposing that women did not want the vote, to accept the principle that no legislation should be introduced without the express approval of a majority of the people it was to benefit, 'would be a negation of all social legislation' starting with the Education Act of 1870. 'There was no reason why women who did wish to have the vote should be deprived of it because others did not want it'.¹²⁹

The argument of women's right to vote as a mark of their 'citizenship' continued to be widely utilised. (See above chapter 2) As a *Labour Leader* editorial of 1908 put it,

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 11-2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 12-3. In later years (although the exact date is uncertain) Johnston organised the defence of a meeting in Glasgow addressed by Mrs. Pankhurst. He got dockers and navvies to throw out disruptive students. J. Smith, 'Taking the Leadership of the Labour Movement: the ILP in Glasgow, 1906-1914', in MacKinlay, Morris, (eds), *The ILP on Clydeside*, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Hansard Commons Debates, 8 March 1907, 4th series, vol. 170, cols 1132-4. See also *Labour Leader*, 8 January 1909; 12 February 1909; 13 May 1910.

The suffragists are out to win for the womanhood of their country the right to vote as the sign and seal of their fellow-citizenship and human equality with men.¹³⁰

Figure 41 appealed to a particularly potent imagery of 'rights', with its reference to the granting of Magna Charta,¹³¹ a long-standing device of radical politics.¹³² Speaking in support of the 1910 Conciliation Bill, Snowden characterised the suffrage organisations' demand for the enactment of this measure as not the demand of 'a favour, but... an act of justice far too long delayed'.¹³³

It was still argued that women should have the right to vote because they paid rates and taxes as men did,¹³⁴ and a time was looked forward to when 'the intelligent women of the nation will not be classed with criminals and lunatics and denied a voice in making the laws by which they are governed'.¹³⁵

It was still not argued, though, that women should have a vote because of

¹³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 9 October 1908. See also 14 September 1906; 8 February 1907; 28 January 1910; 12 May 1911.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 24 June 1910.

¹³² R. McWilliam, 'Radicalism and Popular Culture: the Tichborne Case and the Politics of "Fair Play", 1867-1886', in Biagini, Reid, (eds), *Currents of Radicalism*, pp. 60-1.

¹³³ Hansard Commons Debates, 12 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, col. 324.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 11 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, cols 139-40. See also *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906.

¹³⁵ Allerton, 'Farsley Branch', p. 37, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

THE NEW CHARTER.



FIGURE 41. 'THE NEW CHARTER'.

their status as waged workers. This is hardly surprising, considering the highly ambivalent attitude of male ILPers towards women's waged work, although very occasionally the vote was suggested as a necessary instrument to improve the conditions of women's labour. Herbert Morrison pointed out that while women's 'place *was* the home', they were now making themselves felt in the worlds of

... science, art and industry... women writers and women doctors... women school teachers, women clerks and typists, women in factories and women selling newspapers in the gutters of the city.

They accepted their role as cheap labour because they had a low esteem of the value of this labour, but 'When they become politically enfranchised, they will think more of and about themselves. They will demand and secure improved labour conditions'.¹³⁶

These, though, were isolated voices. Women's claim to the vote was most often expressed not in terms of their role alongside men in the workplace, but rather by stressing their different interests and qualities. In his contribution to Brougham Villiers' collection of essays, *The Case for Women's Suffrage*, Hardie recognised that an increasing number of women were 'entering the industrial as distinguished from the domestic spheres of employment', and had a right to 'a voice in determining what legislation is

¹³⁶ *Labour Leader*, 17 February 1911. See also 18 February 1910; 15 July 1910; *The Common Cause*, 20 April 1911.

wise and necessary'.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, he also assumed that at some point the 'industrial woman' would get married and become a housewife, economically dependent upon a husband. He emphasized that women would need the protection of the vote also in this role, although the shape this protection would take remained vague: 'By conferring the vote upon married women their condition would be materially improved although *still economically dependent upon their husbands* (my italics)'.¹³⁸ Although he recognised that the countries that had granted women's suffrage had not seen great changes in either policy or legislation, he remained a firm believer in women's positive influence in politics. At present

We witness on every hand the effect of unchallenged male domination, arrogant armaments, harsh and unfeeling administration of the law... with the incoming of the mother element into politics this would be gradually changed.¹³⁹

A word of caution was expressed about the way in which it was often assumed that 'the women's vote was the outcome, simply and solely, of natural feeling and superior judgement'.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the consensus of opinion was that women needed the vote to look after their distinctive interests. Speaking at a Trafalgar Square demonstration on the Insurance

¹³⁷ J.K. Hardie, 'Women and Politics', in B. Villiers, *The Case for Women's Suffrage*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1907), pp. 80-1.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 81-2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 82-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 29 January 1909.

Bill, George Lansbury stated that this should not 'become law till the opinion of women has been taken at the polling booth'.¹⁴¹

More commonly, though, votes for women was proposed as enabling the state to benefit from women's particular brand of expertise. Snowden for example believed that having become full citizens women would provide a moral influence on public life.¹⁴² It was MacDonald, though, who developed most coherently this argument. He believed that the 'political' aim of socialism was to make 'available' to the State 'the social experience of all adults'.¹⁴³ In order to claim the vote, women had to demonstrate that their experience was different from men's; the burden of proof, thus, lying with women. MacDonald claimed that it was: women's expertise derived from the home. He considered that legislation was increasingly applying a 'family spirit' to the community as a whole, but this 'spirit' could not be 'interpreted and applied by man alone... For man is neither the creator nor the protector of the family. That has been the work of the woman'.¹⁴⁴

Occasionally, ILPers made use contemporaneously of a range of different arguments in support of women's claim for the vote. R.J. Campbell, for example, believed that most of the disabilities suffered by women had their roots in 'economic maladjustment',¹⁴⁵ and lamented married women's

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 21 July 1911. See also 2 December 1910.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 4 January 1907.

¹⁴³ MacDonald, *Socialism and Government*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 67-72. See also *Labour Leader*, 15 January 1909.

¹⁴⁵ Campbell, *Some Economic Aspects*, p. 2.

economic dependence on their husbands. He advocated wives' right to a share of the husband's wage, but warned: '... ladies, understand that as far as you are concerned it is never likely to be recognised until you have the vote'.¹⁴⁶ He then went on to deal with women as waged workers, '... unprotected, unorganised, and consequently ill-paid'. Uniquely, he urged acceptance of the fact that not only most young women had to find employment before marriage, and that an increasing number were demanding a career outside matrimony, but also that a woman 'may be one of the numerous class who prefer professional or business avocations to that of managing a household, though married...'.¹⁴⁷ He advocated equal pay for equal work, 'But such a remedy is not likely to do much until the women themselves are able to bring pressure to bear directly upon the legislature'.¹⁴⁸ He still considered, though, that men and women had different interests to safeguard and contributions to make. He asked why

The mothers of England, to whose hands is committed the principal care of the children in their early days, should not have a direct share in legislation which is having increasingly to do with the making and the maintaining of the home?¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 2-5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 9-10. See also R.J. Campbell, *Women's Suffrage and the Social Evil*, (Women's Freedom League, London, 1907), pp. 3-5, for Campbell's belief that equal wages would also solve the problem of prostitution.

¹⁴⁹ Campbell, *Some Economic Aspects*, pp. 5-6. See also Anon, 'What Socialism Means for Women', (ILP Leaflet no 11, London, 1908), Pamphlets

ILP men were not always blind to the realities of women's lives. Occasionally they acknowledged the latter's role as workers for wages outside the home and advocated their enfranchisement in order to improve their position in the labour market. Nevertheless, a belief in the distinctiveness of women's nature, and in particular their association with domesticity and the care of children remained practically universal. Such an association was not always necessarily a disempowering one. Women's political activities within the party, and the ways in which these were understood by male ILPers, show both the potentials and the limitations of such a role. An analysis of such understandings is essential in order to appreciate the attitudes of male ILPers towards women's suffrage (and in particular militant) activities.

Although to a large extent confined within the space of the women's page, women continued to contribute to the party press, particularly the *Labour Leader*.

They were always included among the party's speakers. These ranged from well-known national figures such as Katherine Bruce Glasier,¹⁵⁰ to others active within their locality. In April 1908, for example, a Miss Pemberton of Warrington addressed the St Helens ILP, and '... spoke with great feeling on behalf of the little children, and urged those present to a higher appreciation of the ballot as an instrument of reform'.¹⁵¹ Women active

and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

¹⁵⁰ See for example *Labour Leader*, 4 October 1907.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 24 April 1908.

both within the ILP and the suffrage movement regularly appeared as speakers, and by no means always addressed their audience on the issue of women's enfranchisement. In March 1908, for example, Charlotte Despard of the newly formed WFL lectured the Middlesbrough ILP on 'Art and ethics under socialism'.¹⁵² Nevertheless, according to 'S.D.S.',¹⁵³ women's function as speakers was different from men's. The former '... draw to our audience persons whom the mere man would never reach'.¹⁵⁴

Women's activities at branch level were, at least in theory, encouraged.¹⁵⁵ It is interesting to note, though, the extent to which women tended to form a separate group within branches: women's organisations existed at different times in connection with such widely different branches as the Bradford,¹⁵⁶ the Bermondsey¹⁵⁷ and the East Ham ILP.¹⁵⁸ Occasionally they were

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 13 March 1908. See also 25 September 1908.

¹⁵³ Possibly S.D. Shallard, who after abandoning the idea of a career in the Church, and after a spell of employment in the Woolwich Arsenal, had become a professional journalist and socialist lecturer. Edwards, (ed.), *The Labour Annual*, (1900), pp. 155-6. By July 1913 he was a member of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage. *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, July 1913.

¹⁵⁴ *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1906.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 2 April 1909. For a young woman's first hand experience of a male-dominated, but friendly London ILP branch in 1908, see T. Thompson, (ed.), *Dear Girl. The Diaries and Letters of Two Working Women 1897-1917*, (The Women's Press, London, 1987), pp. 123-4.

¹⁵⁶ 'Bradford ILP. Annual Report and Financial Statement for 1907', p. 9, Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

¹⁵⁷ 'Bermondsey ILP Members' Handbook, 1910-1', Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

¹⁵⁸ East Ham ILP Minutes, 3 February 1910; 10 February 1910, ILP Archive.

mentioned as having organised a demonstration or a meeting. For example, the Women's Committee of the Blackburn ILP in April 1908 organised a big demonstration in the new Princes Theatre,¹⁵⁹ while in September 1910 the Women's Mutual Improvement Class of the Bristol ILP held a meeting at which a Mrs. Higgins spoke on women's suffrage.¹⁶⁰

Much more often, they were reported as having organised branches' social events. In May 1906 for example the Ipswich ILP organised a social: 'The ladies superintended the refreshment department',¹⁶¹ and in January 1909 the Bow and Bromley ILP held a social and dance: 'Mrs. Banks and her fair assistants' had 'dispensed refreshments'.¹⁶² Women featured prominently also as organisers of bazaars and sales of work. The Colne Valley women organised a bazaar in April 1907¹⁶³ whilst the 'lady members' of Wishaw ILP held a candy sale in September 1908.¹⁶⁴ In 1910, an obviously sheepish East Ham ILP was forced to admit that it had taken no action in connection with the bazaar being organised to coincide with the Annual Conference: its solution was to ask 'the Ladies to meet... to make an effort

¹⁵⁹ *Labour Leader*, 10 April 1908.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 16 September 1910. See also 10 March 1911.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 1 June 1906.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 8 January 1909. See also 15 March 1907; 19 July 1907; 15 November 1909; 25 March 1910.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 12 April 1907.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 11 September 1908. See also 13 March 1908; 5 June 1908; 26 August 1910.

to do something...'.¹⁶⁵

Women were also given the opportunity of entering politics on their own account by standing for election in local government (although it must be stressed that women always remained very much a minority among Labour candidates). In 1907 Johnson expressed his concern to Snowden that the ILP was not 'taking sufficient notice of the act which enables women to run for Town Councils' and asked him to write a leaflet drawing attention to the issue.¹⁶⁶ A number of ILP women did, though, make use of their opportunities. In 1907 for example, a Mrs. Greenwood was elected as Hebden Bridge ILP's candidate for the Board of Guardians.¹⁶⁷ The year before she had been co-opted as 'lady member' of the Local Education Committee.¹⁶⁸ In 1907 Ethel Bentham was the ILP and LRC candidate for Newcastle Town Council.¹⁶⁹ Three years later, she was, with Margaret Bondfield, the ILP candidate for the London County Council elections.¹⁷⁰ Women were perceived as bringing their specific expertise to local government: 'the help of women is essential for the successful administration

¹⁶⁵ East Ham ILP Minutes, 3 February 1910; 10 February 1910, ILP Archive. See also Snell, *Men*, pp. 147-8.

¹⁶⁶ F. Johnson to P. Snowden 12 September 1907, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 4 October 1907.

¹⁶⁷ *Labour Leader*, 15 March 1907.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 29 June 1906.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 13 December 1907.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 11 March 1910. See also for example 22 February 1907; 22 March 1907; 26 March 1909.

of educational and other branches of the Council's work'.¹⁷¹

All the official posts within the party were open to women on the same basis as men. As Hardie proudly emphasized, 'Ours is the one political movement where women stand on terms of perfect equality with men'.¹⁷² A number of well-known, national figures were elected to the NAC, (although not to the posts of Chairman, secretary or treasurer) for example Katherine Bruce Glasier, Isabella Ford, Margaret MacMillan, Emmeline Pankhurst and Mary Macarthur, while women were also sent to the Annual Conference as delegates. Their contributions were seen as important in illustrating '... the value of having social and political subjects dealt with from the women's point of view as well as the men's'.¹⁷³ At a local level, there were instances of women being elected to official posts. In December 1906 Annie Cobden-Sanderson was elected Treasurer of the Metropolitan District Council¹⁷⁴, while in March 1907 Miss M. Prosser was elected secretary to the Gloucester ILP, Mrs. Parsons to the Kensal Rise ILP and Mrs. G.E. O'Dell to the North Kensington branch.¹⁷⁵ Four years later Miss

¹⁷¹ ILP Metropolitan District Council, *London County Council Election, 1907, Manifesto*, (William Sanders, London, n.d., c.1907), p. 3.

¹⁷² Hardie, *The ILP*, p. 12.

¹⁷³ *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1911. See also 13 April 1906; 5 April 1907. A number of male ILPers' autobiographies mentioned the role of women in the ILP. They concentrated, though, on the achievements of prominent women. See for example Clynes, *Memoirs*, pp. 101-2; Smillie, *My Life*, pp. 305-6.

¹⁷⁴ Metropolitan District Council of the ILP Minutes, 10 December 1906, ILP Archive.

¹⁷⁵ *Labour Leader*, 22 March 1907.

S. Leggatt was elected chairman of the Hammersmith ILP.¹⁷⁶ Overwhelmingly, though, official posts were dominated by men.

The establishment of the Women's Labour League (WLL) as a women's section of the Labour Party in 1906 led to considerable heart-searchings among male ILPers about the role which they considered women should play within the party.¹⁷⁷ The debate over the usefulness of such an organisation shows how both supporters and opponents saw women as making a distinctive contribution to the ILP. W. Holmes for example, the organising secretary of the Norwich ILP, doubted whether there was any need for a separate women's organisation, at the same time unwittingly showing that to some extent women already were a separate entity within the party. 'The ILP already admits women upon equal terms as men within the organisation, *and even sometime the contributions are smaller* (my italics)'. Women in Norwich organised their own meetings 'and we find them an invaluable aid in everything we do from a social gathering to an election'.¹⁷⁸ The WLL's supporters emphasized not only the League's educational function,¹⁷⁹ but also the importance of the contribution women could make to politics.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 24 March 1911. See also 23 March 1906.

¹⁷⁷ For the WLL, see Collette, *For Labour and for Women*; C.L. Collins, 'Women and Labour Politics in Britain, 1893-1932', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 1991).

¹⁷⁸ *Labour Leader*, 23 March 1906. Both the Hyde and the North Salford branches charged women lower subscriptions. Hyde ILP, 'Summer Syllabus, 1907'; North Salford ILP, 'Constitution and Rules, 1910', Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

¹⁷⁹ *Labour Leader*, 23 April 1909.

Presiding over the monthly meeting of the Central London Branch of the WLL, MacDonald emphasized the necessity 'for the feminine influence to be felt practically in the state... they must have an organisation of women as an expression of women's mind',¹⁸⁰ although he significantly added that '... every care would... be taken to guard against the dangers of separating for general purposes women's political activity from men's'.¹⁸¹ For Bruce Glasier, this was the crux of the question. Whilst he did not deprecate the establishment of women's organisations 'for their own special aims, the *Leader*, however sympathetic it may be to those aims, cannot subordinate the general socialist cause to any of them'.¹⁸² Assumptions about the roles of women in society, and in particular a belief in their distinctive, 'domestic' qualities, determined both opportunities for women's political activities, but also limited the contributions they could make.¹⁸³ In turn, these assumptions influenced attitudes towards suffrage militancy.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 22 January 1909.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 27 April 1906.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 23 March 1906. For a more positive assessment of the value of the WLL, see *Ibid*, 29 January 1909.

¹⁸³ See also Hannam, "In the Comradship of the Sexes", pp. 219-23. For a comparison with the opposition of women within the SDF, which in fact seems to have been remarkably similar to that of the ILP's, see Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, pp. 187-216.

3-2. 'THE DAWN OF THE NEW EPOCH OF WOMAN MILITANT'.

As Sandra Stanley Holton has shown, although by 1905 there were real differences between the NUWSS, a 'constitutional' society, and the 'militant' WSPU, both in terms of policy and of internal organisation, neither was a monolithic or static body.¹⁸⁴ For the next few years, male ILPers' attention focused on the actions of militants, but it should be stressed that as suffrage militancy took a number of different forms, attitudes varied accordingly. In October 1905, shortly before the general election, a Liberal meeting was organised in the Manchester Free Trade Hall, Winston Churchill and Sir Edward Grey being among the speakers. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney attempted from the audience to ask whether a Liberal government would introduce women's suffrage. After being ejected by stewards, Pankhurst committed a technical assault upon one of the policemen who were attempting to stop the two from holding a protest meeting outside the Hall. Both were arrested, and upon their refusal to pay a fine, were committed to short prison sentences. The events aroused considerable interest in the press, as well as among ILPers.¹⁸⁵

In the aftermath of the incident, male ILPers' attention focused on the WSPU's heckling of Liberal meetings, both during and in the aftermath of the 1906 general election. Party men were obviously aware that suffrage

¹⁸⁴ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 29-52.

¹⁸⁵ For the classic account of the WSPU's campaigns, albeit one hostile to Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst, see Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*.

activists were not the only hecklers present at political meetings. T. Russell Wallace positively characterised the heckler as ‘... an invaluable acquisition at electoral meetings. He is an almost invariable source of humour to the audience and the candidate’.¹⁸⁶ ILPers themselves were not always averse to interrupting political meetings. The Woolwich men, for example, were ‘famous for heckling’.¹⁸⁷

Reflecting rather more soberly on ‘the active part which women are taking in trying to wring from Ministers a party declaration in favour of women’s suffrage’, Bruce Glasier recognised that

Nothing is more unfortunate than the disturbance of a public meeting, and only stern necessity can justify it. What, in this case, were women to do? They have no votes, their letters asking for deputations to be received were left unanswered; their questions when sent up at the close of meetings were simply ignored... treated as outlaws, they acted as outlaws.¹⁸⁸

The actions of the hecklers were implicitly justified by defining them as a ‘token of freedom’¹⁸⁹ and their demands as ones for ‘elementary justice’.¹⁹⁰ These were contrasted both with the ‘disdain and contempt’

¹⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1906.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 12 January 1906. See also the heckling of Tariff Reformer ‘vanners’ years later, *ibid*, 10 January 1908.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 12 January 1906.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 29 December 1905.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 29 June 1906.

with which they were treated by the Liberal establishment¹⁹¹ and with the violence of which they were victims at Liberal meetings. The rough way in which Adela Pankhurst and Mary Gawthorpe were ‘brutally dragged’ out of the hall where Winston Churchill was speaking in February 1907 was emphasized by a *Labour Leader* editorial, which described their treatment as ‘cowardly and abominable’.¹⁹² Commenting on the Free Trade Hall incident in a letter to his sister, Bruce Glasier defined the whole episode as ‘... altogether shameful as the girls were most rudely and ungallantly handled’. He then added that

Many of us do not believe that the question is so all important as [Christabel Pankhurst]... and others believe it to be, but... we must stand by our own bairns, especially when they are good bairns, and acting solely from a sense of right...’¹⁹³

Support for the hecklers could also be expressed in more concrete ways. In December 1905, the ILPer Lindsay Martin was sitting behind WSPU members at a Liberal meeting in the Free Trade Hall. After Lord Coleridge and Thomas Shaw’s speeches the women had asked the usual questions about votes for women. The stewards immediately intervened, one of them exclaiming that he ‘would like to choke’ Flora Drummond, a prominent WSPU activist. When Martin protested at the man’s roughness, the steward

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 29 February 1905. See also 29 June 1906.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 8 February 1907. See also 29 December 1905; 29 June 1906.

¹⁹³ J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 20 October 1905, Glasier Papers. See also *Labour Leader*, 29 June 1906; 12 January 1906.

punched him twice in the face, 'cutting a deep wound above the eye, from which the blood flowed profusely'. The ILPer had to be taken to the infirmary to have his 'wound stitched and dressed'.¹⁹⁴

Two months later, another ILP man was involved in an incident at a Liberal meeting. After the Leeds socialist Walt Wood had attempted to ask a question about votes for women at the end of Asquith's meeting, he

... had a free fight with the stewards who tried to put him out. Mrs. Wood was also pulled down, but as Walt adds proudly 'not before she had broken her umbrella over three of their heads'.¹⁹⁵

When militant action shifted its focus to the House of Commons itself, the first reaction of ILPers was to justify this by using the same arguments they had urged in defence of the heckling of Liberal meetings. In February 1906, after a meeting in Caxton Hall, the suffrage activists sought admittance to the House of Commons. There they found that small groups were allowed in, while most had to wait outside in the cold. 'Some Labour men' joined the women outside, Snowden and Thorne being singled out by Isabella Ford as having been particularly helpful. The *Labour Leader* editor's comment about the whole episode was unambiguous: 'Gallantry - to say nothing of justice - towards women appears to shrivel up when women dare to show an

¹⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 15 December 1905.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 9 February 1906. See also 29 June 1906; 6 July 1906 for Councillor Morrissey's intervention and arrest at a Liberal meeting.

insurgent zeal for their rights...'.¹⁹⁶ At this stage, he called upon ILPers to restrain their criticisms of the WSPU's tactics. 'We do not wish to add to the already cruel weight of their task'.¹⁹⁷

When, in October of the same year, a number of suffrage activists attempted to hold a protest meeting in the lobby of Parliament, attitudes seem to have been rather more ambivalent. 'J.H.H.' described the scene with obvious embarrassment, if not hostility:

The demonstration was not perhaps calculated to impress the mind of Parliament with the real earnestness which underlies the movement in the country. The screams and gesticulations of some of the women seemed to arouse a feeling of cynicism among the legislators and onlookers.¹⁹⁸

In May, the suffragettes' protest in the Ladies' Gallery (when they feared that a suffrage resolution by Keir Hardie would be talked out) had already opened the WSPU to criticism. While steering away from outright condemnation, Bruce Glasier hinted his disapproval of the women's 'belief that their aggressive methods of agitation has more potency in it than some of their friends will allow...'.¹⁹⁹ Keir Hardie's attitude was more positive. He admitted that he had initially been angered by the women's actions.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 2 March 1906.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 30 March 1906.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 26 October 1906. But see also a more positive assessment by 'J.H.H.' in 16 November 1906.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 4 May 1906.

They had spoilt what he considered to be the resolution's good chances of being passed. Nevertheless, he perceived such actions to be the result of ignorance of Parliamentary procedure and the belief that the resolution had already been lost. He was more generous than Bruce Glasier in his assessment of the suffragettes' achievements. Suffrage was no longer treated with scorn and ridicule and 'the feeling in the country too, is different, and to the women whose action is being so indiscriminately condemned, is mainly due the credit for this'. Nevertheless, he ended his article by calling upon militants to change the focus of their campaign. Revealingly, he advocated (supposedly) masculine forms of political protest. 'Meetings, demonstrations, processions, all the machinery by which men are accustomed to put their claim forward, should be set in motion' to show that the demand for the vote was not confined to 'a few zealots', but had a mass following.²⁰⁰

By 1907, the suffragettes' 'raids' on Parliament were only occasionally mentioned by the party press, always without comment. As late as 1910, though, protesting in Parliament against the government's refusal to grant further facilities for the Conciliation Bill, Hardie blamed the resumption of violence outside the House upon the Government's attitude. He pointed out that 'Women are again being knocked about by the police', and countered accusations that the suffrage activists were behaving in an 'unladylike' manner by emphasizing that they were 'in earnest'. 'They are being treated with a good deal of contempt to which no other section of the community

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 4 May 1906. See also 1 June 1906; 19 June 1908.

would submit if applied to them'.²⁰¹ The attempts by the WSPU in 1906 to obtain interviews with the Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Herbert Asquith, were also noted by the *Labour Leader* without comment, other than references to the women's indifference to 'advice or approbation of every description'.²⁰² However, at a local level, there were instances of more direct intervention. In July 1906 the Watford branch passed and forwarded to the Prime Minister a resolution protesting against the sentence passed on the three suffragettes, Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Sparborough and Annie Kenney, who had attempted to interview Asquith.²⁰³ Resolutions of sympathy were also passed by the Deptford, Leeds, Leicester, and other branches.²⁰⁴ Privately, Bruce Glasier cynically commented that

It was... a great stroke of luck for the women to get locked up. It saved the movement from a storm of contempt and anger. The rowdy tactics will... turn public sympathy against the movement.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Hansard Commons Debates, 18 November 1910, 5th series, vol. 20, cols 142-3. See also *ibid*, 7 November 1906, 4th series, vol. 164, cols 171-2.

²⁰² *Labour Leader*, 16 March 1906. See also 22 June 1906.

²⁰³ London Central Council of WSPU to H. Bryan, n.d.; *ibid*, 6 July 1906, Watford ILP Correspondence Files; Watford Branch Minutes, 11 July 1906, all Herbert Bryan Papers, (H.B. Papers), ILP Archive.

²⁰⁴ *Labour Leader*, 20 July 1906. See also 29 June 1906; 6 July 1906.

²⁰⁵ J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 2 November 1906, Glasier Papers.

Nevertheless, in Parliament ILP MPs, and in particular Hardie and Snowden, asked the Home Secretary to intervene and reduce the sentences of the three suffragettes, as well as of Teresa Billington and others who had been condemned to two months' imprisonment for a disturbance outside the Chancellor's house.²⁰⁶ In Billington's case, Hardie emphasized that the sentence imposed had been out of proportion to the offence committed, which he minimised. He pointed out that the suffragettes' attitude had been 'peaceable'.²⁰⁷ In the case of Mrs. Sparborough, Mrs. Knight and Annie Kenney, it was pointed out that one of the women was sixty four years' old, 'and of very respectable character'.²⁰⁸

After these 1906 incidents, little more interest was shown by male ILPers (at least at a 'national' level) in this type of militant activity. This was not, though, necessarily an expression of disapproval for such actions. There certainly was in 1906 a cooling of relations between ILP and WSPU, but this was caused by the adoption of an electoral policy of opposition to all government candidates and of neutrality towards all others, including Labour Party ones. This policy had already been acted upon during the by-election at Eye, in Suffolk, in April 1906. Flora Drummond had made clear her

²⁰⁶ See also Middlesbrough ILP Minutes, 22 June 1906, Cleveland County Archives, Middlesbrough. I am grateful to Claire Eustance for sharing her research on the Middlesbrough ILP.

²⁰⁷ Hansard Commons Debates, 21 June 1906, 4th series, vol. 159, cols 461-2.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 5 July 1906, 4th series, vol. 160, cols 232-3.

intention to oppose Pearson, the Liberal candidate.²⁰⁹ No Labour candidate was selected, and Bruce Glasier could patronisingly commend the WSPU's 'pluck'. He did not doubt that

... the greatly reduced Liberal vote was in some measure due... to the effects of their propaganda. The women in this matter are taking a leaf out the early electoral history of our Socialist movement.²¹⁰

The situation at the Cockermouth by-election in the Summer of 1906 was, on the other hand, quite different. Here Robert Smillie, the Scottish miners' leader,²¹¹ stood as Labour candidate in a three-cornered contest, but Christabel Pankhurst and Teresa Billington, despite still being at that stage members of the ILP, refused to support him. Rather, they directed their campaign against the Liberal candidate, and maintained a position of neutrality towards both the Labour and the Tory candidates.²¹² For ILPers the immediate issue at stake was one of party loyalty.

ILPers were quite aware of the value of women's work for the party at election time. They addressed meetings, canvassed, undertook clerical and registration work. During the general election of 1906, WSPU members had

²⁰⁹ *Labour Leader*, 6 April 1906.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 13 April 1906.

²¹¹ In 1908 he was elected vice-president, and in 1912 president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. Smillie, *My Life*; Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. III, pp. 165-73.

²¹² *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906; 3 August 1906. See also 10 August 1906; 17 August 1906; 24 August 1906.

been among those who worked for ILP candidates: Emmeline Pankhurst for example campaigned in Merthyr for Hardie²¹³ and Billington in Blackburn for Snowden.²¹⁴ ILPers' unmistakably aggrieved tone at the WSPU's Cocker-mouth activities is not therefore surprising, although the suffragettes' right to decide their own electoral policy was not openly questioned. The issue at stake was whether the course they had adopted was compatible with membership of the party.

The *Labour Leader* editor considered that it was for 'the party' to decide 'How far... women or men who oppose our candidates, or even remain neutral, are entitled to be regarded as loyal members of our party...'.²¹⁵ The ILP persevered with its taunts at Liberal women for allowing their emancipation to be subordinated to party interests. According to Hardie, after the extension of the franchise to a number of men in 1884, many women 'foolishly deserted their own movement and became mere party politicians', and as a result, 'their claim for enfranchisement disappeared almost entirely from the political arena'.²¹⁶ These criticisms were not, though, seen as applicable to the ILP.

Male ILPers continued to emphasise their commitment to votes for

²¹³ E. Pankhurst to J.K. Hardie, 12 January 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²¹⁴ T. Billington to F. Johnson, 16 January 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²¹⁵ *Labour Leader*, 10 August 1906. See also 17 August 1906; 24 August 1906; 21 December 1906.

²¹⁶ Hardie, 'Women and Politics', pp. 78-9. See also *Labour Leader*, 29 December 1905; 19 January 1906; 3 December 1909.

women.²¹⁷ Smillie himself claimed in a letter to the *Labour Leader* that during the election he had spoken in favour of ‘adult suffrage [and] the extension of the franchise to women’.²¹⁸ ILP men also self-righteously emphasized, as Henry Brockhouse did in a letter to the *Labour Leader*, that ‘We of the ILP are genuinely advocating the claims of women, and whatever the action of the WSPU we will continue to agitate for their cause’.²¹⁹ Rather more sourly, and in contrast to the paper’s comments in the aftermath of the Eye by-election, it was also emphasized that the militants’ activities had little impact upon the electorate. According to Bruce Glasier, ‘The male electors are not unless they have come under the influence of Socialistic teaching highly enthusiastic about giving the women the vote’.²²⁰

The extent of the party’s disapproval of the WSPU’s electoral policy can be seen by the fact that on 25 August a meeting of the Manchester and Salford ILP decided by ninety votes to three that Christabel Pankhurst and Teresa Billington had ‘acted in a manner hostile to the cause of Independent Labour in the Cocker mouth Electoral contest’. It consequently requested ‘the

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 10 August 1908. See also 7 December 1906; 11 January 1907.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 24 August 1906.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 18 January 1907. See also 10 August 1906; 11 January 1907.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 10 August 1906. See also 30 November 1906; 7 December 1906; 11 January 1907. Uneasiness over by-election policy manifested itself not only in relation to the WSPU. A suggestion was made in 1907 that suffrage societies should support J.E. Raphael, the Liberal candidate and Men’s League member, at the forthcoming by-election in Croydon. In response, T. Bayard Simmons, secretary of the Croydon ILP, and Men’s League member, urged the League to maintain its position of neutrality. *Women’s Franchise*, 21 November 1907.

branches of the party of which they are members to demand their immediate resignation'.²²¹ The two suffrage activists, though, obviously enjoyed considerable support within their own branch, Manchester Central.²²² At a meeting on 4 September, which Sam Robinson described as 'the largest and most representative meeting of the Central Branch yet held... attended by men and women whose names are revered in the... movement', Christabel Pankhurst refused to guarantee that there would be no repetition of the Cocker-mouth tactics.²²³ Nevertheless, a resolution was carried by nineteen to eight (or, according to Robinson, nineteen to five)²²⁴ that 'the two members have simply endeavoured to carry out the immediate extension of the franchise to women, which is included in the official programme of the party'.²²⁵

Nonetheless, it is clear that this branch was far from united behind the two suffragettes, and even those who supported them were less than happy about the turn of events. Richard Robinson characterised some of the WSPU's tactics as 'unwise' and made no attempt to defend their conduct at

²²¹ *Labour Leader*, 31 August 1906; W. Fallows to F. Johnson, 3 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²²² Bruce Glasier acidly described the branch as 'virtually a family affair'. J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 7 September 1906, Glasier Papers.

²²³ S. Robinson to F. Johnson, 20 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.* See also *Labour Leader*, 7 September 1906; F.C. Toulmin to F. Johnson, 9 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive; Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 4 September 1906; 26 February 1907.

Cockermouth, but ultimately supported them because 'They are engaged in advocating a cause which is just and a righteous one, without which socialism itself will have a much harder struggle to win'.²²⁶ George Benson, on the other hand, after describing himself as '... well known to some of the leaders of the WSPU as a supporter of their cause', declared his disagreement with their election policy, and hoped '... that they will see that it is inconsistent with membership of the ILP'.²²⁷ The Manchester Central decision did not end the question. On 22 September the Manchester and Salford ILP met again, and restated its belief that Pankhurst and Billington's behaviour during the Cockermouth by-election had been 'disloyal to the constitution and inimical to the interests of the Party', and, as such, inconsistent with their membership to the party. This time, though, it appealed to the NAC to decide on the issue.²²⁸ Eventually, at the end of October a NAC meeting decided after 'a lengthy discussion' that

... we regret that a policy of neutrality towards... [Smillie's] candidature should have been pursued by certain women

²²⁶ *Labour Leader*, 31 August 1906. See also 21 September 1906.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 14 September 1906.

²²⁸ F.C. Toulmin to F. Johnson, 9 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive; *Labour Leader*, 28 September 1906. See also S. Robinson to F. Johnson, 20 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive, for a criticism of the tactics adopted at the meeting by the WSPU's opponents, among whom he singled out 'official representatives of the *Leader*'. The WSPU's by-election policy led to considerable controversy also for example within the Middlesbrough branch, where, after a number of turbulent meetings, Marion Coates Hansen, the branch's organising secretary and member of the Union, resigned. (Although she was re-elected barely a week later). Middlesbrough ILP Minute Book, 17 August 1906; 8 October 1906; 15 October 1906.

members of the ILP but deprecates any further action being taken in connection with the incident... we wish to clearly state that we regard loyalty to the constitution and policy of the Party as essential.²²⁹

On the whole this was a rather mild reprimand, which quite clearly stopped short of endorsing the expulsion of the two women from the party, although only a month earlier Bruce Glasier had privately expressed his belief that Mrs. Pankhurst would have to choose between resigning or facing expulsion.²³⁰ Despite the NAC's moderation, there is no sign that it acceded to the request made by Isabella Ford and Margaret McMillan, by then a well-known child welfare reformer, to pass a resolution declaring that the views of all ILP candidates on the issue of women's suffrage would be 'clearly ascertained' before their candidature would be endorsed.²³¹

The issue of the WSPU's by-election policy was once more brought up at the 1907 conference. A resolution was moved by F.B. Maynard, the South-West Ham representative, (who stated that ILPers wished 'to treat the women not as "angels" but as "comrades"') and seconded by Walthamstow's Paul

²²⁹ NAC Minutes, 26, 27 October 1906, ILP Archive. Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst resigned from the ILP in September 1907. Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 17 September 1907.

²³⁰ J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 14 September 1906, Glasier Papers. According to Bruce Glasier, Hardie agreed that WSPU members would have to separate from the ILP, although unlike Glasier, he much regretted the necessity. J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 27 September 1906, Glasier Papers. See also J.K. Hardie to J. Bruce Glasier, 16 May 1908, Glasier Papers.

²³¹ I.O. Ford and M. McMillan to F. Johnson, 28 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 119.

Campbell, which condemned the WSPU's conduct as 'detrimental to the party' and declared that 'loyalty to the constitution and policy of the party is an essential condition of membership'. At this point, Margaret McMillan 'rose to bring a message of peace and goodwill from some of the women who were prominent in the great movement'. Although she made no criticism of the WSPU, she committed herself, Charlotte Despard, Annie Cobden-Sanderson, Ethel Snowden and Isabella Ford to take part in elections only in support of the Labour Party. As chairman of the conference, MacDonald then suggested that in view of this message, the resolution might be withdrawn. At this point, though, Emmeline Pankhurst stood up and 'disclaimed all connection with the declaration made by Miss McMillan'. She emphasized that the WSPU would continue with its policy of opposing the Liberal Party. She believed that the vote would be obtained '... by putting pressure on the present government', and added that 'If you think my conduct inconsistent with my membership I will resign'. As a result, Maynard refused to withdraw his resolution, but the conference nevertheless with 'chivalrous considerateness'²³² voted the previous question 'by an overwhelming majority'.²³³

It seems clear that by the time of the 1907 conference a cleavage had appeared among ILP women, with one group deciding to fight for their enfranchisement through the Labour Party and the other committing itself to a tactical neutrality. Divisions of course were not always so clear-cut.

²³² *Labour Leader*, 5 April 1907.

²³³ ILP Conference Report, 1907, pp. 47-8.

Isabella Ford, for example, changed priorities for the time being, and gave precedence to her suffrage work. This, though, did not entail her permanent withdrawal from the labour movement.²³⁴ The vote in favour of the previous question at the 1907 conference seems to indicate a desire to gloss over such differences, but these were destined to re-emerge the very next day. The occasion was the Standing Orders Committee's recommendation that the Conference should send a telegram stating its support 'to the women imprisoned for their fidelity to the cause of sex equality' and expressing 'the hope that their self-sacrificing efforts may be crowned with success'. On the one hand, Bruce Glasier protested against the sending of a telegram which 'virtually committed the ILP to the policy of the Women's Political Union... He was all for the women's cause, but not for the Women's Political Union'. On the other hand, Hardie called upon the Conference to be magnanimous, reminding it that a large proportion of the women who were about to leave prison were members of the ILP. He sidestepped the issue of tactics, and urged the party to express its '... appreciation for those who have the courage to go to prison in support of what they believe to be right'. Eventually, despite Hardie's calls for unanimity, the Conference voted to send the telegram by 181 votes to 60.²³⁵

The issue of the WSPU's electoral policy was the source of considerable debate in the Summer of 1906 also among the ILP's local branches. 'Much heated discussion' took place at a meeting of the Glasgow City ILP. The

²³⁴ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 119-23.

²³⁵ ILP Conference Report, 1907, pp. 55-7.

members were almost equally divided between those who condemned the suffragettes' tactics and those who justified them, and eventually it was decided to ask the NAC why they had endorsed a candidate like Smillie, 'who was well known to be hostile to the Women's Enfranchisement Bill'.²³⁶ The Battersea branch refused to endorse the demand for the expulsion of the two suffragettes, and 'deprecated any action calculated to weaken our ranks and alienate the women workers'.²³⁷ The attitude of the majority of the branches was, though, rather less sympathetic towards the WSPU. The Woolwich ILP, for example, expressed the opinion that Pankhurst, Billington and Mrs. Hansen 'do not endorse the methods of the ILP', and as such 'are not qualified to remain members of the party'.²³⁸ The Deptford ILP called upon the NAC to publicly disassociate the party from the WSPU, and to ask Pankhurst and Billington to resign, 'failing which, that they be expelled'.²³⁹

The WSPU was not deflected, though, from its anti-government election policy. The secession from the WSPU in 1907 of Edith How Martyn, Charlotte Despard, Teresa Billington and others, eventually to form the Women's Freedom League, (WFL) caused a brief flurry of interest among

²³⁶ A. Swan to F. Johnson, 16 August 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²³⁷ H. Lavender to F. Johnson, 21 August 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²³⁸ J. Newman to F. Johnson, 1 September 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²³⁹ J.T. Oliver to F. Johnson, 2 September 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also the resolutions from Fulham, A. Garland to F. Johnson, 25 August 1906; Kingston (Glasgow), P. Connell to F. Johnson, 3 September 1906; Walthamstow, R.E. Dick to F. Johnson, 25 September 1906, all F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

male ILPers. It was believed that the creation of a new organisation arose not only from a disagreement over the WSPU's internal democracy, but also from a desire to support Labour candidates at elections.²⁴⁰ To this belief some ILPers clung even after it was strongly denied by the women concerned. The claim was made that '... we know of many hitherto members of the WSPU who are resolved to work definitely with the ILP...'.²⁴¹

Despite such convictions, by 1907 WSPU and WFL activities could only produce a rapidly declining interest within the male section of the party. In 1906 there were still indications that the WSPU was to some extent operating within the context of the labour movement. As Emmeline Pankhurst explicitly stated in a letter, 'to secure votes for women is our first objective, but all our members take part in the general work of the Socialist movement'.²⁴² In May, the WSPU organised a contingent of five or six hundred women marshalled by Annie Kenney to join a demonstration by the unemployed in Hyde Park.²⁴³ But by 1907, these indications had also ceased.²⁴⁴

This by no means signifies a cessation of interest for women's suffrage as

²⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 20 September 1907.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 27 September 1907.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 6 April 1906.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 18 May 1906. See also 8 June 1906; 10 August 1906.

²⁴⁴ This shift on the part of the WSPU is usually seen as a sign of Emmeline, and especially Christabel Pankhurst's 'incipient Toryism'. It can also be understood as an attempt to create an independent, 'woman-centred' movement, away from the masculine constrictions of the ILP's socialism.

a whole on the part of ILP men. At election times, for example, if the interest in the activities of WSPU and WFL was minimal, emphasis was placed on the support received by Labour candidates from other suffrage organisations. Already at the Huddersfield by-election of November 1906 ‘if less exciting, certainly no less earnest and persuasive than the emissaries of the WSPU, were the speakers of the Lancashire and Cheshire Women’s Labour Representation Committee’, who, unlike the militants, supported T. Russell Williams, the Labour Party candidate, and a member of the NAC.²⁴⁵

The radical suffragists were not the only ones who supported Labour candidates. When George Barnes contested Jarrow on June 1907, for example, he received the support of the North-East Society for Women’s Suffrage.²⁴⁶ According to F.J. Shaw

The Society, containing... members from all parties, is taking a very independent line in politics, and is willing to support the best man from the vital point of view of the political equality of the sexes, irrespective of other considerations...²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 30 November 1906; ILP Conference Report, 1907, p. 20. See also *Labour Leader*, 29 November 1907 for their support of Holmes at the West Hull by-election.

²⁴⁶ A society affiliated to the NUWSS.

²⁴⁷ *Labour Leader*, 21 June 1907. See also 28 June 1907; 5 July 1907. For other examples, see 24 April 1908; 5 November 1909. At this stage, the NUWSS’ policy was to support the ‘best friend’ of women’s suffrage. This most often resulted in support being given to the Liberal candidate. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 32-3.

At one level, then, the conflict which the WSPU's election policy had generated was resolved by distancing the ILP from the suffrage organisation and its activities, while maintaining intact the party's commitment to votes for women. As MacDonald pointedly emphasized,

there are loyal members of our party who are as keen suffragists as any who come from the provinces, with their railway fees and housekeeping bills paid, in order that they may go to gaol. But they believe that our Labour Party is to get them the suffrage; they cling to our Labour Party; they trust our Labour Party.²⁴⁸

At a more subtle level, though, it seems clear that a solution was not to be achieved so easily: the controversy over electoral policy had simply exposed a more serious, and unresolved tension about the place of women's suffrage within ILP ideology.

Throughout the period under consideration, voices were raised which emphasized that the achievement of women's emancipation in general, and suffrage in particular were an essential first step towards the establishment of a socialist society. According to John Edwards, 'We cannot accomplish socialism without the help of women, and their help is useless unless it be given on a basis of equality'.²⁴⁹ This was also Hardie's position. The aftermath of the Cocker mouth controversy shows how considerably his

²⁴⁸ *Labour Leader*, 12 April 1907. See also J.R. MacDonald to M.E. MacDonald, n.d. c. December 1910, Ramsay MacDonald Papers.

²⁴⁹ *Labour Leader*, 11 February 1910. See also 15 January 1909; 19 August 1910.

position had changed from his earlier dismissal of 'political' reforms. He called upon the WSPU to change its electoral policy in order to be able to support Labour candidates, secure in his belief that on its part Labour should continue to work for suffrage because 'the vote is a weapon which can be used with effect in changing the conditions under which men and women alike suffer under the present system...'.²⁵⁰ The enfranchisement of all adults, both men and women, was 'a necessary preliminary to the coming of Socialism'.²⁵¹

For others, though, the choice was not so simple. Many saw suffrage and socialism not as all part of the same cause, but as separate issues. And however supportive they were of suffrage, their first priority was never in doubt.

We have already seen Bruce Glasier's fear of the subordination of the socialist cause to 'women's interests' in relation to the formation of the WLL. At the same time, he had been protesting against the suggestion that women should temporarily put aside all other political work to concentrate on the suffrage campaign. He emphasized the ILP's commitment to women's suffrage, but

... our first cause is Socialism, vote or no vote, and... we have no more faith in women's enfranchisement than in men's apart

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 21 December 1906. See also J.K. Hardie to J. Bruce Glasier, 11 May 1908, Glasier Papers.

²⁵¹ J.K. Hardie, *Socialism and Civilisation*, (The Christian Commonwealth Co., London, n.d., c.1910), p. 5.

from the regenerative light and power of Socialism.²⁵²

Behind accusations of disloyalty lay a belief that the WSPU had in fact decided to prioritise women's suffrage. J. Smith from Stockton took the opportunity in a letter to emphasize that there were '... half a dozen questions crying louder for our immediate attention than does women's enfranchisement'.²⁵³ Smith was an adult suffragist, but we can find the supporter of equal suffrage Bruce Glasier also grappling with the same question of priorities. According to him, the WSPU was willing to sacrifice the interests of the Labour Party and of the ILP for the sake of the vote, and there was no reason why they should not do so again 'for some other policy' once they had obtained the vote.²⁵⁴ Privately, he expressed his ambivalence even more openly. He considered that 'the giving of the vote will not help socialism', although it would compel socialist speakers 'to appeal more to the domestic side of things, which will be a good thing in its way'.²⁵⁵

If votes for women were not necessarily seen as part of the socialist advance, an independent suffrage movement could easily be perceived as a threat, or at best a distraction, and the refusal on the part of a number of prominent party women such as Despard and Cobden-Sanderson to

²⁵² *Labour Leader*, 23 March 1906. See also 3 January 1908.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 17 August 1908.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 10 August 1906. See also 7 December 1906.

²⁵⁵ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 6 February 1907, Glasier Papers.

contribute to ILP funds until they had been enfranchised, would only have fuelled fears further.²⁵⁶

It remains to be seen in what ways this translated itself in attitudes towards the activities of suffrage organisations after the summer of 1906. Just before the Cockermouth by-election, Dora Montefiore's refusal to pay her taxes until women had been granted the vote was welcomed in positive terms by the *Labour Leader*. 'In this, as in other tactical efforts, the women, while provoking the scorn of the 'worldlings' are undoubtedly winning the way to victory'.²⁵⁷ After this date, though, the work of organisations such as the Tax Resistance League²⁵⁸ was hardly noticed by the paper, except for brief mentions of the refusal Alice Clark, Quaker granddaughter of John Bright and business woman, to pay her income tax²⁵⁹ and of the Inland Revenue's threats to prosecute Charlotte Despard for non-payment of her taxes.²⁶⁰

Perhaps even more remarkably, considering the space this is usually given in accounts of suffrage militancy, militants' destruction of property also received very little attention. In the first *Labour Leader* issue of July 1908 it was mentioned that two members of the WSPU, Mary Leigh and Edith New, had been condemned to two months' imprisonment for breaking two

²⁵⁶ M. McGilchrist to F. Johnson, 10 February 1909; C. Despard to T.D. Benson, 21 June 1910; A. Cobden-Sanderson to T.D. Benson, 26 June 1910, all F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²⁵⁷ *Labour Leader*, 1 June 1906. See also 20 July 1906.

²⁵⁸ Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p. 155.

²⁵⁹ *Labour Leader*, 22 March 1907.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 1 July 1910.

of Asquith's windows with stones.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, the news was overshadowed by an event which had occurred three months earlier, when three men active in the unemployed agitation had been convicted to twelve months in jail for breaking the plate glass window of a large Manchester warehouse.²⁶²

It was not the suffrage, but the unemployed agitation which led ILPers to question the role of violence against property within a political agitation, with its possible justifications, and the limitations of 'constitutional' methods of protest for those outside the conventional norms of 'citizenship'.²⁶³

All this does not, though, mean that ILP men completely ignored militancy after 1907. Rather, they devoted attention to it when it appeared in forms they could find acceptable. First of all, militants were supported when it was felt that their 'rights' were being denied. For example, the treatment of militants as ordinary misdemeanants, rather than as political prisoners, eligible for the privileges of the first class division, aroused ILPers' indignation.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 3 July 1908. See for example 28 August 1908; 19 November 1909; 28 January 1910. Initially, window-breaking was undertaken to protest against the refusal to grant suffrage prisoners political status. It was then discovered that such a tactic ensured a speedy arrest. More serious attacks on property began in 1909 as a protest against forcible feeding. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, p. 47.

²⁶² *Labour Leader*, 3 April 1908. This of course suggests that the suffragettes were emulating the agitation by the unemployed. Another interesting detail is the fact that the men had made use of a bottle attached to a piece of string. The string is, of course, usually associated with the suffragettes, and their 'feminine' concern not to hurt anybody.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 3 April 1908; 28 August 1908; 30 October 1908; 28 May 1910.

Speaking in Cardiff in the Autumn of 1908, Hardie emphasized that ‘A strong distinction should be made in every civilised country between the ordinary felon and the political agitator’.²⁶⁴ According to Bruce Glasier the suffragettes, ‘by the whole circumstance of their agitation, ought to be accorded the least degrading treatment’.²⁶⁵ ILP MPs, particularly Hardie and Snowden, remained assiduous in asking Parliamentary questions on this issue.²⁶⁶ The treatment of suffragettes was compared with that of the Jameson raiders, who had been granted the privileges associated with first class status,²⁶⁷ and of political prisoners in Ireland.²⁶⁸ In July 1909 they took up the defence of suffragettes imprisoned in Holloway who refused to obey prison regulations until they were treated as political offenders. They brought to the Home Secretary’s attention the prisoners’ demands, and questioned him about the punishments meted out upon the women for insubordination. Snowden emphasized that the women were not ‘afraid of the rigour of imprisonment... they demand to be treated as first-class

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 13 November 1908.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 21 February 1908. See also 2 November 1906; 20 November 1908.

²⁶⁶ Hansard Commons Debates, 30 January 1908, 4th series, vol. 183, cols 359-60; 28 October 1908, 4th series, vol. 195, col. 274; 22 July 1909, vol. 8, col. 611.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 31 October 1906, 4th series, vol. 163, col. 1109; 4 November 1908, 4th series, vol. 195, cols 1211-2.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 4 August 1909, vol. 8, col. 1915.

prisoners on principle'.²⁶⁹ In July 1909 the NAC as a whole also passed a resolution calling upon the government to grant suffrage prisoners first class treatment.²⁷⁰

ILPers also tended to come to militants' defence when they were seen to have been victimised, particularly by physical assaults. Thus, forcible feeding, when first imposed upon the hunger-striking prisoners at Winson Green gaol in Birmingham, was defined without hesitation as 'torture',²⁷¹ a 'horrible outrage, beastly outrage',²⁷² although privately Bruce Glasier confessed that 'I hardly see what the prison officials are to do with these women'.²⁷³ Hardie emphasized the violence inflicted upon the bodies of the prisoners. He painted a vivid picture of

5, 6, or 8 strong warders struggling with one helpless and weak woman, fixing tubes in her nostrils, and pumping food into her. Does not manhood revolt at such treatment?²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 4 August 1909, vol. 8, cols 1913-6. See also ibid, 14 July 1909, vol. 7, col. 2033; 21 July 1909, vol. 8, cols 507-9, 587; 29 July 1909, vol. 8, col. 1350.

²⁷⁰ *Labour Leader*, 30 July 1909. See also 28 February 1908; 9 July 1909; 16 July 1909; 30 July 1909 A. Cobden Sanderson to J.K. Hardie, 29 August 1909, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive; Hansard Commons Debates, 29 June 1909, vol. 7, col. 232; 30 June 1909, vol. 7, cols 392-4; 1 July 1909, vol. 7, cols 609-10, for ILPers' support of the suffragettes' 'right' to petition the Prime Minister.

²⁷¹ *Labour Leader*, 1 October 1909.

²⁷² Hansard Commons Debates, 27 September 1909, vol. 11, col. 924.

²⁷³ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 28 September 1909, Glasier Papers.

²⁷⁴ *Labour Leader*, 1 October 1909.

In Parliament, he first of all emphasized the 'trivial' nature of the offences which had been committed by the suffragettes who were being force-fed: 'they are instances of an everyday occurrence in connection with political meetings'. He then called upon the government to change its policy in the name of 'humanity' and of that 'chivalry which has hitherto supposed to characterise the dealings of men and women'. It was his belief that 'It must be revolting to any man... to reflect that women... are being subjected to the indignity which forcible feeding implies'.²⁷⁵ Between September and December 1909 Hardie and Snowden in particular, regularly asked questions in Parliament on the issue. They enquired after the state of health of the prisoners,²⁷⁶ asked what kind of procedures were being followed, what hygienic arrangements were made,²⁷⁷ whether all prisoners were medically examined²⁷⁸ and what kind of restraints were imposed.²⁷⁹ They brought to the Home Secretary's attention medical opinion emphasizing the dangers to health of forcible feeding.²⁸⁰ Such intense concern was not always viewed approvingly within the ILP. Among the resolutions sent in for

²⁷⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 5 November 1909, vol. 12, col. 2173.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 28 September 1909, vol. 11, col. 1093; 30 September 1909, vol. 11, col. 1427; 1 December 1909, vol. 13, col. 500.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 7 October 1909, vol. 11, cols 2184-5.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 27 October 1909, vol. 12, cols 1001-3.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 1 October 1909, vol. 11, cols 1636-7; 5 October 1909, vol. 11, col. 1849.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 4 October 1909, vol. 11, cols 1652-3; 6 October 1909, vol. 11, cols 1999-2001. See also 28 October 1909, vol. 12, col. 1180; 1 November 1909, vol. 12, col. 1432.

consideration at the first annual conference of the Division Number Six in 1909, was one from North Lambeth, which called upon the Conference to

look with disfavour on the action of our Comrades Keir Hardie and Philip Snowden in occupying valuable time in the House of Commons looking after the interests of the suffragettes fed by force; seeing that unemployment is so great and a standing disgrace to a Christian country, they should make this of primary importance and attend to the interests of those thousands of women and children who require feeding otherwise than by force.

Eventually, the previous question was called both the resolution and to an amendment which congratulated the Labour Party for its sympathetic attitude towards the women's franchise agitation,²⁸¹ a common strategy to deal with divisive issues.

Male ILPers protested also against the violence to which suffrage activists were subjected both by the police and by 'mobs'. After a great number of militants were injured in November 1910, ('Black Friday') while trying to deliver a petition to the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, ILPers protested strongly against police brutality. A parallel was drawn with recent events in striking mining communities in South Wales. Here the police were accused of assaulting peaceful crowds.²⁸² Both in the case of miners and

²⁸¹ ILP No 6 Divisional Conference Agenda, 1909, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

²⁸² *Labour Leader*, 18 November 1911; Hansard Commons Debates, 24 November 1910, 5th series, vol. 20, col. 390; 1 March 1911, 5th series, vol. 22, col. 367. See also *Labour Leader*, 19 February 1909; Hansard Commons Debates, 13 February 1907, 4th series, vol. 169, col. 272.

of suffragettes, the Home Secretary was criticised for refusing to undertake an enquiry into allegations of excessive violence, as urged both by Hardie and Snowden (Figure 42).²⁸³

Despite these parallels, it is worth noting that in the case of suffragettes, what was alleged was not only a violent assault upon their bodies, but also an 'indecent' one.

The police... looked on while members of the deputation - some of them ladies well advanced in years - were being subjected to all kinds of rough handling and indecent treatment by the young hooligans in the crowd.²⁸⁴

Concern over the safety of the suffragettes was emphasized as overriding any difference in policy between militants and ILP. In July 1906, the WSPU had organised a mass demonstration in Manchester's Boggart Hole Clough, which 'several organised groups of hooligans' had managed to disrupt. Bruce Glasier observed that in the general confusion '... many of the women were ill-used, and... but for the arrival of rescue bodyguards of Socialist men several of the women would have been infamously assaulted...'. This had been '... an incident which will rouse and rally the Socialist manhood of Lancashire' and concluded that despite differences of opinion over suffragette tactics, it was 'the duty of Socialists to protect... the inviolability

²⁸³ *Labour Leader*, 10 March 1911. See also 17 March 1911.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 25 November 1910. See also 3 March 1911.

BURKING ENQUIRY!

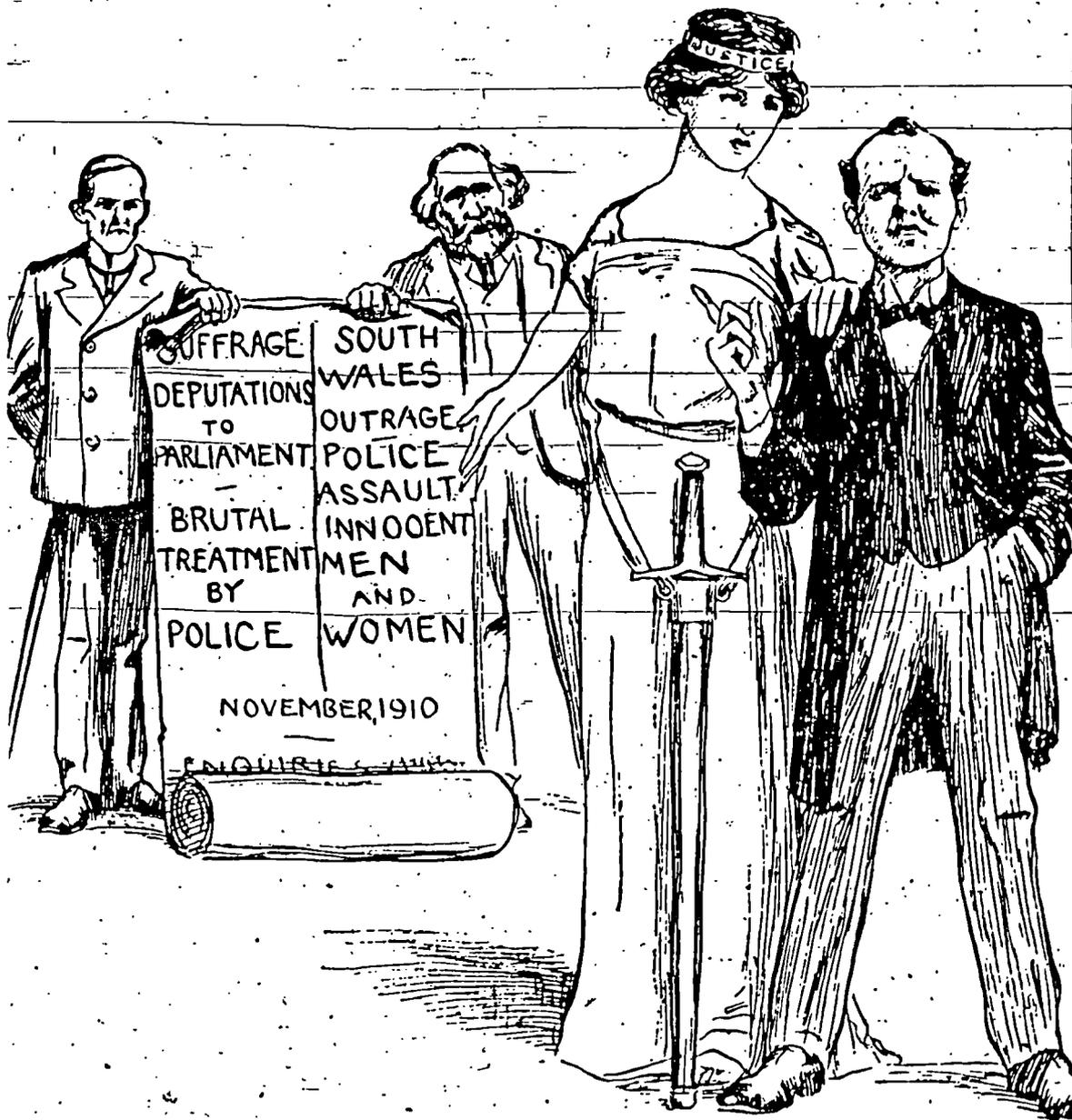


FIGURE 42. 'BURKING ENQUIRY!'

of the person of our women comrades in their struggle'.²⁸⁵ At a repeat WSPU demonstration held the following week in Manchester's Stevenson Square (and apparently organised chiefly by Manchester Central's Secretary Sam Robinson) ILP men acted not only as speakers, but also as 'bodyguards'. 'Red Flag Jr' reported that '... a stalwart army of reliable ILPers had taken up their position as a bodyguard round the platforms several hours before the time of the meeting'. These were mostly members of the Manchester Central ILP, although Bruce Glasier was also mentioned as being among the men 'keeping stern eyes' on a group of youths trying to disturb the meeting.²⁸⁶

On the whole, ILP men were ready to lend militants their support when they perceived them to be under attack, either by a denial of their 'rights' or by physical violence. There is no doubt that they found considerable pleasure in identifying themselves as 'manly' defenders of threatened women, an ideal which they shared with many 'antis'.²⁸⁷ In his autobiography, Fenner Brockway remembered being part of a male bodyguard, protecting women who were trying to enter parliament to present a petition. Interestingly, he counterposed this experience to the 'humiliation' he had received from the Pankhursts, when they rejected his services as a

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 20 July 1906. See also 20 March 1908; 9 October 1908. Hannah Mitchell vividly described the events in her autobiography, Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, pp. 148-52.

²⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 27 July 1906.

²⁸⁷ Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, pp. 71-2.

journalist on discovering that he was only 'a boy of twenty'.²⁸⁸

A the same time, ILP men did not generally feel threatened by women's presence in the 'public' arena. They were rather proud of the opportunities open to them in the ILP, although these were ultimately limited both by unthinking assumptions about what kind of activities were 'suitable' for women, or by the difficulties experienced by all women with family responsibilities who wished to be politically active. At the same time, though, the campaigns of suffrage activists, and in particular of militants, could not be understood on the same terms as the organisation of a bazaar or a social. Even before a section of the suffrage movement adopted more violent methods of militancy, by heckling Cabinet Ministers, breaking windows, or committing technical assaults upon the police, women were not only undertaking new political activities, but were also doing so outside the party and without reference to it. Hardie's statement that militants 'had received their political training in the Independent Labour Party' and had 'adopted the militant tactics of that body and applied them to their own particular object'²⁸⁹ was obviously true only in a very limited way. By 1908 many male ILPers had been forced to develop new understandings and images of political womanhood.

Women could be portrayed as the victims of mob and police brutality, and of inhuman treatment at the hands of the Liberal government. Sandra

²⁸⁸ Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp. 28-9. See also, Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, p. 128; *Women's Franchise*, 28 January 1909, for other instances of male ILPers acting as 'bodyguards'.

²⁸⁹ Hardie, 'Women and Politics', p. 79.

Stanley Holton has suggested that militancy (at least, as understood by Emmeline Pankhurst) was essentially a moral stance, designed to demonstrate the brutality of male power, particularly that of the Liberal government.²⁹⁰ ILP men could not quarrel with this conception of political action, at least as long as militancy was directed at the Liberal government, and as long as they could identify themselves as the women's manly champions.²⁹¹ Suffragettes' weakness, vulnerability and 'femininity' could be emphasized. In November 1909 Hardie asked the Home Secretary a question in Parliament about an incident at Strangeways goal, where three suffragettes had been released at ten pm on a Friday evening. According to Hardie, they had been taken to the WSPU's offices, and on finding these closed for the night, were '... left there on the street'. Hardie chose to emphasize the pathos of the women's situation. One of them had 'fainted twice before finding accommodation', another had not reached home until 3.30 in the morning. Revealingly, in his reply Herbert Gladstone presented a radically different image of the three suffragettes, who

²⁹⁰ S. Stanley Holton, 'In Sorrowful Wrath: Suffrage Militancy and the Romantic Feminism of Emmeline Pankhurst', in H.L. Smith, (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*, (Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 1990), pp. 7-24.

²⁹¹ See also M. Vicinus, 'Male Space and Women's Bodies: the Suffragette Movement', in M. Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, (Virago, London, 1985), pp. 247-80. For a comparison with the attitudes towards militancy of 'literary men' and of male suffrage activists, see A.V. John, 'Men, Manners and Militancy: Literary Men and Women's Suffrage', in John, Eustance, (eds), *The Men's Share?*, pp. 88-109; S. Stanley Holton, 'Manliness and Militancy: the Political Protest of Male Suffragists and the Gendering of the "Suffragette" Identity', in *Ibid*, pp. 110-34.

being free to do as they liked on discharge, elected to go together in a cab to the offices of the Women's Social and Political Union, and left the prison singing and shouting.²⁹²

At the same time, ILPers developed a rather different image of 'political', womanhood. Speaking in support of the 1910 Conciliation Bill, Hardie exposed the hypocrisy surrounding talk of 'chivalry' towards women, giving the example of Lancashire mill-workers forced to work right up to their confinement, and of pit-top lasses. He chose to emphasize women's new-found self-confidence and self-reliance.

Women do not want chivalry; they do not want to be treated on the old chivalrous form as being half angel and half idiot. They ask to be allowed to defend themselves, not by the chivalry of men... but by the strength of their own vote.²⁹³

Although C. Higham spoke wistfully of 'women who could work for the cause unostentatiously and quietly, "without making such a shriek about it"',²⁹⁴ there was throughout the period a considerable amount of admiration for what was termed women's 'pluck'.²⁹⁵ 'Red Flag Jr' told the story of a socialist man he had encountered at the Stevenson Square meeting

²⁹² Hansard Commons Debates, 25 November 1909, vol. 13, cols 57-8. See also V. Grayson, *The Appeal of Socialism*, (The People's Press, Stockport, n.d., c.1909), pp. 12-3.

²⁹³ Hansard Commons Debates, 11 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, col. 143.

²⁹⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1907, p. 56.

²⁹⁵ *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906.

of July 1906, whom ‘... I had recently heard inveighing against the women’s campaign’. Having expressed his surprise at meeting the man there, he had received this reply:

I don’t care a rap about women’s votes, but you won’t find me in the rear when men or women Socialists are in the front... These women are bricks. I shall vote for them now because of their pluck.²⁹⁶

According to Bruce Glasier, ‘... the spirit of revolt... has awakened their determination and urged them to pursue their insurrectionary course’.²⁹⁷ ILPers’ interest in women workers’ own ‘militant’ activities has already been noticed: occasionally the connection between the different areas of women’s revolt was stated explicitly. Commenting on the birth of his daughter, Ramsay MacDonald observed that

... she opens her eyes upon a world of agitating barmaids, tea-waitresses, suffragettes and Women Labour Leaguers. Little does the little lady realise her good fortune in being ushered into existence with the cry of ‘Votes for Women’ in the streets heralding the dawn of the new epoch of women militant.²⁹⁸

Assessments of the effectiveness of militancy ultimately varied considerably. Writing to his sister in July 1906, Bruce Glasier claimed to

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 27 July 1906. See also 17 March 1911.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 6 July 1906.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 8 May 1908. See also 14 September 1907.

'see the humour as well as the pathos' of suffragettes' actions, although ultimately 'no one can restrain them, and in the end I am convinced they will win'.²⁹⁹ The NAC Report to the 1906 Conference reported that after twenty years of inactivity, the women's suffrage movement 'is again well to the front in politics, thanks mainly to the vigorous agitation inaugurated by the women members of the Party in Manchester'.³⁰⁰ Even after the Cocker mouth controversy, Sam Robinson (admittedly one of the Pankhursts' strongest supporters at the time) chose to emphasize not only the effectiveness of the WSPU's tactics, but also their positive influence on the ILP: 'They reach people we don't reach and I consider them to be the most successful recruiting sergeants we have in our movement'.³⁰¹ Four years later, when the passage of a women's suffrage measure seemed imminent, the new *Labour Leader* editor gave the credit to the militants' 'devotion to the cause and brilliant tactics'.³⁰²

Others held a rather more negative view of militancy. T. F. Richards dismissed the militants in a few words: socialists, '... did not want to be like the suffragettes, and get into prison without effecting their object'.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 6 July 1906, Glasier Papers. See also *Labour Leader*, 2 November 1906.

³⁰⁰ ILP Conference Report, 1906, p. 19.

³⁰¹ S. Robinson to F. Johnson, 20 October 1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 16 November 1911.

³⁰² *Labour Leader*, 25 November 1910. See also Campbell, *Some Economic Aspects*, pp. 1-2.

³⁰³ *Labour Leader*, 15 March 1907.

According to MacDonald, the suffragettes had managed to 'get well advertised', and to secure the sympathy of

... a certain body of opinion... I do not believe in the method either for unemployed men or unenfranchised women. It goes a certain length all right, stops, and then loses its power.³⁰⁴

Ultimately, though, it seems clear that militancy had a profound effect on the ILP, if not as a model, certainly as a yardstick against which to measure its own activities. A leaflet published by the South Wales and West of England ILP Federation called upon 'men' to be prepared to go to prison for the cause of free speech. 'Surely our cause is worth suffering. Why, the women of the WSPU put us to shame'.³⁰⁵ As the ex-Salvation Army officer, journalist and close friend of Hardie's,³⁰⁶ Frank Smith, put it to the 1907 conference (amid applause), 'there were to-day those in the socialist ranks who were political babies in the days when some of the women were warriors and heroes'.³⁰⁷ By 1910 the term 'militant' was in general use: its connotations were entirely positive. William Anderson for example (hardly a 'rebellious' figure) was described as 'a militant advocate of the

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 14 May 1909. See also 11 February 1910.

³⁰⁵ Anon, 'Bath Free Speech Fight', (South Wales and West of England ILP Federation, 1907), Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

³⁰⁶ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. IX, pp. 270-4.

³⁰⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1907, p. 47.

cause of Socialism and Labour'.³⁰⁸

Despite the fact that this did arouse a good deal of interest among ILP men, it was not only suffrage activists' 'militancy' which attracted their attention. Suffrage advances all over the world, from Finland³⁰⁹ and Norway³¹⁰ to South Africa,³¹¹ Germany,³¹² Canada³¹³ were followed with interest.³¹⁴ Their example was used to counter antis' warnings about the disastrous consequences of granting women the vote. In the countries where women were enfranchised, 'no sex change appears to have taken place',³¹⁵ and as Snowden pointed out, 'the stockings still got darned, the baby still was nursed, women did not spend all their time discussing politics, and the population continued to increase'.³¹⁶

Not surprisingly, perhaps, attention tended to remain focused on events in Britain. Before the Cockermouth by-election, the *Labour Leader* frequently mentioned the WSPU's 'constitutional' activities, such as the formation of

³⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 1 April 1910. See also 18 November 1910; ILP Conference Report, 1908, p. 32.

³⁰⁹ *Labour Leader*, 22 June 1906; 11 December 1908.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 21 June 1907; 3 June 1910; 8 July 1910.

³¹¹ *Ibid*, 1 November 1907.

³¹² *Ibid*, 28 January 1910.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 4 March 1910.

³¹⁴ See also for example *Ibid*, 24 March 1911; 14 April 1911; Johnston, *The Case*, p. 8.

³¹⁵ Johnston, *The Case*, p. 10.

³¹⁶ Hansard Commons Debates, 28 February 1908, 4th series, vol. 185, col. 266.

new branches in London's Canning Town and Poplar,³¹⁷ or the publication of a manifesto.³¹⁸ Their demonstrations were reported in positive terms, ILP men often being included among the speakers. Frank Smith, for example, reported the procession and mass meeting in Trafalgar Square organised by the WSPU in May 1906, in connection with the Women's Franchise deputation to the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman. Among the speakers were included Hardie, T.F. Richards and John Macpherson.³¹⁹ At this stage, the connection between the ILP and the WSPU was still being emphasized.³²⁰ The Manchester Stevenson Square demonstration was the last large scale demonstration which was mentioned by the *Labour Leader* as having been the fruit of WSPU/ILP collaboration,³²¹ although at a local level we can still find the Southwark ILP organising a suffrage demonstration in the borough's Newington Baths in conjunction with the WSPU (and at their expense) in January 1907.³²² WSPU demonstrations continued to be advertised in the paper.³²³ Occasionally these were also reported, mostly in favourable terms. A Manchester demonstration in July 1907 for example

³¹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 9 March 1906.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 23 March 1906. See also 16 February 1906.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 25 May 1906. See also 23 February 1906; 6 July 1906.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, 9 March 1906.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 20 July 1906; 27 July 1906.

³²² Southwark ILP Minutes, 13 December 1906; 3 January 1907; 15 January 1907, ILP Archive.

³²³ See for example *Labour Leader*, 5 October 1906; 28 December 1906; 19 April 1907; 28 February 1908; 29 May 1908.

was described as ‘... a striking success, thanks to the splendid weather, the attractions of the movement, the personalities of the speakers, and the organising abilities displayed’.³²⁴ With few exceptions, such as a meeting in Leicester, organised jointly by the WSPU and NUWSS, where MacDonald and Grayson were included among the speakers,³²⁵ ILP men do not seem to have participated in any of these, although a contingent of male ILPers (including Hardie) was present at the mass demonstration organised by the WSPU in Hyde Park in June.³²⁶ The presence of women such as Mrs. T.D. Benson and Mrs. Harker at an ‘At Home’ organised by the Manchester WSPU in the Memorial Hall as late as June 1907 indicates however, that connections between the ILP and WSPU had not entirely disappeared.³²⁷ In March, Hardie had expressed his belief to Bruce Glasier that ‘ILP women are as anxious as ever to retain their membership in and work for the ILP...’,³²⁸ and a breakfast organised that month to welcome the release of Charlotte Despard from a month’s imprisonment brought prominent ILP men and suffragettes together once more. Among those present were Hardie,

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 24 July 1908. See also 21 December 1906; 5 April 1907.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 13 March 1908.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 26 June 1908; *Women’s Franchise*, 25 June 1908.

³²⁷ *Labour Leader*, 7 June 1907. See also Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, pp. 144-57.

³²⁸ J.K. Hardie to J. Bruce Glasier, 4 March 1907, Glasier Papers. At a local level, activists continued to hold a membership to both ILP and WSPU. For the example of Leeds, see Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 125.

Snowden, Barnes, Charles Duncan³²⁹ and T.F. Richards.³³⁰ Such occasions were obviously not successful in healing the breach: aside from reports of its unlawful activities, by 1909 the WSPU had virtually disappeared from the *Labour Leader*.

Equally, after the first flurry of excitement, when it was thought that the WFL might adopt a pro-Labour election campaign, the activities of the organisation were hardly ever noticed. A brief report of its demonstration in London in February 1908³³¹ and an even briefer mention of its annual conference in January 1909,³³² were the solitary exceptions, although ILP MPs asked questions in parliament concerning the WFL 'vigil' outside the House of Commons in the Summer of 1909. Duncan and Hardie called upon the PM to grant them an interview,³³³ and a month later Hardie and Snowden protested against the arrest of WFL members on picket duty in Downing Street³³⁴ and against the fact that a deputation from this organisation had been barred from entering Parliament.³³⁵

It must by no means be assumed, though, that disillusionment with the two

³²⁹ Duncan was the general secretary of Tom Mann's Workers' Union, and since 1906, the Barrow-in-Furness MP. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. II, pp. 123-6.

³³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 8 March 1907.

³³¹ *Ibid*, 7 February 1908.

³³² *Ibid*, 15 January 1909.

³³³ Hansard Commons Debates, 26 July 1909, vol. 8, cols 846-7.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 19 August 1909, vol. 9, cols 1529-30.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 10 August 1909, vol. 9, cols 250-1.

main militant organisations determined an automatic renewal of interest in the activities of other suffrage societies. The activities of radical suffragists for example received considerable attention from the *Labour Leader* throughout 1906 and 1907.³³⁶ Their demonstrations were advertised and, however briefly, reported.³³⁷ Bruce Glasier addressed a meeting organised by radical suffragists in the Manchester Free Trade Hall in October 1907,³³⁸ although indications that ILP men acted as speakers for such meetings are rare.³³⁹ The organising of a petition concerning the Plural Voting Bill in Rossendale by Selina Cooper and Sarah Reddish was followed with interest³⁴⁰ and the candidature of Thorley Smith as women's suffrage candidate in Wigan during the 1906 general election was commented upon approvingly.³⁴¹ But most importantly, just as the WSPU inaugurated its anti-Liberal election tactic, the radical suffragists reiterated their support for Labour candidates. In 1906 and 1907 they supported T. Russell Williams at Huddersfield³⁴² and James Holmes at Hull.³⁴³ In 1907, in connection with

³³⁶ For the radical suffragists' campaigns, see Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 211-46.

³³⁷ *Labour Leader*, 11 October 1907; 25 October 1907.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 1 February 1907. J. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 1 February 1907, Glasier Papers.

³³⁹ But see *The Common Cause*, 15 July 1909.

³⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 20 July 1906; 3 August 1906.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, 2 February 1906. But note also that Bulley's request to the NAC for his candidature to be endorsed in December 1905 was refused. N.K. to A.K. Bulley, 7 December 1905, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

³⁴² *Labour Leader*, 30 November 1906; 7 December 1906.

the Belfast Labour Party Conference, the radical suffragists published a manifesto in which they affirmed their faith in the Party.³⁴⁴

It seems rather surprising, therefore, that after 1907, the radical suffragists virtually disappeared from the pages of the *Labour Leader* along with WSPU and WFL.³⁴⁵ Although this issue was never openly discussed, the florists' assistants dispute of 1909 brought into the light a fundamental difference in the thinking of radical suffragists and most male ILPers, which may explain the *Labour Leader's* shift. Bruce Glasier's comments on the issue show a complete lack of sympathy, and arguably understanding, for the radical suffragists' position. He stated that women such as Eva Gore-Booth opposed all protective legislation for women principally because they believed that the power of Parliament could also be used to keep women out of well-paid professions.

In the abstract name of 'Liberty'... Miss Eva Gore-Booth and her followers ask working women to renounce all the practical benefits of special factory legislation for women. But under conditions of Capitalist exploitation... [this was] practically the liberty of their employers to exploit them without let or hindrance...

It has already been seen how radical suffragists placed more emphasis on women's role as waged workers than ILP men were willing to do. In

³⁴³ *Ibid*, 29 November 1907.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 8 February 1907.

³⁴⁵ For rare exceptions, see *ibid*, 12 March 1909; 21 July 1911.

addition, it seems that for Bruce Glasier, the radical suffragists were not simply adopting a different position on how to improve the conditions of women workers, but were actually working against their interests: they were representatives of the '... middle-class woman of "Abstract Justice"'.³⁴⁶

The activities of the NUWSS were occasionally noticed. Both its march through London from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall (where Keir Hardie acted as one of the speakers) in February 1907 (the 'Mud March')³⁴⁷ and the procession from the Embankment to the Albert Hall in June 1908 were singled out for praise. In relation to the latter, it was stated that

The splendid earnestness, enthusiasm and political solidarity displayed in the great procession through the streets and in the immense gathering in the Albert Hall has given the women's movement a new and impressive significance.³⁴⁸

It is interesting to note also that even before the establishment of the Electoral Fighting Fund in 1912, the NUWSS occasionally lent its support to Labour by-election candidates, such as Ben Turner at Dewsbury³⁴⁹ and

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 26 March 1909. See also Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 231-42. They too emphasise the different understanding of women's role in society on the part of radical suffragists and the Labour Party.

³⁴⁷ *Labour Leader*, 15 February 1907.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 19 June 1908.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 24 April 1908.

Mr. Cameron in Liverpool.³⁵⁰ The ILP's attitude was not always, though, necessarily uncritical. The NUWSS' support for Bertrand Russell as by-election candidate for Wimbledon was considered pointless. Since it was assumed that he would be standing as a Liberal, 'We fail... to see how it will be possible to say... what support he has gained or lost because of his adoption of the women's cause'.³⁵¹ In the North, after the resignation of the radical suffragists' from the NESWS in 1906, contacts between this society and the ILP seem to have been severed. The one recorded event which once more brought together the two organisations was a debate held in Blackburn between Helena Swanwick, who supported equal suffrage and the ILPer Mr. Hyam, (presumably the same Mr. Higham who at the 1907 Conference mocked the suffragettes' 'shrieking' tactics) who supported adult suffrage. The outcome of the debate was not recorded, but it can hardly be viewed as an example of harmonious cooperation.³⁵²

The activities of the Adult Suffrage Society (see above, chapter 2) were also occasionally noticed by the *Labour Leader*.³⁵³ Such notices were usually brief and hardly enthusiastic, but it seems clear that at least some ILPers were involved in this organisation. Frank Rose for example was

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 5 August 1910. In September 1911, during a 'truce' in militancy, both the NUWSS and the WSPU supported the Labour candidate T. McKerrell at a by-election in Kilmarnock Burghs against a Tory and a Liberal 'antis'. Leneman, *A Guid Cause*, p. 104.

³⁵¹ *Labour Leader*, 10 May 1907. See also 17 May 1907.

³⁵² NESWS Annual Report, 1908, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

³⁵³ *Labour Leader*, 22 March 1907; 15 January 1909; 24 April 1909.

mentioned as the speaker at an Adult Suffrage Society whist drive in September 1909.³⁵⁴ In October 1909 an editorial reported the formation of the People's Suffrage Federation, (PSF)³⁵⁵ to which fifteen ILP branches had already affiliated. The editorial position, though, including after Bruce Glasier's departure, remained firmly in favour of equal suffrage. The branches which had affiliated to the PSF were reminded that the ILP National Conference had committed the party to equal suffrage.³⁵⁶ Even so, the party's stance was apparently not strong enough for Ethel Snowden, who in October 1909 resigned from the ILP after she had protested to the NAC about the conduct of Mary Macarthur, who was helping to organise the PSF, and had declared herself opposed to equal suffrage.³⁵⁷ By April 1910 William Anderson and George Lansbury (alongside Margaret Bondfield and Mary Macarthur, both prominent members of the Women's Trade Union League³⁵⁸) had joined the Federation's executive, and ninety eight ILP branches had either affiliated or passed resolutions of sympathy.³⁵⁹

On the whole, though, ILP men saw themselves and their party as strongly

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 24 September 1909.

³⁵⁵ This organisation brought together women trade unionists such as Margaret Bondfield and Mary Macarthur, and WCG members, including its president, Margaret Llewelyn Davies, as well as Liberal and Labour adultists. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 63-5.

³⁵⁶ *Labour Leader*, 22 October 1909.

³⁵⁷ E. Snowden to F. Jowett, 16 September 1909; E. Snowden to F. Johnson, 7 October 1909, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

³⁵⁸ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. II, pp. 39-45, 255-60.

³⁵⁹ *Labour Leader*, 8 April 1910. See also 15 July 1910; 14 April 1911.

supportive of equal suffrage. While interviewing the Australian Labour premier, Fenner Brockway stated that

... all our men do support women's suffrage... A few object to the extension of the franchise on a limited basis, but even those support the Second Reading of the Conciliation Bill.³⁶⁰

It was left to the women to criticise what they often perceived as the only lukewarm support of socialist men for women's suffrage. Ethel Snowden was a particularly harsh critic, not only of ILP men in general, but also of the *Labour Leader's* editor, Bruce Glasier. She characterised his attitude as

... more insidious and mischievous than a bold and complete repudiation or denunciation. It is this 'willing to wound and yet afraid to strike, just hint a fault and hesitate dislike' conduct on your part towards the women's movement which has driven nine tenths of the formerly active women of the ILP into the independent women's agitation, and which has brought the other one tenth to the brink.³⁶¹

When in October 1909 she resigned from the ILP, she emphasized that 'For a long while now I have been dissatisfied at the want of support given to woman suffrage by the ILP and the *Labour Leader*'.³⁶² The editor

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 2 June 1911. See also 23 November 1906.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, 18 January 1907. In his diary, Bruce Glasier referred to Ethel Snowden as a 'she-wolf'. J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 14 January 1907, Glasier Papers.

³⁶² *Labour Leader*, 15 October 1909. See also 11 January 1907. For Robinson's critique of the attitude towards the WSPU of those behind the scenes of the *Labour Leader*, see S. Robinson to F. Johnson, 20 October

responded to Snowden's resignation by defending the record on women's suffrage of the *Labour Leader*, NAC and ILP, although he also revealingly emphasized that even had these bodies been remiss in their advocacy of women's enfranchisement, ultimately '... the promotion of Socialism is the supreme duty of the ILP... and so long as this duty is fulfilled that is the most important thing'.³⁶³

Ethel Snowden's protest was not an isolated one. In February 1907 Philip Snowden wrote T.D. Benson an angry letter, asking 'What has come over you on the Women Question'? He justified the suffrage activists' decision not to be tied to the Labour Party, since this body '... only pretended a sympathy so long as it thought the cause worth patronising for its own ends'. He denied that the feeling among the ILP had turned against the WSPU and ended his letter on an intransigent note, emphasizing that should the party 'sacrifice the greatest of all principles for a selfish aim... I have done with it... Nobody could do otherwise and remain a socialist'.³⁶⁴

During the 1910 Conference the discontent of a number of ILP women came to a head. Annot Robinson³⁶⁵ moved and Charlotte Despard

1906, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

³⁶³ *Labour Leader*, 15 October 1909.

³⁶⁴ P. Snowden to T.D. Benson, 5 February 1907, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. Somebody had written at the top of the letter 'Snowden at his worst'.

³⁶⁵ A Manchester-based socialist and suffragist, she had broken with the WSPU in 1908. In 1907 she had joined the Manchester Central ILP, of which her husband, Sam Robinson, was propaganda secretary. In 1910 she became part-time organiser for the WLL, in 1912 taking up the post of NUWSS organiser. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. VIII, pp. 215-19.

seconded a motion which proposed the deletion of references to the 'Women's Movement' from the NAC Report.³⁶⁶ Robinson pointed out that although every Conference passed a resolution in favour of women's enfranchisement, the NAC never then acted on the issue. She drew attention to how Hardie and Snowden had protested against forcible feeding, yet the NAC as a whole had remained silent, whereas it could have 'aroused an agitation in the country about it'.³⁶⁷ Although the delegate from North-West Leeds, H.S. Wishart, pointed out that the NAC Report gave as much space to the women's movement as to unemployment, 'which he considered to be a much more important question',³⁶⁸ the other male speakers backed Robinson and Despard's critique of the NAC. C.N.L. Shaw, the secretary of the London Clarion Scouts and interestingly, an adult suffragist,³⁶⁹ warned against the risk of driving women from the ranks of the ILP, while Hardie deprecated 'the frivolous way in which this question was treated by men who professed to be out for socialism'.³⁷⁰

The criticisms of Robinson, Despard and others certainly seem to have been justified, given that the ILP undertook very few activities as an organisation

³⁶⁶ *Labour Leader*, 1 April 1910.

³⁶⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1910, p. 74.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 75.

³⁶⁹ Sharp, (ed.), *The Reformers' Year Book*, p. 227.

³⁷⁰ ILP Conference Report, 1910, pp. 75-6. Eventually, the motion was withdrawn. See also *Labour Leader*, 7 September 1906; 27 September 1907; 5 November 1909. Of course not all the judgements passed on the ILP by women were negative. See for example E. Brown to G. Barnes, 17 February 1909; E. Brown to J.K. Hardie, 12 May 1909, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

(and independently from any suffrage organisation) in support for women's suffrage, at least outside the House of Commons or the annual conferences.³⁷¹ During the 1906 general election the NAC signed on behalf of the ILP a 'United Manifesto in Favour of Votes for Women', together with organisations such as the WCG, the Women's Liberal Federation and textile workers.³⁷² During the general election of 1906, as well as both those of 1910, the ILP committed itself to equal suffrage,³⁷³ while the Special Election Conference of the ILP in December 1909 included among the issues to be pressed for in Parliament 'the full and equal citizenship of men and women'.³⁷⁴ Action did not, though, always match such commitments.³⁷⁵

I have found only one reference to a suffrage demonstration organised by the ILP at a national level, although in June 1906 the NAC decided, possibly at the instigation of the Manchester Central branch³⁷⁶ to send the branches

³⁷¹ ILP Conference Report, 1909, p. 23. See also *ibid*, 1906, p. 19; 1907, pp. 20-1; 1908, pp. 18-9; 1910, pp. 22-3; 1911, p. 24.

³⁷² *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1906; NAC Minutes, 18 December 1905, ILP Archive. See also *Women's Franchise*, 8 August 1907.

³⁷³ Anon, 'Special Election Leaflet Issued by the Independent Labour Party and Addressed to the Working-Class Electors of Great Britain', (ILP, London, n.d., c.1906), Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive. *Labour Leader*, 10 December 1909; 25 November 1910; Anon, 'ILP Manifesto to the Electors of Great Britain', (ILP, London, 1909), Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

³⁷⁴ *Labour Leader*, 24 December 1909. See also *Manifesto to the Women's Social and Political Union*, (Wadsworth & Co, Keighley, n.d., c. 1906), Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

³⁷⁵ See for example NAC Minutes, 5, 6, 27 April 1906, ILP Archive.

³⁷⁶ Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 12 June 1906.

a circular, emphasizing 'the need for agitation' on the issue of women's suffrage, and promised that 'where a large demonstration could be arranged, an endeavour would be made to send a speaker'.³⁷⁷ A 'national demonstration' was organised by the Metropolitan District Council of the ILP and eventually held in November 1906 in the London Horticultural Hall. Alongside Hardie, the speakers were Snowden, Stephen Walsh,³⁷⁸ Charlotte Despard and Emmeline Pankhurst.³⁷⁹ On the whole, the NAC's was hardly an impressive record.

Individual male ILPers did distinguish themselves by the earnestness of their support. And there is no doubt that among the party's national figures, Hardie was the one most consistently active for women's suffrage, a fact recognised by suffragists of all denominations. At a demonstration held in Manchester in 1908 to welcome him back after a long cruise undertaken to restore his health, Annot Robinson, on behalf of the WSPU, 'paid a warm tribute to Mr. Hardie's championship of the women's cause'.³⁸⁰

More hostile observers also recognised his commitment to women's enfranchisement. In 1907 *Judy: the London serio-comic Journal* associated

³⁷⁷ NAC Minutes, 15, 16 June 1906, ILP Archive.

³⁷⁸ A Lancashire miners' leader, Walsh had since 1906 been Labour MP for Ince. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. IV, pp. 187-90.

³⁷⁹ *Labour Leader*, 7 December 1906; Metropolitan District Council of the ILP Minutes, 10 November 1906, ILP Archive.

³⁸⁰ *Labour Leader*, 8 May 1908. See also *Women's Franchise*, 10 October 1907.

him with 'the devine [sic] right of the suffraget [sic]',³⁸¹ while in 1911 *The Daily Graphic* dubbed him 'the ladies' man'.³⁸² Even within the ILP, not all acknowledgements of Hardie's commitment to women's suffrage were of a positive nature. During the 1907 Labour Party Conference, for example, he was accused of having 'come under the influence of women's petticoats'.³⁸³ Possibly more seriously, his close ILP associate, Bruce Glasier, privately considered that

I fancy I can detect a conscious desire on his part to figure in history as the women's champion. What I object to in this is that his power to champion them is derived from us - our work and cohesion but... we must all... be sacrificed as reactionaries on the question, all to enable him to triumph'.³⁸⁴

Although others such as MacDonald³⁸⁵ and Snowden³⁸⁶ on occasion mentioned suffrage in their speeches, Hardie did so consistently throughout the period, whether speaking at the Manchester Free Trade Hall³⁸⁷ or

³⁸¹ *Judy: the London serio-comic Journal*, 16 February 1907, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 85), ILP Archive.

³⁸² *The Daily Graphic*, 12 June 1911, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 85), ILP Archive.

³⁸³ *Labour Leader*, 1 February 1907. See also 8 February 1907.

³⁸⁴ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 26 June 1907, Glasier Papers.

³⁸⁵ *Labour Leader*, 15 January 1909.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 20 January 1911.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 22 December 1905.

addressing small demonstrations in West Bromwich³⁸⁸ or Blythe³⁸⁹. Both in 1906 and 1910 in his manifesto to the Merthyr electors he committed himself to women's suffrage.³⁹⁰ Occasionally other ILPers included women's suffrage as one of the issues they supported in their election campaign. An old acquaintance, for example, Joseph Burgess, having been selected as candidate for Montrose Burghs, declared himself at a meeting in Arbroath '... for women's franchise in no uncertain terms'.³⁹¹

Hardie was also a regular speaker at suffrage demonstrations. In May 1906 he had participated in the suffrage deputation to the Prime Minister.³⁹² In July 1906 we find him seconding a suffrage resolution at a demonstration in Trafalgar Square organised by the WSPU,³⁹³ while a few days later he acted as one of the speakers (Leonard Hall being another) both at the disrupted meeting in Boggart Hole Clough and at the subsequent one in Stevenson Square.³⁹⁴ Exactly four years later, we can still find him

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 22 March 1907.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 19 August 1910. See also 14 September 1906; 21 December 1906; 8 February 1907; 20 November 1908; 17 December 1909; 3 March 1911. Note that between the Spring of 1907 and that of 1908 Hardie was out of action because of illness. See 3 May 1907; 10 April 1908.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 19 January 1906; 9 December 1910.

³⁹¹ *Ibid*, 1 May 1908. See also I.O. Ford to M. Fawcett, 18 January 1906, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

³⁹² *Daily Graphic*, 21 May 1906; *Daily Mirror*, 21 May 1906, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 85), ILP Archive.

³⁹³ *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906. See also *The Bystander*, 2 July 1906, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 85), ILP Archive.

³⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906; 20 July 1906; 27 July 1906.

addressing suffrage meetings. With Snowden, he was the principal speaker at a meeting in London's Caxton Hall organised by the Men's League for Women's Suffrage (MLWS) in support of the Conciliation Bill.³⁹⁵ A week later, along with the Earl of Lytton, he addressed a demonstration in Hyde Park organised jointly by the MLWS and the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement.³⁹⁶

He was of course not the only ILP man to address suffrage demonstrations. In February 1906 Snowden, for example, chaired a suffrage meeting in Leeds, Christabel Pankhurst and Isabella Ford acting as speakers.³⁹⁷ In July 1907, Stanton Coit and R.J. Campbell addressed a 'men only' meeting organised by the MLWS in the Kensington Town Hall.³⁹⁸ while Fred Jowett and Leonard Hall were among the speakers at an 'enthusiastic meeting' convened by the Birmingham Women's Suffrage Society in connection with the ILP's Annual Conference of 1911.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 15 July 1910. The Men's League was a non-party, independent organisation, established in 1907 at the instigation of Herbert Jacobs, a London barrister who then became its chairman. John, Eustance, 'Shared Histories - Differing Identities', pp. 10-7.

³⁹⁶ *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, August 1910. See also *Labour Leader*, 11 May 1906; 15 February 1907; *The Daily Graphic*, 11 February 1907, Uncatalogued Miscellanea, (ILP 6, Box 85), ILP Archive. The Men's Political Union was established in 1910 as a 'fighting men's league' committed to an anti-government policy. The eminent journalist and war-correspondent Henry W. Nevinston 'slightly reluctantly' became its chairman. John, Eustance, 'Shared Histories - Differing Identities', pp. 17-8.

³⁹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1906.

³⁹⁸ *Women's Franchise*, 18 July 1907.

³⁹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 21 April 1911. See also 1 February 1907; 13 March 1908; 9 June 1911; *Women's Franchise*, 10 October 1907; 27 February 1908;

There were other ways in which support could be manifested: in November 1906 Hardie visited the suffragettes in prison,⁴⁰⁰ while a month later Snowden and Stanton Coit were among the guests at a banquet organised by Mrs. Fawcett to welcome released prisoners.⁴⁰¹ More daringly, in 1910 Joseph Clayton agreed to stand as a woman suffrage candidate for the South Salford constituency against Hilaire Belloc,⁴⁰² although in the event the king's death changed the political situation and Clayton withdrew his candidature.⁴⁰³ In 1907 Sam Brooks had written to the *Labour Leader* urging the necessity of forming 'a man's organisation to further the cause of women's suffrage'. Failure to do so would mean that 'so far as men are concerned, the age of chivalry is dead'.⁴⁰⁴ Assuming that the organisation concerned was the MLWS, further mentions of it were only incidentally made in the pages of the *Labour Leader*. Nevertheless, a number of individual ILPers became members: Snowden for example, was the first MP to join, and in 1911 became one of its vice-presidents.⁴⁰⁵ Stanton Coit

28 January 1909; *Votes for Women*, 7 July 1911.

⁴⁰⁰ *Labour Leader*, 16 November 1906.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 14 December 1906.

⁴⁰² *Ibid*, 27 May 1910; *The Common Cause*, 5 May 1910.

⁴⁰³ NESWS Annual Report, 1910, Women's Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library.

⁴⁰⁴ *Labour Leader*, 24 May 1907. In 1910 Brooks was joint secretary of the Manchester's Men's League. *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, September 1910.

⁴⁰⁵ *Women's Franchise*, 6 February 1908; *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, September 1911.

became the League's honorary treasurer, while S.D. Shallard joined the executive in 1913.⁴⁰⁶ The most spectacular act of support for women's suffrage came, perhaps, when Hardie offered to resign from the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1907 when the Belfast Conference voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of adult, rather the equal suffrage.⁴⁰⁷

Already we have seen the assiduity with which both Hardie and Snowden asked questions in Parliament relating to the suffrage campaign. They and other ILP MPs were also consistently supportive of suffrage measures which came before Parliament. In 1906 Hardie was among the backers of Dilke's annual adult suffrage bill, and spoke in favour of its Second Reading. He still emphasized, though, that an indispensable step towards securing adult suffrage was 'to remove at once the sex barriers which prevent women from being citizens at all'.⁴⁰⁸ The ILP also supported the inclusion of women's suffrage among the provisions of the Plural Voting Bill. After being contacted by the WSPU in July 1907, the Watford ILP, for example, sent resolutions demanding the inclusion of a Woman's Suffrage clause in the Bill to the Prime Minister and to the West Hertfordshire MP.⁴⁰⁹ In November

⁴⁰⁶ I am grateful to A.V. John for sharing her research in the MLWS' membership.

⁴⁰⁷ *Labour Leader*, 1 February 1907. See also Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 175-7. For a discussion which places Hardie's actions in the context of debates over MPs' accountability to the party's conference, see Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 184-95

⁴⁰⁸ Hansard Commons Debates, 2 March 1906, 4th series, vol. 152, col. 1453.

⁴⁰⁹ Watford ILP Minutes, 11 July 1906; 25 July 1906, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

1906 Hardie introduced an equal suffrage bill, which was backed among others by Snowden.⁴¹⁰ This never reached a second reading, but in February 1907 Dickinson introduced the same bill.⁴¹¹ In March Snowden spoke in favour of its second reading, and denied both the accusations that the bill would not enfranchise working-class women and also that there was no demand for women's suffrage in the country.⁴¹² The bill was eventually talked out. In February 1908, Stanger reintroduced the bill,⁴¹³ and Snowden again spoke in support of its Second Reading, dealing with the 'same worm-eaten objections'.⁴¹⁴ On this occasion the bill came to a division, and all ILP MPs voted in favour, except Hardie and J.M. McLachlan, who were not present, the former being ill.⁴¹⁵ Despite the favourable vote, the bill went no further.

In February 1909 Geoffrey Howard introduced his adult suffrage bill.⁴¹⁶ In an interesting shift since 1906, when Hardie had declared himself in favour of 'every line' of Dilke's bill,⁴¹⁷ ILP opinion tended to be critical

⁴¹⁰ Hansard Commons Debates, 7 November 1906, 4th series, vol. 164, cols 171-3.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, 15 February 1907, 4th series, vol. 169, col. 416.

⁴¹² Ibid, 8 March 1907, 4th series, vol. 170, cols 1130-4.

⁴¹³ Hansard Commons Debates, 3 February 1908, 4th series, vol. 183, col. 541.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 28 February 1908, 4th series, vol. 185, cols 265-70.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 28 February 1908, 4th series, vol. 185, cols 283-8.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, 19 February 1909, vol. 1, col. 333.

⁴¹⁷ Hansard Commons Debates, 2 March 1906, 4th series, vol. 152, col. 1453.

of this bill. Speaking in the debate over the second reading of Howard's bill, Snowden emphasized his agreement with the policy of the suffrage societies, who believed that a measure to remove the sex disability should take precedence over adult suffrage. Nevertheless, he voted with the other ILP MPs in favour of the bill.⁴¹⁸

At the end of 1909, with a general election in view, Hardie observed a changed attitude towards women's suffrage, and believed that the next Parliament would have to take the issue more seriously.

For twenty years at least, the enfranchisement of women has been an academic question at elections, and was so treated by candidates; now... candidates who pledge themselves for or against will be doing so in good faith, and with a full sense of what is implied.⁴¹⁹

In June 1910 David Shackleton introduced an equal suffrage bill⁴²⁰ which had been worked out by the all-party Conciliation Committee of MPs, of which Lord Lytton was the president and Snowden joint secretary.⁴²¹ The

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 19 March 1909, vol. 2, cols 1383-5.

⁴¹⁹ J.K. Hardie, 'The General Election', in *The Socialist Review*, November 1909, p. 173.

⁴²⁰ Hansard Commons Debates, 14 June 1910, 5th series, vol. 17, cols. 1202-7.

⁴²¹ Cross, *Philip Snowden*, pp. 108-110. For the work of the Conciliation Committee, and particularly of its instigator, H.N. Brailsford, see F.M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter. H.N. Brailsford and His World*, (Clarendon, Oxford, 1985), pp. 72-87.

proposed bill would have enfranchised about one million female occupiers.⁴²² Both Hardie and Snowden spoke in favour of the Bill's second reading⁴²³ and when, despite an overwhelming Commons' vote in support, the government refused to grant further facilities to the bill, both spoke out in protest. Snowden emphasized that the majority of 109 had given a clear indication that the Commons wanted the measure to proceed through its further stages, especially since the vote had been given without the Whips' pressure and despite the appeals of influential Cabinet ministers. He suggested that the government had allowed a second reading but had refused further facilities because they had thought they would be 'able to kill the bill' and because by 'mocking and exasperating the women... they can goad the women into extreme militant tactics once more'.⁴²⁴

In April 1911 Dickinson introduced a slightly altered Conciliation Bill⁴²⁵ and Lansbury spoke in favour of its second reading.⁴²⁶ When the government refused to grant further facilities in the current session, but promised a week in the next, Hardie and Snowden were among those asking

⁴²² Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 137. See also Snowden, *In Defence*, pp. 4-5.

⁴²³ Hansard Commons Debates, 11 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, cols 138-45; 12 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, cols 316-24.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*, 29 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, cols 2587-2592. See also 28 July 1910, 5th series, vol. 19, cols 2338-9; 18 November 1910, 5th series, vol. 20, cols 73, 106-7, 142-4.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, 5 April 1911, 5th series, vol. 23, col. 2219.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*, 5 May 1911, 5th series, vol. 25, cols 764-773.

for details.⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, it was only when Asquith announced the introduction of a manhood suffrage bill, that the party as a whole swung into action. (See chapter 4)

When one turns to consider the branches' attitudes towards women's enfranchisement, the picture which emerges is one of considerable support, which tended to manifest itself in the welcoming of suffrage speakers and the passing of resolutions, rather than in any more active forms. Before the Cocker mouth by-election, local branches were often mentioned as having been visited by suffrage speakers, including members of the WSPU. For example, in March 1906 Christabel Pankhurst lectured the annual meeting of the Sowerby Divisional Federation of ILP branches on 'Votes for Women',⁴²⁸ while in June Frederick Pethick Lawrence addressed the Watford ILP.⁴²⁹ Not all speakers were members of the WSPU. What they seemed to have in common, alongside a commitment to women's suffrage, was membership of the ILP. For example, in July 1906 Isabella Ford addressed an open-air meeting on women's suffrage under the auspices of the Garw Valley ILP⁴³⁰ and in August Ethel Snowden addressed another under

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 29 May 1911, 5th series, vol. 26, cols 703-5; 31 May 1911, 5th series, vol. 26, cols 1164-5.

⁴²⁸ *Labour Leader*, 23 March 1906.

⁴²⁹ F. Pethick Lawrence to H. Bryan, 13 May 1906, Watford ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 10 August 1906.

⁴³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906.

those of the High Wycombe ILP on the same topic.⁴³¹

There was no immediate break between the WSPU and ILP branches in the aftermath of Cockermouth, despite signs of hostility from some branches.⁴³² In October 1906 Adela Pankhurst gave the Wilton ILP ‘an excellent Socialist address, showing the great need for the vote for women in order to get a better state of affairs’,⁴³³ and in January 1907, Teresa Billington and Dora Montefiore addressed a ‘crowded’ meeting of the Brighthouse ILP.⁴³⁴ After the late spring of 1907, though, it became rare for WSPU speakers to address ILP branches.⁴³⁵ Equally rarely were the branches addressed by the WFL, although for example in March 1910 Mrs. Sproson lectured the East Ham ILP⁴³⁶ and in October Mrs. Mustard addressed the South Hackney ILP.⁴³⁷ However, two popular speakers were in demand: Charlotte Despard and Annot Robinson. Both were members of the ILP as well as active suffragists.⁴³⁸

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, 3 August 1906. See also 17 November 1905; 27 April 1906; 8 June 1906; 10 August 1906.

⁴³² *Ibid*, 7 August 1906.

⁴³³ *Ibid*, 5 October 1906.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*, 1 February 1907. See also 1 March 1907; 22 March 1907; 31 May 1907; Fulford, *Votes for Women*, p. 172.

⁴³⁵ But see for example *Votes for Women*, 14 January 1909; 12 March 1909.

⁴³⁶ East Ham ILP Minutes, 17 March 1910, ILP Archive. Note that in 1911 this branch joined the PSF. *Ibid*, 26 January 1911, ILP Archive.

⁴³⁷ *Labour Leader*, 25 October 1910. See also 8 November 1907.

⁴³⁸ For Charlotte Despard, see *Ibid*, 26 July 1907; 9 August 1907; 17 July 1908. For Annot Robinson, see *ibid*, 18 June 1906; 28 May 1909.

Other suffrage speakers belonged to a variety of organisations. Ethel Snowden, for example, was a prominent member of the NUWSS.⁴³⁹ Others were less well-known, at least outside their locality. In January 1910, a Mrs. Manners who addressed the Mansfield ILP was identified as belonging to the 'Women's Suffrage Society'⁴⁴⁰ while the Mrs. Hume who gave the Bournemouth ILP 'a vigorous address' on 'the Present Position of the Women's Suffrage Movement' was described as 'our comrade'.⁴⁴¹

Very occasionally men (almost exclusively ILPers) addressed the branches on women's suffrage. Thus, W. H. Oaten, (whom I presume to be male) the secretary of the Taunton ILP, addressed the Taunton Labour Church on 'Women's Suffrage' in November 1906,⁴⁴² while in March 1908 J. Phillips read a paper on 'Women's Suffrage' to the Aberdare ILP. He took up an 'anti' position, but 'the great majority' of the members declared themselves in favour of women's suffrage.⁴⁴³

Occasionally branches were reported as having passed resolutions in favour of women's suffrage, often after having been addressed by suffrage speakers. Although it is difficult to gauge the spirit of meetings, support was generally

⁴³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 6 December 1907; 3 January 1908.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 11 February 1910.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, 19 February 1909.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, 30 November 1906. See also 23 November 1906; 18 March 1910.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, 13 March 1908.

forthcoming.⁴⁴⁴ After Charlotte Despard had addressed the Preston ILP in 1906 on 'Woman as a Citizen', 'a resolution was passed in favour of women's enfranchisement'.⁴⁴⁵ In November 1911, at the WSPU's request, the Watford branch sent a resolution to the Hull Labour Party Conference emphasizing 'That it is urgent that the Government shall confer the Parliamentary franchise upon the women of this country'.⁴⁴⁶ A number of resolutions in support of the 1910 Conciliation Bill were passed. For example, the first annual demonstration of the Manchester and Salford Federation of the ILP impressed upon '... the Labour Party the duty of strongly supporting the Bill now before Parliament, which has for its object the enfranchisement of women on the same terms as men'.⁴⁴⁷ After the Cocker mouth by-election, resolutions of sympathy for militancy were in short supply, although in February 1908 the Manchester Central ILP passed 'with acclaim' a resolution protesting against suffragettes' treatment as common criminals, and the North Manchester branch passed a resolution protesting against the behaviour of the Metropolitan Police.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 25 May 1906. See also 26 January 1906; 8 June 1906; 22 June 1906.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 2 November 1906.

⁴⁴⁶ WSPU to H. Bryan, 16 November 1907, Watford ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 14 September 1906; 16 November 1906; 24 January 1908; Southwark ILP Minutes, 3 March 1908, ILP Archive.

⁴⁴⁷ *Labour Leader*, 24 June 1910. See also 25 February 1910; 17 June 1910.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 21 February 1908.

The more active branches also organised demonstrations. In July the Liverpool ILP organised a 'Votes for Women' demonstration, with Teresa Billington and Adela Pankhurst as speakers, and Councillor Morrissey in the chair,⁴⁴⁹ while in August it was the turn of the Halifax ILP, when Annie Kenney was the advertised speaker.⁴⁵⁰ On the other hand, the Edinburgh ILP turned to the 'constitutional' suffragists and organised a 'joint discussion' with the NUWSS.⁴⁵¹

The red banner of the London ILP Federation also took part in the NUWSS' 'mud march' of February 1907 between Hyde Park and the Exeter Hall,⁴⁵² while in June 1908 around three hundred ILPers, men and women, marched behind 'the bright red banner of the Metropolitan District Council of the ILP' from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park, where a WSPU mass meeting was held.⁴⁵³ The Conciliation Bills seem to have reawakened some enthusiasm on the part of the branches: in July 1910 for example the Ipswich ILP organised an open-air demonstration in support of David Shackleton's bill.⁴⁵⁴

In February 1909, nine Leeds working-men (including the president and secretary of the local LRC and the secretary of the local ILP) went as a

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 20 July 1906.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 24 August 1906. See also Middlesbrough ILP Minutes, 10 July 1906; 17 August 1906.

⁴⁵¹ *Labour Leader*, 17 November 1905. See also 14 September 1906.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, 15 February 1907.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, 26 June 1908.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 15 July 1910. See also 7 April 1911.

deputation from the Leeds Suffrage Society to interview Herbert Gladstone and to urge the necessity of granting the vote to women. Of the nine, four were members of the ILP.⁴⁵⁵

Very occasionally, adult suffrage speakers addressed branches: for example in February 1910 Miss Ward of the PSF had addressed the South Hackney ILP,⁴⁵⁶ while in January 1911, after she had addressed the East Ham ILP, the branch decided to affiliate to the PSF.⁴⁵⁷ It seems clear that not all branches approved of equal suffrage. In January 1907 for example, the Stockton ILP sent a resolution to the *Labour Leader*, whereby the branch refused to contribute to the 'Special Effort Fund' until the NAC had acted to ensure the passage of an Adult Suffrage Bill, rather than simply an equal suffrage one.⁴⁵⁸ When in March 1910 Mrs. Manson of the WFL addressed the Camberwell ILP, she found that a large majority of the members favoured adult suffrage.⁴⁵⁹

The Manchester Central branch continued to stand out for its enthusiasm for women's suffrage. On the release of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney from prison in October 1905 it had organised a welcome

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 12 February 1909.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 4 February 1910.

⁴⁵⁷ East Ham ILP Minutes, 26 January 1911; 8 February 1911; 27 April 1911; 6 December 1911, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 8 March 1907.

⁴⁵⁸ *Labour Leader*, 4 January 1907.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 25 March 1910. See also 24 June 1910; *Women's Franchise*, 27 February 1908.

demonstration in the Free Trade Hall. Leonard Hall had chaired the meeting, and Hardie had been one of the speakers.⁴⁶⁰ It is unclear how far (if at all) the Manchester Central ILP and other Manchester branches were involved in the suffrage demonstrations held in Manchester in July 1906. There is no doubt, though, that ILP men such as Leonard Hall, Alfred Ogden, R.C. Wallhead⁴⁶¹, Councillor Morrissey and others acted as speakers,⁴⁶² while as has already been seen, after the disturbance at Boggart Hole Clough, ILP men were quick to respond to the call made by Richard Robinson through the pages of the *Labour Leader* 'to arrange that a fair hearing is obtained for the women in their agitation for the vote'.⁴⁶³ All was not harmony, though, even within this branch. Between March and April 1907, eight members seceded (including Wallhead) in protest at the branch's support for the WSPU, and formed a separate ILP in the neighbourhood.⁴⁶⁴

On the whole, it seems clear that male ILPers remained committed to equal suffrage throughout the period under consideration, although there was always a minority which favoured adult suffrage. The strength of this

⁴⁶⁰ Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 18 October 1905. See also Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 190-2.

⁴⁶¹ After failing in a career as decorator and craftsman, Wallhead became a full-time freelance ILP propagandist in 1908. In 1909 he was elected to the NAC, where he established himself as one of the leadership's defenders. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. III, pp. 195-9.

⁴⁶² *Labour Leader*, 6 July 1906; 20 July 1906.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, 20 July 1906. See also 26 January 1906 for Mary Gawthorpe's description of the campaign undertaken in Leeds during the 1906 general election, and the support it received from Labour men.

⁴⁶⁴ Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 19 March 1907; 23 April 1907.

minority is impossible to quantify, mostly because the party press remained securely in the hands of equal suffragists, conferences being the one venue where adult suffragists could find a 'platform' and a wider audience. It is clear, though, that the division was not a simple one between leadership and rank and file. Some branches, such as Blackburn and Stockton, were clearly committed to adult suffrage, while others, such as Middlesbrough and Manchester Central, to equal suffrage. The leadership also seems to have been far from united. Hardie and Snowden enthusiastically endorsed the position of most suffrage societies, and whatever his private ambivalence, so did Bruce Glasier. Anderson and Jowett, on the other hand, were two of the ILP's 'leadership' who worked through the PSF.

Both adult and equal suffragists, though, operated within the context of a shared ideology. The ILP's main constituency remained masculine workers and trade unionists: for equal suffragists women's claim to political representation was perceived to lie not in their identity as waged workers, but rather in abstract notions of 'citizenship' and 'justice', or in their role as 'domestic' beings. 'Women' and 'workers' remained distinctive entities. Adult suffragists appealed to the ILP's identity as a 'working-class' party to denounce limited suffrage: there is no evidence, though, that they rejected women's primarily 'domestic' identity.

The suffrage agitation did, though, have an impact on ILP thinking: the importance of 'political' reform could no longer be dismissed out of hand, while it became clear that the party's appeals could no longer be directed exclusively at men. The eruption of militancy in its various forms provided

ILP men with a new challenge. It was not its perceived insurgent zeal (or even illegality) which upset them: they responded by developing a role for themselves as militants' 'manly' defenders and bodyguards. At the same time, they did not necessarily feel threatened by women's presence in the 'public' arena, and approval was expressed when 'militant' zeal was seen as manifesting itself in the 'public' sphere of industrial action. The break came when militants were thought to be prioritising suffrage over the socialist cause: it became clear that not even all equal suffragists (such as for example Bruce Glasier) considered suffrage as an integral part of the march to socialism, but rather as a worthy but separate cause. It remains to be seen how ILP men responded when adult suffrage became 'practical politics' in 1911.

CHAPTER 4

'POLITICAL DEMOCRACY IS THE PRELUDE TO SOCIAL DEMOCRACY'. INDUSTRIAL UNREST AND POLITICAL REFORM, 1911-1914.

In November 1911 the Prime Minister informed a PSF deputation that in the next parliamentary session the government would introduce a Manhood Suffrage Bill open to women's suffrage amendments.

The announcement provoked an immediate response from the *Labour Leader*. As 'J.J.M.', the paper's parliamentary correspondent, put it, the political situation had suddenly become one 'of the tensest interest'.¹ Initially, the response reflected that of suffrage societies, and the chances that women would be able to be enfranchised through this measure were rated very low. It was emphasized that there did not exist a majority in Parliament in favour of adult suffrage, and that an alliance of Tories and 'enemies of women's suffrage among the Liberals and Irish' would secure the defeat of any such amendment.² 'J.J.M.' described the inevitable consequences in stark terms: 'Passes the Manhood Suffrage Bill. The sun of women's enfranchisement leaves the sky. At the end of the chapter women, excluded, sink in lamentation. Descends a voteless night'.³ An editorial defined

¹ *Labour Leader*, 10 November 1911.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Asquith's proposal as a 'mockery' and called upon the party to ensure that the government kept its promise 'that the Conciliation Bill should have a chance next year'.⁴

By the following week the approach had shifted. The *Labour Leader* contributors recognised, not particularly regretfully, that the Conciliation Bill had been effectively destroyed. As Harry Dubery pointed out,

although we would sooner have votes for women on an objectionable basis than no votes at all... the opportunity of relegating property qualifications to the limbo of dead things is too good to be lost.⁵

Hardie voiced the general opinion that a measure like adult suffrage, which would mean that 'man's hitherto unchallenged political supremacy is at stake', could pass both Commons and Lords only as a government bill.⁶

In response to a call for action from Head Office, at a meeting in December 1911, the City of London branch called 'upon the Government to introduce not a Manhood Suffrage, but a genuine measure of adult suffrage establishing political equality between the sexes'. The Labour Party was also reminded 'to act up to their expressed principles on the question of Adult

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 December 1911.

⁶ J.K. Hardie, *Radicals and Reform. Being a Statement for the Inclusion of Women in the Forthcoming Reform Bill*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, 1912), pp. 7-8. See also *Labour Leader*, 17 November 1911; 1 December 1911.

Suffrage' in connection with the proposed Reform Bill.⁷ Similar resolutions in support of a government adult suffrage measure were also passed by a large number of branches, including Hebburn Colliery, Tunstall,⁸ Southall and Oxford.⁹

This was seen as a golden opportunity to smooth over differences between adult and equal suffragists within the party. As Lansbury pointed out, for the past seven years the party had been divided over the question of women's suffrage, 'owing to the wish of some of us to compromise on the subject in order to remove sex disqualification'. All this, though, was now in the past. It was now possible to 'join forces' and demand that the government include women in the forthcoming bill.¹⁰ Bruce Glasier, who had just become editor of *The Socialist Review*,¹¹ was in a minority in still viewing the issue as one of a democratic measure versus one which only included 'property suffrage' for women. According to him, socialists would have to decide 'whether a partial enfranchisement of women will or will not be acceptable'.¹² His own opinion was clear: 'any Bill which excludes

⁷ City of London ILP Minutes, 14 December 1911, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. See also 'Political Equality Campaign', Official Circular from Head Quarters, December 1911; F. Drummond to H. Bryan, n.d., both City of London ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

⁸ *Labour Leader*, 26 January 1912.

⁹ *Ibid*, 2 February 1912. See also 9 February 1912; 1 March 1912.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 17 November 1911. See also 24 November 1911.

¹¹ NAC Minutes, 22-23 January 1912, ILP Archive.

¹² 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1912, pp. 323-4.

working-class women... simply because they did not possess property... would not... be a recognition of women's rights...'.¹³ His opinion of equal suffrage had shifted since his time as *Labour Leader* editor. In November 1911 he confided to his diary that the

spinsters-and-pay-rate measure I have grown more and more to detest. Hardie gave us I now think a bad lead on this question. The Pankhursts too much persuaded him.¹⁴

In general, though, the debate between equal and adult suffragists within the party was considered to be over. Even more optimistically, Dubery saw in the situation an opportunity not only to bring back together equal and adult suffragists, but also to welcome back into the party fold many of its 'best women-workers', who had left the ILP 'to force to the front the question of votes for women'. He thought the time had come when 'our comrades in the women's movement can stand shoulder to shoulder with us "whole hoppers"...'.¹⁵

ILPers also committed themselves to opposing any measure which did not include any provision for women. In November 1911 the NAC had decided to press for a government adult suffrage measure and 'to inaugurate a national campaign throughout the country in favour of full and complete political democracy'. It had also resolved that 'proposals for franchise

¹³ Ibid, March 1912, p. 10.

¹⁴ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 23 November 1911, Glasier Papers.

¹⁵ *Labour Leader*, 1 December 1911.

extension which do not confer citizenship upon women should be definitely opposed'.¹⁶

The Southall ILP, after calling upon suffragist MPs to vote in support of the inclusion in the Reform Bill of all women over twenty one, protested against 'the tactics of those who, in the interests of a small and selfish minority of the women are prepared to sacrifice the extension of the working-class franchise'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, most other resolutions (or possibly, those published by the *Labour Leader*) supported the policy of opposing any purely masculine franchise bill.¹⁸

The next step was to obtain the Labour Party's endorsement of the policy, in addition to its existing commitment to adult suffrage.¹⁹ In January 1912 the Labour Party Conference voted for a resolution proposed by Arthur Henderson²⁰ and Anderson, which declared a manhood suffrage measure 'unacceptable'. The position of the *Labour Leader* on the issue was unambiguous, and Smillie's announcement that the miners would be opposing the resolution was viewed with open hostility: their action had

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 24 November 1911; 'Report from Head Office', 18 November 1911, NAC Minutes, ILP Archive.

¹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 24 November 1911. See also 5 January 1912 for the position of the Ashington branch.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 24 November 1911; 15 December 1911; 1 March 1912.

¹⁹ 'Report from Head Office', 11 December 1911, NAC Minutes, ILP Archive.

²⁰ A foundry workers' leader, in 1903 Henderson, while still a Liberal agent, had won a by-election at Barnard Castle under the auspices of the LRC. Never a member of the ILP, in 1911 he was elected Labour Party general secretary. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. I, pp. 161-7.

brought the party near to 'eternal disgrace'.²¹ At an adult suffrage meeting at the London Albert Hall, organised jointly by ILP, Labour Party and Fabian Society, MacDonald (since 1911 the Labour Party's chairman) further stated the party's willingness to 'turn out the government' on the issue of women's suffrage.²² Eventually, a resolution was passed with overwhelming support assuring 'the Government that no measure of Manhood Suffrage will be acceptable to the organised forces of Labour throughout the kingdom', and demanding adult suffrage.²³

The *Labour Leader's* uncompromisingly hostile attitude towards a suffrage measure limited to men may have led it to underestimate the extent of the feeling within the party that any extension of the franchise should be supported. Even the paper's editor took it for granted that in electoral contests manhood suffrage would greatly benefit the party, by enfranchising 'about four million new voters, a large proportion of whom are young, keen supporters of the Labour and Socialist movements'.²⁴ Nevertheless, manhood suffrage could only be supported by 'a dishonourable sacrifice of

²¹ *Labour Leader*, 2 February 1912. Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 224-5.

²² *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1912. But see also Macdonald's qualifications, *ibid*, and Edgar Lansbury's observation that nobody present at the demonstration 'can possibly be under the delusion that any Labour member pledged himself to vote against the Government in the event of the proposed Manhood Suffrage Bill being passed through', 23 February 1912. See also R. Cavendish-Bentinck to J.R. MacDonald, 9 February 1912, Ramsay MacDonald Papers.

²³ *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1912.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 17 November 1911.

principle', whose result would be the exclusion of women 'from citizenship and political equality'.²⁵ A measure which extended the franchise to men only was 'a gross affront and injustice to women'²⁶ and an 'insult',²⁷ as well as, according to Lansbury, 'a most flagrant attempt to belittle the work women have been doing this past fifty years to obtain justice'.²⁸ Hardie defined the issue as 'a test question for democracy'.²⁹

James Mylles, the London Divisional organiser, pointed out in the *Labour Leader* that the very fact that a Manhood Suffrage Bill had been introduced was due to the women's campaigns, but that then it sought 'to rob them of the fruits of labour'. There had been no comparable demand for manhood suffrage: 'There has been no cry from unenfranchised men pleading for the opportunity to serve as citizens in the counsels of the nation.'³⁰

In a letter to the *Labour Leader* Henry Norton pushed the argument further, and emphasized the greater importance of removing 'the sex disability than merely to increase the number of men voters'.³¹ This position, which echoed equal suffragists' earlier arguments about women's distinctive disabilities, was supported by the writer of the 'Notes' column in the *Labour*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 November 1911.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 November 1911.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 November 1911.

²⁹ Hardie, *Radicals*, p. 5.

³⁰ *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1912. See also 17 November 1911, Hardie, *Radicals*, p. 5.

³¹ *Labour Leader*, 1 December 1911.

The franchise wrong to women is far deeper and harsher than any franchise wrong to men. It brands women as occupying an inferior status in the community... Millions of men are disfranchised [sic] for many reasons, but none are disfranchised [sic] because they are men.³²

Rather disingenuously, Mylles also pointed out that by championing adult suffrage, the party would win the support of thousands of men and women, 'raised to citizenship by our efforts'.³³

At Hardie's insistence, the NAC had decided in November 1911 that its policy was to be supported by a nationwide Political Equality Campaign,³⁴ secretly organised in consultation with the NUWSS' parliamentary secretary, Catherine Marshall.³⁵ The aim was 'to reach the trade unionists and the workers in general' by distributing leaflets, holding 'hundreds' of meetings in 'industrial centres', as well as sending circulars and speakers to trade unions, trade councils, and local labour representation committees, 'with a view to getting resolutions passed and forwarded to local MPs and to the government'.³⁶ Branches were called upon to throw themselves in the

³² *Ibid*, 15 December 1911.

³³ *Ibid*, 12 January 1912.

³⁴ 'NAC Report from Head Office', 18 November 1911, NAC Minutes, ILP Archive; *Labour Leader*, 24 November 1911.

³⁵ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 88-9.

³⁶ 'Political Equality Campaign', Official Circular from Head Quarters, December 1911, City of London ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP

campaign 'with heart and soul'.³⁷

In December 1911, furthermore, the joint committee of the ILP and Fabian Society had decided to hold a 'Labour Demonstration on the Suffrage Question' at the Albert Hall, on 13 February of the following year. The Labour Party also eventually agreed to participate, each organisation providing speakers and sharing equally both expenses and proceeds.³⁸ The line up included Macdonald as chairman, with Hardie, Snowden, (though, on the night, he was absent because of illness) Anderson and Will Crooks as speakers.³⁹

Although *Leader* reports were unfailingly positive, it is difficult to view the campaign as a success. The NAC Report to the 1912 conference claimed that around two hundred meetings had been held, 'and much valuable educational work... accomplished',⁴⁰ but between January and March 1912 the *Labour Leader* announced less than a hundred. The speakers included (in addition to Annot Robinson, Florence Harrison Bell and other women) Lansbury, Snowden, Hardie, MacDonald, Tom Richardson⁴¹ and George

Archive.

³⁷ *Labour Leader*, 8 December 1911. See also 15 December 1911; 12 January 1912.

³⁸ F.J. to M. Macarthur, 12 December 1911, F.J. Corr.; NAC Minutes, 22, 23 January 1912, both ILP Archive.

³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 5 January 1912.

⁴⁰ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 20.

⁴¹ A Durham checkweightman, and one of the earliest members of the ILP in the north-east, in 1910 Richardson had been elected as Labour MP for Whitehaven. Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. IV, pp. 146-7.

Barnes. Meetings seem to have been spread over a wide geographical area, although mostly limited to England. MacDonald's itinerary seems to have been fairly typical: between 2 and 9 February he addressed a meeting in East Ham and one in Ipswich, then travelled north to Harrogate, Bingley, Warrington and Eccles.⁴²

It seems clear that some branches responded to the call of the campaign much more readily than others. The precise motive for this is difficult to establish, but the presence of enthusiastic supporters of women's suffrage obviously had an impact. It was Margaret Travers Symons (Hardie's secretary, who in 1908 had rushed into the Chamber, demanding that MPs deal with women's suffrage⁴³) who suggested at a meeting of the City of London ILP in December 1911 that the branch should organise an adult suffrage demonstration. This was agreed upon, and it was decided to invite Hardie and G.B. Shaw as speakers.⁴⁴ It is also not surprising to find the London campaign being opened in Lansbury's Bow and Bromley, the Bow Baths Hall being 'packed to its fullest extent' for a meeting addressed by Lansbury and the PSF's Miss Ward, the chair being taken by Mrs. Despard.⁴⁵ Two weeks later, the branch was busy submitting 'the Political

⁴² *Labour Leader*, 2 February 1912.

⁴³ Fulford, *Votes for Women*, p. 164.

⁴⁴ City of London ILP Minutes, 14 December 1911, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. Eventually, Hardie informed the branch that in view of the Albert Hall demonstration, it would not be necessary for a separate meeting to be organised in central London. *Ibid*, 11 January 1912.

⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 2 February 1912.

Equality demand' to local trade unions, 'with the offer to send speakers, and a gratifying response has been received'.⁴⁶

The Blackburn branch, which had been associated at conferences with a demand for adult suffrage, also distinguished itself by its enthusiasm and its supposed determination 'to make the people of Blackburn talk nothing but Political Equality'. It had organised 'several' mass meetings, as well as circularised all Liberal and Tory clubs and trade union branches with the NAC resolution, and had offered to send speakers to explain the ILP attitude.⁴⁷ The East Ham branch, on the other hand, showed itself far less enthusiastic about the campaign. Consideration of the resolution from headquarters, declaring that no franchise measure excluding women would be acceptable, was postponed to the Annual Meeting,⁴⁸ and although eighteen tickets for the Albert Hall demonstration were bought, by the end of January some remained unsold.⁴⁹ The Bristol ILP seems to have left the organisation of their Political Equality meeting entirely to the women's section. The branch's contribution as a whole seems to have been to wish them 'good luck'.⁵⁰

Despite such local variations, the impression is that, although this was not

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 16 February 1912.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 9 February 1912.

⁴⁸ East Ham ILP Minutes, 12 December 1911, ILP Archive.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 10 January 1912; 17 January 1912; 31 January 1912.

⁵⁰ Bristol ILP, 'General Secretary's Report', (Bristol, 1912), n.p., Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

admitted, the campaign failed to generate a great deal of enthusiasm. Although swiftly adding that 'no less than eight thousand people could have been present', the *Labour Leader* correspondent had to admit that the Albert Hall, holding twelve thousand people, had not been filled for the Adult Suffrage meeting.⁵¹ The Report of the Joint Committee of the ILP and Fabian Societies stated that around six thousand people had attended.⁵² The fact that seven hundred meetings were organised in July 1911 alone in connection with the party's Campaign for a Living Wage (even given the greater ease of organising outdoor meetings) is also instructive.⁵³

At the beginning of January 1912 Mylles had announced that the campaign would continue through February and March, but this seems to have petered out by mid March. By the second issue of the *March Leader*, Mylles' regular campaign column had disappeared.⁵⁴

This lack of enthusiasm seems particularly difficult to explain if one considers the high hopes which had been expressed during the campaign. Dubery looked forward to the time when, with franchise reform out of the way, socialists could devote their attention to more important issues:

⁵¹ *Labour Leader*, 16 February 1912.

⁵² Joint Committee of the Independent Labour Party and Fabian Society, 'Report of the two years ended April 30 1913', (Manchester, 1913), Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

⁵³ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 19. See also J. Mylles to City of London Branch, February 1912, City of London ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

⁵⁴ For the last issue, see *Labour Leader*, 1 March 1912.

'legislation that will deal with poverty problems'.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, a number of individuals expressed far more positive opinions about political reform, to the extent of pointing out that 'democracy' (in this case, understood as adult suffrage) was a necessary precondition to the establishment of a socialist society. As Mylles put it,

Political democracy is the prelude to social democracy. Without the power to impress themselves on the political system the people are not a democracy: they are only a crowd. When the people possess the right and the opportunity to vote... then democracy takes shape out of the crowd.⁵⁶

Only when democracy had been achieved would it become possible to govern 'according to the ideas of the people'.⁵⁷ Dealing more specifically with the claims of women, Hardie told the Adult Suffrage meeting in the Albert Hall that socialists had no right to 'revolutionise society... without giving women an opportunity to express their view', and added that 'it is a matter of no moment to me whether women vote for or against us'.⁵⁸

There were dissenting voices. In a letter to the *Labour Leader*, in which he opposed the rejection of a manhood suffrage bill, 'because it does not go all the way', A.J. Bliss pointed out that 'it is not by the vote alone... that Socialism will be established. Many of us have not and never have had the

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 8 December 1911.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 19 January 1912.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*. See also 12 January 1912.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 16 February 1912.

opportunity to vote direct for Socialism'. There is no indication in the letter that Bliss opposed the method of obtaining socialism through parliamentary action, the implication being that adult suffrage was simply not necessary for this end.⁵⁹ In an earlier letter, he had explicitly stated that 'Female suffrage, whatever its merits or demerits, is in no way the business of *Socialists as such*'. He feared that the issue would divide the party, but most importantly, and from a point of view diametrically opposed to Hardie's, he deprecated the introduction of women's suffrage

before Socialism is safely established... For of all women's qualities the most fundamental is her desire to *conserve*... surely dangerous to a party of progress such as ours is...⁶⁰

In response, Fred Hughes emphasized that to suggest that women's enfranchisement was no part of socialism represented a misunderstanding of the women's movement or of socialism itself. After all, 'the struggle for the vote is... only one phase of the struggle of women for industrial and social freedom...'. He believed that if socialism was to 'be built upon a patriarchal [sic] foundation, with women and children still considered as chattels of their fathers, husbands or brothers', women would be justified in opposing socialism.⁶¹ According to the editor, by 1 March the *Labour Leader* had received only one letter supporting Bliss' position, 'and a very large number

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 1 March 1912.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 2 February 1912.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 16 February 1912.

in opposition'.⁶² It is doubtful, though, in view of later events, how far the talked-about 'alliance of the Woman and Labour movements'⁶³ reflected a shift in ILP practices and understandings of socialism. As figure 43 shows, 'Labour' and 'Woman' may have been invited to sail in the same boat, but their nature remained clearly distinct, and the woman does not seem to have been provided with an oar.⁶⁴

This chapter's next section will assess the reasons why the campaign petered out as it did after such auspicious beginnings. It will consider whether, and how far, male ILPers' ideas about the role of men and women within society changed, as the industrial climate became increasingly tense. A further section will then concentrate on attitudes towards suffrage. While these proved relatively uncontroversial, the relationship with two of the main suffrage societies, the WSPU and the NUWSS, provided the focus of considerable debate, as the first developed new forms of militancy and the second built closer links with the Labour Party. Taking these debates into consideration, the chapter will then conclude by surveying ILP men's position on suffrage, as well as more in general towards franchise reform, in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of war, as a general election was thought to be imminent.

⁶² *Ibid*, 1 March 1912.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 16 February 1912.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 9 February 1912.

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM.



The Boatman to the Woman: "Come along, we'll row across together. You ought to have been over long ago."

[The I.L.P. is conducting a great campaign for the complete enfranchisement of all men and women. The Labour Party Conference has declared that no franchise bill will be acceptable which does not include women. A demonstration will be held in Royal Albert Hall, London, on February 13th.]

FIGURE 43. 'FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM'.

4-1. 'THE REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR OF THE MASSES...'

In August 1912, I.E. Philips wrote to the *Labour Leader* that, only a few months before, many in the party had been rejoicing at the newly-found connection between the labour and suffrage movements as

a combination of forces that would prove irresistible in the battle of right against wrong. There was some talk of the woman movement as the rightful wife of the Labour movement, but, if so, our step has not been in front, or abreast, but behind, and a hesitant one at that.

The situation had become one of 'relative silence and inaction'.⁶⁵ What had happened?

In January 1912, while the Political Equality Campaign was in full swing, the author of the *Labour Leader* 'Review' had observed that since the Leicester Labour Party conference of the year before, 'the nation has witnessed an industrial revolt of unique proportions'.⁶⁶ A month earlier, the editor had commented upon the development of 'a new spirit' among railwaymen, miners and other workers: 'a spirit of deep rooted revolt against poverty and social injustice'.⁶⁷ It was against this background of increasing

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 29 August 1912.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 26 January 1912. By way of comparison, while in 1906 479 stoppages of work had taken place, in 1913 a high point was reached of 1,459 disputes leading to strikes or lock-outs. Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis*, pp. 98-130.

⁶⁷ *Labour Leader*, 15 December 1912.

tension that the Political Equality Campaign took place.

In 1910 a ten month strike had taken place in the South Wales coalfield, while the Summer of 1911 had seen strikes of dockers, seamen and other workers in London, Liverpool and elsewhere. A national rail strike was called in August, although it was settled after two days.⁶⁸ The outbreak of a miners' strike in support of a demand for a minimum wage in March 1912, which involved, according to the *Labour Leader*, around a million workers, was too much for the men contributing to the paper. The writer of the 'Notes' stated that 'The strike... diverts for the time being the attention of the ILP from almost every other question'. The party had been 'running a very successful Political Equality Campaign', culminating with 'the magnificent demonstration at the Albert Hall'.

These meetings... will be taken up again at a later period, but for the moment our members feel sure that the full weight of the Party should be thrown on the side of the miners in their heroic struggle for a living wage.⁶⁹

When, soon after, the government programme originally devoted to 'political' reforms (including manhood suffrage) was changed to introduce a Coal Miners' (Minimum Wage) Bill, the setback to franchise reform was not lamented.

⁶⁸ Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis*, pp. 98-130.

⁶⁹ *Labour Leader*, 8 March 1912.

Electoral reform may now be crushed out of the programme of work, and in any case it has little interest for us beyond the opportunity it affords to do justice to the political claims of women.⁷⁰

Figure 44, a *Labour Leader* illustration, shows (a masculine) ‘Banquo of Labour’ stalking a parliamentary session devoted to electoral reform, Welsh disestablishment and Home Rule.⁷¹

Throughout 1912 and 1913 most ILPers maintained a positive attitude towards the strikes. The national strike in the coalfields was followed by a strike in the London docks, although the National Transport Workers’ Federation’s call for national support was unsuccessful. 1913 saw a strike of Dublin transport workers, with smaller actions taking place in Britain, for example in the Midlands’ metal trades. In June 1914 a ‘Triple Alliance’ of miners, dockers and transport workers was established.⁷² At the same time, though, male ILPers emphasized that ultimately workers’ emancipation would be obtained through political, not industrial action. Snowden re-stated the ILP’s rejection of syndicalist ideas, and socialism’s emphasis on the need ‘to gain the control of the state by political democracy’. It was through the state that ‘industrial democracy’ would then be established.⁷³ Anderson

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 10 May 1912. See also 22 March 1912.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 23 February 1912.

⁷² Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis*, pp. 98-130.

⁷³ P. Snowden, *Socialism and Syndicalism*, (The Nation’s Library, London, 1913), p. 214. See also ‘Socialist Review Outlook’, in *The Socialist Review*, February 1913, pp. 407.

THE BANQUO OF LABOUR.



"Avaunt, I and quit my sight."
—Macbeth.

Into a Parliamentary Session intended to be devoted to Welsh Disestablishment, Home Rule, and Electoral Reform, there has already stalked the dreaded spectre of Labour Unrest.

FIGURE 44. 'THE BANQUO OF LABOUR'.

described the strikes of 1911 as ‘a determined rising of the worst-paid workers’,⁷⁴ but added that ‘... industrial action cannot possibly supersede political action’.⁷⁵

There were few indications of any awareness that not all the workers involved in the disputes actually possessed a vote. Mylles had emphasized that the workers who suffered most were those who most often did not possess a vote with which to protest against their exploitation. He wondered how it would be possible to ‘reap the political result of the recent industrial unrest under the existing franchise system’? With the granting of adult suffrage, the field of battle would be shifted from the workplace ‘into the workshop where our national laws are made’.⁷⁶ As Anderson pointed out to the Albert Hall adult suffrage demonstration, he believed that the labour unrest should be resolved through political action, and therefore, ‘how dare we leave out all the women of the country and millions of men besides’?⁷⁷

Much more often, though, ILPers stuck to the well-established emphasis on the workers’ existing political power. Macdonald believed that in future, trade union conflicts would have to be played out in the field of ‘the State, not the workshop; the weapon is to be the ballot box’.⁷⁸ Figure 45, which

⁷⁴ W.C. Anderson, *What Means this Labour Unrest?*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, 1912), p. 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* See also *Labour Leader*, 13 June 1912.

⁷⁶ *Labour Leader*, 19 January 1912.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 February 1912. See also 13 June 1912.

⁷⁸ J.R. MacDonald, *The Social Unrest. Its Cause and Solution*, (T.N. Foulis, London, 1913), p. 104. See also Anon, *The Battle of the Ballot*,

appeared in the *Labour Leader* of July 1912, shows an unambiguously masculine working man using his vote to further 'Labour's Demands'.⁷⁹

A *Labour Leader* editorial of April 1912 was fairly typical in comparing 'the misery and suffering' inseparable from strikes and lock-outs with the 'wise use of the franchise', which would 'lead us steadily forward to our goal'.⁸⁰

It seems clear that the labour unrest effectively dragged attention away from the campaign for political reform. Despite earlier hopes of an alliance between the labour and women's movements, only very rarely was the connection made between the workers' industrial unrest and their often unenfranchised status. It remains to be seen why this should have been so.

Not surprisingly, considering contemporary industrial upheavals, the ILP continued to identify itself in the immediately pre-war years as a party of and for 'workers'. An editorial of September 1912 emphasized that the ILP's socialism was not divorced 'from the urgent, everyday questions that press with insistence over the working-man'.⁸¹ In addition, in a development obviously connected with the attention devoted to the industrial unrest, the

(Independent Labour Party, London, 1912), n.p.; *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912; 10 July 1913.

⁷⁹ *Labour Leader*, 18 July 1912.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 5 April 1912. See also 29 March 1912; 5 September 1912; 9 October 1913; G. Barnes, 'Trade Unionism and Strikes', in *The Socialist Review*, August 1912, p. 422. But see also *Labour Leader*, 27 February 1913.

⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 19 September 1912. See also 7 June 1912; 5 June 1913; 16 October 1913.

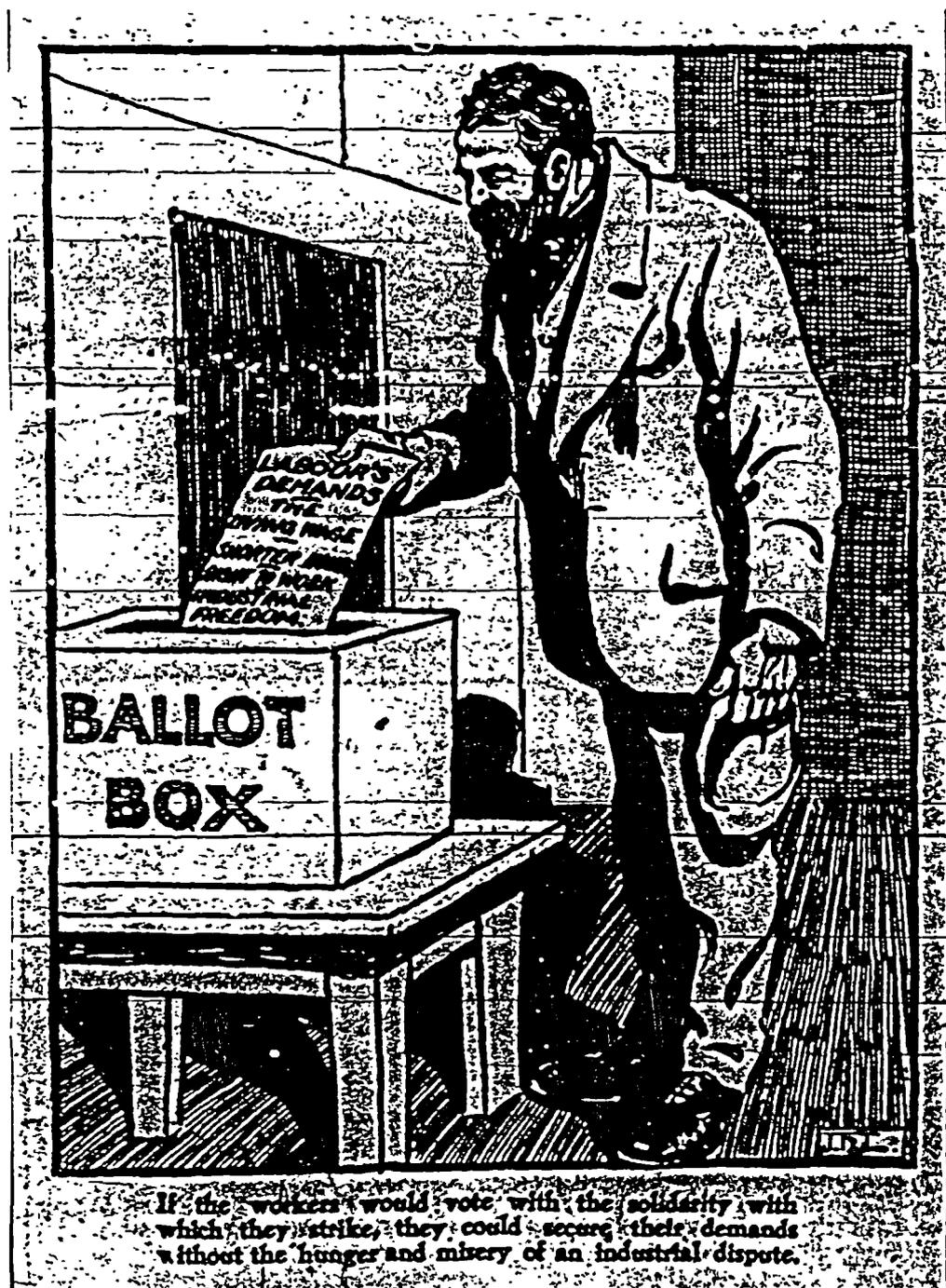


FIGURE 45. 'IF THE WORKERS WOULD VOTE WITH THE SOLIDARITY WITH WHICH THEY STRIKE...'

‘worker’ in question was to a large extent indistinguishable from the trade unionist with experience of industrial strife. As the same editorial continued, ‘... we must join wholeheartedly with our trade union allies in all their struggles to secure juster conditions in workshop, factory and mine’.⁸² Political power through the Labour Alliance was portrayed as the next stage in the development of workers from trade union organisation and industrial action. According to Vernon Hartshorn, it was up to ‘the Labour Party to give vent to the revolutionary fervour of the masses by forcing on legislative measures...’.⁸³

Although individual ILPers, such as Leonard Hall, were influenced by syndicalist ideas,⁸⁴ the party’s official position remained strongly in favour of representative government.⁸⁵ The progression of (a masculine) Labour from workshop organisation, to the Labour Alliance and finally Parliamentary representation is vividly depicted by the *Labour Leader* illustration reproduced in Figure 46.⁸⁶ Furthermore, it was emphasised that socialism could not be established without the support of trade unionists, ‘the

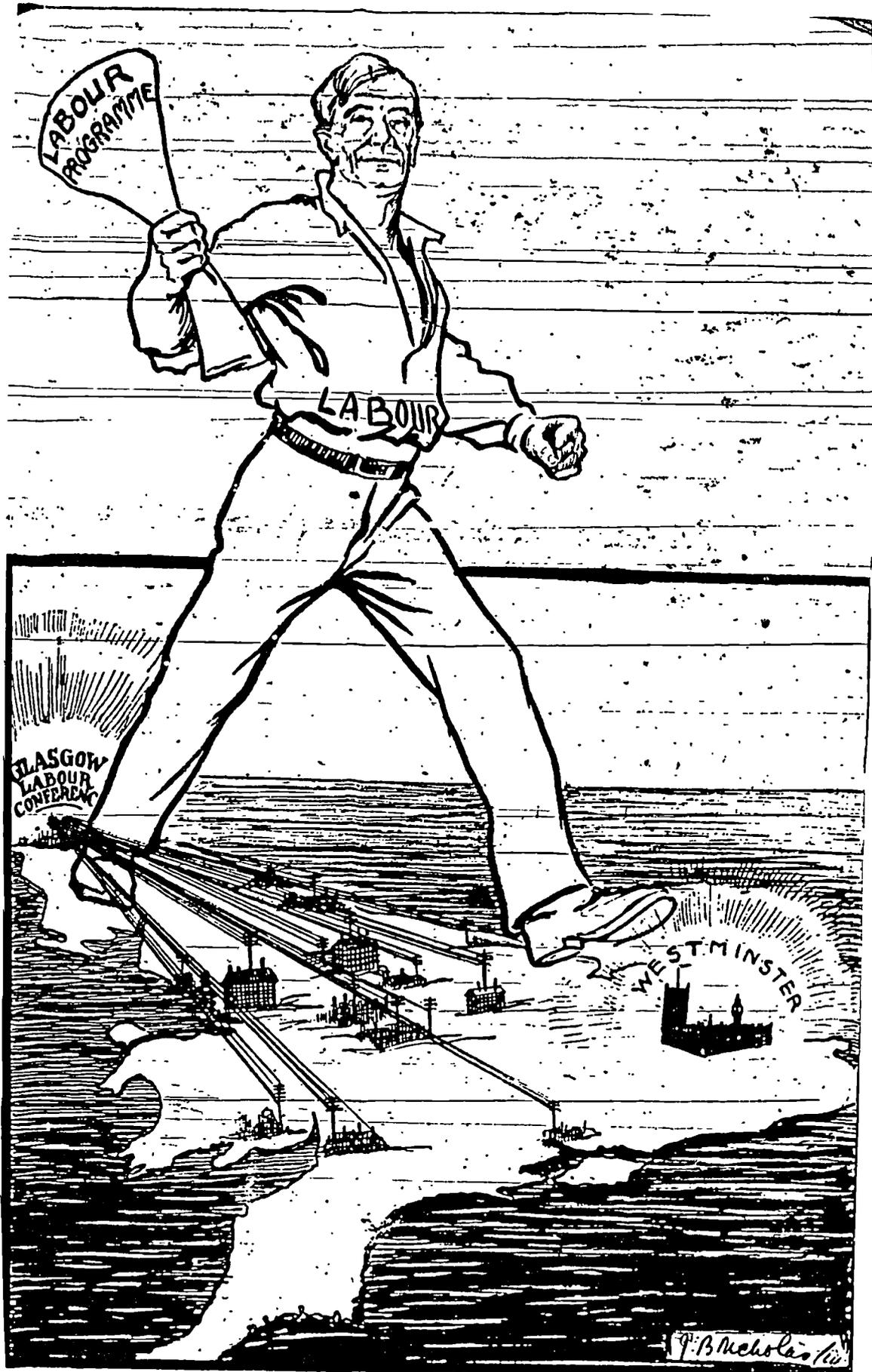
⁸² *Ibid*, 19 September 1912.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 12 January 1912. See also 19 April 1912; 31 May 1912.

⁸⁴ Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 58-9.

⁸⁵ Syndicalism was by no means a homogeneous movement, but in general, it did not look to Parliament or the state to establish socialism, but rather to working-class organisations, particularly trade unions. It was through ‘direct action’ that workers would achieve control over society and the economy. B. Holton, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914. Myths and Realities*, (Pluto Press, London, 1976), p. 17.

⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 29 January 1914.



FROM PARLIAMENT TO PARLIAMENT.

FIGURE 46. 'FROM PARLIAMENT TO PARLIAMENT'.

flower of the British workpeople'⁸⁷ and 'the cream of the proletariat'.⁸⁸ Speaking at the Halifax Theatre Royal, MacDonald presented the suggestive image of 'political' and 'trade union' 'armies' marching alongside each other, 'The Labour Party within Parliament and the Trade Union Party in the workshops'.⁸⁹

The party's rhetorical appeals still included women. As Herbert Morrison enthused, 'The Labour Movement heralds the Coming Day of the World for the Useful... In the consciousness of that, its men and women stand upright'.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, predictably, a concentration upon organised workers and on industrial strife meant also that ILPers' objects of attention were overwhelmingly masculine: miners,⁹¹ railwaymen,⁹² transport workers,⁹³ as well as dockers,⁹⁴ postal workers⁹⁵ and so on.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 10 May 1912.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 19 December 1912. See also 22 January 1914.

⁸⁹ J.R. MacDonald, *Labour Party's Policy*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, 1912), pp. 14-5.

⁹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 1 December 1911. See also P. Snowden, *The Game of Party Politics*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1913), p. 13. But see also the wholly masculine rhetoric of J. Arnott, *The Mending of Mankind. Darwinism and Socialism*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1912).

⁹¹ *Labour Leader*, 15 December 1911; 12 January 1912; 1 March 1912.

⁹² *Ibid*, 9 February 1912; 26 April 1912.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 31 May 1912; 13 June 1912.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 2 January 1913.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 19 January 1912.

Women's involvement in the prevailing industrial unrest was by no means wholly ignored. Strikes by women workers in the Vale of Leven in Scotland,⁹⁶ the new assertiveness of London County Council charwomen⁹⁷ and women shopworkers,⁹⁸ as well as the involvement of women in disputes in the Leicester trimming trade,⁹⁹ Black Country metal trades¹⁰⁰ and so on, were mentioned by the *Labour Leader*. The NAC Report to the 1912 Conference observed that 'the women-workers have been active in the brave struggles of the last twelve months. The number of organised wage-earning women have increased, and now stands at 222,000'.¹⁰¹ R.J. Campbell, speaking at a demonstration organised by the National Anti-Sweating League in the Queen's Hall in London, optimistically stated that there existed 'A new spirit... stirring today throughout the ranks of womanhood, and especially among working women'.¹⁰² Nevertheless, this spirit was hardly reflected among ILPers as a whole. While 'militant' male workers occupied whole columns, women were relegated to a few lines of small print.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 15 December 1911.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 12 January 1912.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 8 March 1912.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 12 January 1912.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 5 June 1913.

¹⁰¹ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 26. According to Barbara Drake, the number of organised women, which in 1910 stood at 183,000, nearly doubled in the next four years. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 46-50.

¹⁰² *Labour Leader*, 13 March 1913.

The image of women in the industrial unrest as workers fighting on their own behalf, suggested in these few lines of the *Labour Leader*, also competed with that of women as the wives of strikers. An editorial of December 1911, for example, feared that a time would soon come when ‘miners will fight hand-to-hand... against starvation and death, their advance hampered by the hunger of wives and children’.¹⁰³ Figure 47 shows both female figures included in the procession of workers outside Westminster as carrying a child, obviously emphasizing their role as mothers, rather than as industrial workers.¹⁰⁴ Short stories portrayed women as influencing their husbands’ decision as to whether to become blacklegs, or suffer the consequences of a prolonged strike.¹⁰⁵

Beyond the industrial unrest, women workers were not entirely forgotten. In the Summer of 1912 Anderson wrote with obvious pride that ‘the ILP has always concerned itself deeply with the industrial problems of the women-workers’ and that the party’s principles included not only women’s political equality, but also their ‘economic independence’.¹⁰⁶ Anderson was among a number of ILPers who as in an earlier period expressed a commitment to women’s ‘economic independence’, without elaborating on the exact meaning of these terms, and particularly, whether they implied a recognition of

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 22 December 1911.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 17 May 1912. See also 7 November 1912; 25 September 1913.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 20 June 1912; 11 July 1912; 27 February 1913; 25 September 1913.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 18 July 1912.



THREE BLIND MINISTERS.

Mr. JOHN BURNS (*with characteristic optimism*): "What's wrong with them? 'Don't they know John Burns is at the L.G.B.?"

Mr. ASQUITH: "Daresay there's something wrong, but I haven't a notion what it is."

Mr. LLÓYD GEORGE (*with flash of inspiration*): "Let's appoint a Committee of Inquiry."

[*The Government, it is stated, are appointing a Committee to investigate the causes of the Labour Unrest.*"]

FIGURE 47. 'THREE BLIND MINISTERS'.

women's equal status as workers with men.¹⁰⁷ Fred Hughes certainly seemed to be making a case for such an equal status when he protested in *The Socialist Review* against the forced restriction of women to the domestic sphere. He emphasized that

the ideal of the Socialist... is surely of a community in which equal honour will be accorded to the makers of homes and to the pioneers of thought and action, irrespective of sex... Woman is in the common world of work, and the working man must realise that either she will raise herself or drag him down.¹⁰⁸

Few others, though, would have entirely agreed.

G.L. Chiozza Money's¹⁰⁹ understanding of women's 'economic independence' within the socialist state of the future shows both how such notions did not necessarily imply a recognition of women's equal status as waged-workers, and how potent continued to be the identification of women with motherhood. Although he considered that marriages within the 'Great State' would be between 'economic equals',

motherhood, of course, will be the peculiar care of the Great State, and for a certain number of years the mother will draw her professional income as a mother, in addition to an

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 17 May 1912; 6 March 1913.

¹⁰⁸ F. Hughes, 'The Position of Women', in *The Socialist Review*, February 1912, pp. 150-1.

¹⁰⁹ Author of an influential work on *Riches and Poverty*, Chiozza Money had been elected in 1906 as Liberal MP for Paddington. Pethick Lawrence, Edwards, (eds), *The Reformers' Year Book*, (1907), p. 239.

endowment on each child, and the child will be in no sense dependent upon the work of his father.

From ten to fifteen years of 'most adult women's' lives would be dedicated to maternity.¹¹⁰

The issue of wages brought to the surface even more clearly the continued ambiguity among ILP men in their understandings of women's economic position. Generally, discussions could not divorce women's role as workers from those of wives and mothers.

In October 1912 Louis Williams defended in the *Labour Leader's* letters' page the decision of the National Federation of Class Teachers to recommend a lower minimum wage for women than for men on the well-worn ground that 'the woman... teacher is normally unmarried, and has no family responsibilities; the man... teacher is normally married and has...'.¹¹¹ J. Beanland, who had been appointed secretary to the Manchester MLWS after Brooks' departure from town,¹¹² condemned Williams' 'hybrid androcentric Socialism':

A man's wife ought to be as independent of his support as his

¹¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 15 March 1912. For the continuing currency of ideas of a male 'family wage' earner, see W.H. Ayles, *Bristol's Next Step*, (Bristol ILP, Bristol, 1912), p. 21. See also Bruce Glasier's belief that the very notion of 'economic independence' for women was 'fundamentally anti-social', in 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1913, p. 332.

¹¹¹ *Labour Leader*, 10 October 1912.

¹¹² *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, June 1913.

brother is, and will be when women have secured economic independence, towards which 'equal pay for equal work' is the first step.¹¹³

Although Fred Hughes emphasized (admittedly, rather ambiguously) that 'if the service of the women is equal to that of the men, the recognition should be equal',¹¹⁴ supporters of equal wages did not necessarily care to place particular emphasis on the equal value of women's work. In a *Labour Leader* article, Snowden advocated equal pay for equal work both because the present inadequate remuneration was the cause of 'the lowering of wages of men and the restriction of the employment of men', and because the hardships they suffered in the workplace meant they were 'unfitted... to rear a strong and healthy progeny'.¹¹⁵ In 1914, T.D. Benson tackled the issue directly in a letter to the *Labour Leader*, in which he condemned the National Union of Clerks' decision to press for a minimum wage of thirty five shillings for both male and female workers. He believed that its enforcement would mean the dismissal of most women from employment, since he doubted 'whether you get equal work as between men and women at the age of 21'. Men looked upon their work as a career, while women as 'an interval between school and marriage, and need not therefore take their work so seriously'. Furthermore, 'men are both physically and

¹¹³ *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1912. For Williams' response, see 24 October 1912.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5 December 1912.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 9 January 1913.

constitutionally better able to bear the strain of constant application than are women'.¹¹⁶ He condemned the National Union of Clerks' motives as 'another phase of the struggle for existence between the sexes on the industrial plane'.¹¹⁷ Benson's letter brought an impressive response, although to some extent he was justified in observing that no 'scathing indictment' of his opinion of women's labour had been forthcoming.¹¹⁸ Horatio Bostock, the Honorary Lecture Secretary of the Brixton ILP, was the most open in his positive assessment of women's waged work.

Women are doing the same work as men, and there are no signs of diminution of production, whether in mill, factory, or office, or coal mines when women worked in them.¹¹⁹

And while Herbert Elvin, the general secretary of the National Union of Clerks, harshly condemned Benson's 'ignorance' in 'assuming that all women clerks will eventually get married',¹²⁰ Fred Hughes to some extent elided the issue by emphasizing that the dispute was between 'serious workers' and 'dilettante and inefficient'. He pointed out that

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 3 April 1913.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 17 April 1913. See also 1 May 1913; 8 May 1913; 22 May 1913.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 8 May 1913.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 8 May 1913.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 17 April 1913.

... the woman (or the man) who takes up clerical work to earn pocket money merely as a preliminary to some other career is not wanted in the office...¹²¹

It seems clear that before the war, ILP men had not developed a coherent set of ideas concerning the role of women in the workplace. A general commitment to women's 'economic independence' and equal wages by no means meant a rejection of women's 'maternal' and 'domestic' nature. A number of male ILPers furthermore expressed their belief that women's distinctive nature and aspirations would 'naturally' make their position in the workplace a subordinate one. This serves to explain not only why the industrial unrest was portrayed as a masculine event, but especially why, when the political lessons were drawn from it, the connection between the need for workers to add to industrial action the conquest of political power, and the necessity of extending the franchise to women, was simply not made. ILPers reverted to modes of thought which had emphasized the separate nature of 'economic' and 'political' emancipation, and which had depended on the construction of the 'labour' on whose behalf the party was acting as composed of enfranchised male waged-workers.

Although there were notable exceptions, such as S.H. Halford's belief that arguments from 'biology or sex psychology... can knock the women's case into a cocked hat in ten minutes',¹²² male ILPers continued to see

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 10 April 1913. See also 24 April 1913; 1 May 1913.

¹²² *Ibid*, 19 December 1912. Halford was a regular contributor to *The Socialist Review*. See for example his 'Democracy and Industry', in *The Socialist Review*, December 1911, pp. 254-9.

themselves as committed to the cause of women's emancipation. Looking back upon twenty years of party history, Hardie proudly asserted that

Ours is the one political organisation wherein women stand on terms of perfect equality with men. From its earliest inception the ILP has taken a decided stand on the side of women's claim for political equality.¹²³

Anderson pointed out in the *Labour Leader*, that 'the supreme fact in our national life is the revolt of the workers against economic bondage'.¹²⁴ The exception was women's suffrage, the one measure of political reform for which there was still 'passion of feeling and purpose'.¹²⁵ Consequently, although the Political Equality Campaign was interrupted, and women's enfranchisement was not perceived as part of the solution to the industrial unrest, ILP men did not lose all interest in the matter.

¹²³ J.K. Hardie, *After Twenty Years. All About the Independent Labour Party*, (Independent Labour Party, London, 1913), p. 13. See also *Labour Leader*, 22 February 1911; 17 May 1912; 16 April 1914.

¹²⁴ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1913. See also 5 January 1912.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 5 January 1912. See also 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, March 1912, p. 1; *Labour Leader*, 9 January 1913.

4-2. 'A DEEP, STRONG, TRUE FEELING IN FAVOUR OF THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN'

By 1911, it was hardly felt necessary to justify women's claim to the vote. No new argument was developed, and old ones in support of women's enfranchisement were mentioned not so much with the aim of convincing, but on the assumption that they were generally held principles. Once more, therefore, it was emphasized that women should enjoy the 'rights of citizenship', and no longer be condemned to the status of 'aliens in the state'.¹²⁶ Women's enfranchisement was a 'recognition of the dignity of women'¹²⁷ and 'an act of justice'.¹²⁸ Speaking in support of the Second Reading of the Conciliation Bill in March 1912, Snowden stated that 'the basis of democratic government should be government by consent'. The fact that this did not at present apply to women was 'a violation of the first principle of representative and democratic government'.¹²⁹

At the same time, it was felt that women could contribute their distinctive qualities to political life. Suffrage supporters did not attempt to deny the existence of innate differences between the sexes,¹³⁰ but Halford's was an

¹²⁶ *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912. See also 17 November 1911; 27 March 1913.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 23 January 1913.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 15 January 1914.

¹²⁹ *Hansard Commons Debates*, 28 March 1912, 5th series, vol. 36, col. 709.

¹³⁰ See for example *Labour Leader*, 19 December 1912.

isolated voice in emphasizing that to grant women political power would mean 'a legislative tyranny of the most merciless kind', the inevitable result of 'the inherent incapacity for sympathy or understanding in sex matters which most educated women must manifest'.¹³¹ On the contrary, the benefits to political life which women's different natures, their 'fine enthusiasm,... quick insight, true intuition'¹³² would bring were emphasized. According to Wallace West, the very 'mental and temperamental equipment of women' would eventually lead them to espouse causes which had as their aim 'race betterment and the removal of social evils'.¹³³

Women could contribute their domestic expertise to the public sphere. Arguing for the inclusion of women's suffrage within the Home Rule Bill in 1912, both Snowden and MacDonald emphasized the pre-eminently 'domestic' nature of an Irish parliament. According to MacDonald, it would

deal pre-eminently with questions of public health, of housing, of the family, of factory legislation, questions that deal with the building up in Ireland of those domestic and those communal virtues in which women's experience is so very precious...¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 2 January 1913. See also S.H. Halford, 'Women, Religion and Socialism', in *The Socialist Review*, June 1912, pp. 302-8.

¹³² *Labour Leader*, 17 November 1911.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 15 December 1911. See also 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1913, p. 333.

¹³⁴ Hansard Commons Debates, 5 November 1912, 5th series, vol. 43, col. 1118. See also *Labour Leader*, 7 November 1912; 14 November 1912; 15 January 1914.

Occasionally, the claim of women to the vote as waged-workers was recognised. Just as MacDonald and Snowden had emphasised women's domestic role to advocate the inclusion of women's suffrage in the Irish Home Rule Bill, Lansbury emphasized that he wanted 'the women's point of view with regard to factory and industrial legislation to be heard in this House'.¹³⁵ For Hardie, at least, the 'industrial' and 'domestic' arguments in favour of women's suffrage were not mutually exclusive. He believed that men had obtained political power, and were at present using it 'to secure economic freedom'. Women were also

... a very potent factor in industry. Why should ... [they] have legislation affecting the conditions under which... [they earn their] living thrust upon... [them] willy nilly?

At the same time, legislation was increasingly being introduced dealing with 'children and housing.... Are these matters where we can afford to discard the voice of the mother and the housewife'?¹³⁶

It is interesting to note the extent to which ILP men who advocated women's need for the vote to improve their condition as waged-workers, were also champions of equal wages. And most importantly, as has already been seen, although there is no reason to doubt their genuine concern for the welfare of the women workers, such concern did not generally demonstrate

¹³⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 5 November 1912, 5th series, vol. 43, col. 1104. See also *Labour Leader*, 19 January 1912.

¹³⁶ Hardie, *Radicals*, pp. 13-4. See also J.K. Hardie to J. Redmond, 17 January 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive; *Labour Leader*, 15 January 1914.

an acceptance of women's equal status with men as wage-earners. Dubery, for example, in a *Labour Leader* article dealing with the employment of women in the civil service, and significantly, subtitled 'How should undercutting of men be met', condemned as 'ridiculous' men's pretence that they 'can keep women out of the world's work'. His central concern, though, was that women were used to depress men's wages and conditions of work. The solution to what he perceived to be *men's* problem, was for them 'to insist on "equal pay for equal work" and to demand the extension of the franchise to women'.¹³⁷

Although male ILPers' attitudes towards women's enfranchisement had not changed, the ILP's decision to undertake an adult suffrage campaign brought about a temporary rapprochement with the WSPU. Between November 1911 and March 1912, the ILP's rejection of any suffrage measure which excluded women was given sympathetic coverage by the WSPU's organ, *Votes for Women*, in rather sharp contrast to its previous lack of interest in the ILP's activities.¹³⁸ There is little evidence that the WSPU took a direct part in any of the Political Equality Campaign demonstrations, although it is significant that in January 1912 Christabel Pankhurst addressed with Hardie and Princess Bariatinsky (a Russian Ibsenite actress) an ILP demonstration in Glasgow, on which occasion a resolution was passed 'demanding adult suffrage, and urging opposition to any proposal which does not include

¹³⁷ *Labour Leader*, 8 August 1912. See also 22 August 1912; 9 January 1913.

¹³⁸ *Votes for Women*, 17 November 1911 to 29 March 1912.

women'.¹³⁹

After the Campaign folded, isolated instances can be found of WSPU speakers addressing ILP branches. In January 1913, for example, Sylvia Pankhurst was advertised as giving a lecture to the Briton Ferry ILP.¹⁴⁰ In May 1912 the WSPU organised a meeting in Merthyr to coincide with the ILP Annual Conference. The speakers, alongside Sylvia Pankhurst, 'General' Drummond and Charlotte Despard, were Hardie and Lansbury, and apparently they aroused 'remarkable enthusiasm'.¹⁴¹ On 14 July 1912 the London ILP branches cooperated with the WSPU in the organisation of a suffrage demonstration in Hyde Park. An 'ILP platform' seems to have been secured, Hardie, Lansbury, a Mrs. Slater and Dubery being the speakers, while Mylles took the chair.¹⁴² These meetings, though, can be seen as the swan-song of ILP/WSPU collaboration. By January 1912, Christabel Pankhurst was already warning Labour MPs that support for adult suffrage or opposition to manhood suffrage were not adequate. It was their responsibility to throw out the government if it did not introduce a woman

¹³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 9 February 1912, *Votes for Women*, 9 February 1912. See also *Labour Leader*, 29 March 1912.

¹⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, 2 January 1913. See also 24 July 1913.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 31 May 1912, *Votes for Women*, 29 March 1912. The NUWSS also organised a meeting the following afternoon, which was addressed, among others, by Snowden. *The Common Cause*, 6 June 1912. See also *The Merthyr Express*, 25 May 1912; 1 June 1912.

¹⁴² No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Minutes, 2 May 1911; 13 June 1912; 12 September 1912, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

suffrage measure.¹⁴³ By May, although she acknowledged the work of MPs such as Hardie and Snowden, she considered that the Labour Party was in alliance with an 'anti' government.¹⁴⁴ As her attitude hardened, so male ILPers adopted an increasingly hostile stance towards militancy. The WSPU had declared 'truces' to facilitate the passage of the 1910 and 1911 Conciliation Bills, but these had broken down after the government announced its intention to introduce a Reform Bill. The WSPU's subsequent militant actions took the shape of increasingly violent attacks on property, including organised window-breaking and arson, its aim being to provide a threat to public order.¹⁴⁵

Mylles was an exception in writing admiringly that

the great and growing army of women demanding citizenship have marshalled and drilled their battalions... Their crusade has spread to all corners of the country... the result has been a deep, strong, true feeling in favour of the enfranchisement of women.¹⁴⁶

In March 1912, the City of London branch could still pass (by the very narrow majority of six to five) a resolution of sympathy 'with Mrs.

¹⁴³ *Votes for Women*, 26 January 1912.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 24 May 1912.

¹⁴⁵ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 71-2.

¹⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, 12 January 1912. See also Hansard Commons Debates, 21 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 52, col. 142.

Pankhurst and her colleagues in their fight for votes for women'.¹⁴⁷

Occasionally, militants' heroism and self-sacrifice were still pointed out. Speaking in Parliament, Lansbury asserted that '... I have never met men or women so full of good, sound spirit, fighting for what they are ready to die for...'.¹⁴⁸ Emily Wilding Davison's death, after she had thrown herself in front of the horses at the 1913 Derby, seems to have aroused a good deal of sympathy at a time when attitudes were hardening towards militancy as a whole. The *Labour Leader* 'Notes' writer could not 'attempt to justify' her actions, 'but her courage, determination, and devotion must command the respect and, indeed, the reverence of all... The tragedy is that this noble heroism has been so ill-directed'.¹⁴⁹ The Brixton ILP unanimously passed a resolution expressing its admiration for Davison's 'noble self-sacrifice', which was described as 'an heroic end to a life of resolute good, unalterable will, and quenchless desire for universal happiness'.¹⁵⁰

Most male ILPers at this stage could only reconcile themselves to militancy when they could portray women as passive and as 'victims'. Lansbury, thus, presented a pathetic portrait of the women who had left the ILP to join the suffrage struggle. Some had 'gone to their eternal rest bruised and battered' from the fight, while others were dragging on an existence 'as invalids,

¹⁴⁷ City of London ILP Minutes, 14 March 1912, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. See also Middlesbrough ILP Minutes, 14 April 1913.

¹⁴⁸ Hansard Commons Debates, 28 June 1912, 5th series, vol. 40, col. 671.

¹⁴⁹ *Labour Leader*, 12 June 1913.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 26 June 1913. For Davison's death, see also 19 June 1913.

crushed and beaten in body, but their spirits still burning with hope...'.¹⁵¹

An interesting parallel is provided by the way in which ILPers dealt with the issue of prostitution, another activity undertaken by women of which they could not approve. Here too, female agency was ignored, and women were portrayed straightforwardly as victims. In his expose of an alleged miscarriage of justice in the prosecution of Queenie Gerald, a brothel procuress, Hardie was following an established tradition of contrasting 'rich men' and 'roues' with 'young girls, mere children' and 'maidens' who had been 'lured' from 'the paths of virtue'.¹⁵² This expose must be placed in the context of a moral panic in 1912 over 'white slavery', understood as the selling of (white) women to enforced prostitution abroad, which eventually led to the raising of the age of consent with the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912. Discourses surrounding such 'panic' centred on the role of women as 'victims' of male sexuality. As Lucy Bland has observed, 'The representation of women as helpless victims in need of male protection was a satisfying reflection for those, such as Asquith, up against the suffragettes...'.¹⁵³ Such a self-image was, though, also one sought by men who saw themselves as sympathetic to suffrage, if not to 'suffragettes'.

In 1912 in particular, ILP men concentrated their attacks on what they

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 17 November 1911. See also 26 September 1912.

¹⁵² J.K. Hardie, *The Queenie Gerald Case. A Public Scandal*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, 1913). See also *The Vote*, 29 August 1913; *The Common Cause*, 26 September 1913; *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, August/September 1913, for support from suffrage societies.

¹⁵³ Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 297-304.

perceived as the excessively harsh sentences being passed upon militants. Commenting on the sentence of six months with hard labour imposed on suffragettes for breaking windows in the West End, the *Labour Leader* 'Review' writer emphasized that the crime was 'essentially political in spirit'. And even if this extenuating circumstance was overlooked, 'to punish an act of window-breaking by a long term of hard labour is obviously a far greater crime...'.¹⁵⁴ Comparisons were made with other political 'militants'. In the Summer of 1912, Lansbury emphasized that the sentences of five years penal servitude which had been passed on Mary Leigh and Gladys Evans for attempting to set fire to the Dublin Theatre Royal to coincide with a visit by Asquith¹⁵⁵ were excessive. He pointed out that this was the Dublin where 'a few days before men who had destroyed a sanatorium were sentenced only to a few weeks' imprisonment', where the Phoenix Park murders had taken place and 'the revolutionary Nationalist movement' had its headquarters.¹⁵⁶

In February 1913, the sentences imposed on Bow activists for breaking windows were condemned. It was emphasized that 'wealthy suffragists' had been placed in the second division for similar offences: 'There is one law for the West End of London and one for the East'.¹⁵⁷ Branches joined in the chorus of protest. Resolutions calling upon the Home Secretary to secure the

¹⁵⁴ *Labour Leader*, 5 April 1912. See also 24 May 1912; Hansard Commons Debates, 5th series, 31 March 1913, vol. 51, vol. 172-4.

¹⁵⁵ *Labour Leader*, 15 August 1912.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 15 August 1912.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 20 February 1913. See also ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 88.

reduction of the heavy sentences imposed by ‘biased judges and magistrates’ were passed by Finsbury¹⁵⁸ and Govanhill,¹⁵⁹ while the Kensal Rise and West Kilburn ILP recorded, ‘with feelings of indignation and horror, its emphatic protest against the vindictive, so-called deterrent sentences passed on the Dublin women...’.¹⁶⁰

The prison treatment of militants continued to arouse indignation among male ILPers. Lansbury (until his loss of the Bow and Bromley seat in December 1912) and Hardie regularly asked parliamentary questions on the issue, although other ILP MPs, including Snowden, did so to a far lesser extent.¹⁶¹ Both they and ILPers outside Parliament still supported militants’ claim to be considered political prisoners and placed in the first division and for a distinction to be made, as Hardie put it, ‘between the altruistic offender and the sordid and selfish motive of the ordinary criminal’.¹⁶² In June 1912 the London and South-Eastern Counties Divisional Council agreed to cooperate with the MLWS in the organisation

¹⁵⁸ *Labour Leader*, 29 March 1912.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 12 April 1912.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 29 August 1912. See also 31 May 1912; 22 August 1912; 26 June 1913.

¹⁶¹ See H. Franklin to J.K. Hardie, 28 April 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive, for Franklin’s recognition of ‘the splendid way you have helped us inside the House of Commons...’.

¹⁶² Hansard Commons Debates, 22 May 1912, 5th series, vol. 38, col. 2023. See also *Labour Leader*, 27 June 1912; 11 July 1912; *Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage*, June 1912. It is interesting to note that after the summer of 1912, possibly as militant violence increased, the issue was no longer raised.

of a Trafalgar Square demonstration in support of the demand for the first class treatment of suffragist prisoners.¹⁶³ Privately, though, Harry Dubery (the honorary secretary) informed Herbert Bryan (the Divisional secretary) that the Council should not put itself 'to any serious bother in finding speakers', although to ignore the Men's League's request 'would be to lay ourselves open to unnecessary criticism'.¹⁶⁴

Forcible feeding continued to be condemned as a 'degrading torture'¹⁶⁵ and an 'awful and brutal process'.¹⁶⁶ Snell emphasized that 'this unsupervised physical violence inflicted upon delicate women in the name of the law must stop',¹⁶⁷ whilst Hardie echoed militants' own arguments by asserting that 'this outrage is equal to the worst form of outrage that can be perpetuated upon a woman - every feeling is violated'.¹⁶⁸ A resolution from Bow and Bromley described 'such methods of dealing with political offenders as barbarous and unworthy of a nation claiming to be civilised'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Minutes, 13 June 1912; H. Bryan to Council members, 23 May 1912, No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Correspondence Files, both H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

¹⁶⁴ H. Dubery to H. Bryan, 26 May 1912, No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

¹⁶⁵ *Labour Leader*, 19 April 1912.

¹⁶⁶ Brockway, *Socialism over Sixty Years*, p. 97. See also *Labour Leader*, 2 July 1914.

¹⁶⁷ *Labour Leader*, 10 April 1913.

¹⁶⁸ Hansard Commons Debates, 28 June 1912, 5th series, vol. 40, col. 660. See also *ibid*, 5 August 1912, 5th series, vol. 41, col. 2778.

¹⁶⁹ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1913. See also 16 October 1913; 4 July 1912; East Ham ILP Minutes, 15 May 1912, ILP Archive.

More spectacularly, in June 1912, when the Prime Minister answered in a dismissive manner questions in the House by Tim Healy on forcible feeding, Lansbury left his place and ‘probably without knowing what he was doing... found himself at the table of the House thundering a passionate denunciation in the very teeth of the offending ministers’.¹⁷⁰ He eventually obeyed the Speaker’s instruction to leave the House, but not before having shouted at Asquith that

You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! You may talk about principle and fight in Ulster. You ought to be driven out of public life. You do not know what principle is...¹⁷¹

On the whole, Lansbury’s outburst was viewed sympathetically within the party, although ‘J.J.M.’ justified it more in terms of the man’s impulsive character, rather than the justice of the cause he championed. Lansbury was described as ‘warm-hearted, reckless, dashing and exuberant as a river in flood...’.¹⁷² The Birmingham Federation, the Radstock and Smallheath¹⁷³ and the High Wycombe ILP¹⁷⁴ passed supportive resolutions. Among the letters of congratulations received by Lansbury were those of a number of

¹⁷⁰ *Labour Leader*, 27 June 1912.

¹⁷¹ Hansard Commons Debates, 25 June 1912, 5th series, vol. 40, col. 218.

¹⁷² *Labour Leader*, 27 June 1912. See also Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 256-7; Lansbury, *My Life*, pp. 118-9.

¹⁷³ *Labour Leader*, 11 July 1912.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 18 July 1912.

ILP men. John Edwards, for example, expressed his belief that the government was

acting in a most wicked and brutal manner, and the ordinary forms of expression are incapable of conveying to them the sense of utter abhorrence which decent men ought to feel towards them...¹⁷⁵

Beanland declared himself 'glad to have met... one man who has blood in his veins'.¹⁷⁶

In the privacy of his own diary, though, Bruce Glasier expressed himself rather differently. He saw the whole incident as

... a mere outbreak of self-consciousness and see-what-a-good-boy-am-I-miss. [sic] Lansbury is a bit of a fool. The whole attempt to work up the hysterical heroics of the women into a sublime display of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, is rather sickening: and the fact that Hardie... is taking part in it, seems to warn us of the dangers of feminism in politics. But the Western world generally... appears to be afflicted with nerves.¹⁷⁷

It is not surprising that it should be MacDonald who, in the aftermath of

¹⁷⁵ J. Edwards to G. Lansbury, 25 June 1912, George Lansbury Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science Archives, London School of Economics.

¹⁷⁶ J. Beanland to G. Lansbury, 26 June 1912, George Lansbury Collection. See also F. Smith to G. Lansbury, 25 June 1912; J. Clayton to G. Lansbury, 26 June 1912; B. Turner to G. Lansbury, 26 June 1912, all George Lansbury Collection.

¹⁷⁷ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 26 June 1912, Glasier Papers.

the incident, wrote a strongly-worded letter to *The Daily Chronicle*, to publicly lament the fact that the campaign of protest against the prison treatment of women was distracting attention from 'the wanton destruction of the movement for arming women with the parliamentary vote'. Lansbury's actions were clearly inexplicable to him. As early as April 1911 Anderson had tried to explain to him how to 'deal' with somebody like Lansbury, 'an honest big-hearted man far stronger on the emotional than the intellectual side',¹⁷⁸ but obviously with little success. MacDonald condemned the WSPU (although without directly naming it) as made up of 'women who are in a position to throw into collection plates... £10,000 at a minute's notice', a reference to a meeting held in the Albert Hall on 28 March 1912. Militancy was dismissed as 'this hysterical campaign'. Although 'the repulsiveness of forcible feeding stir [sic] up emotions which push every other feeling into the background', the fact had to be faced that 'the cause of women's enfranchisement is being ruined'.¹⁷⁹

It is difficult to gauge the reaction of the party as a whole to MacDonald's views. In a letter to the editor of *The Daily Chronicle* Frank Smith asked rhetorically whether while suffrage prisoners were 'enduring prison, and suffering undescrivable tortures; while some have been driven to attempt suicide, and many have had their health permanently shattered...' it was a

¹⁷⁸ W.C. Anderson to J.R. MacDonald, 4 April 1911, Ramsay MacDonald Papers.

¹⁷⁹ *The Daily Chronicle*, 27 June 1912.

time for labour activists to join the attack upon them.¹⁸⁰ Also, the ever vigilant Brixton ILP passed a resolution regretting MacDonald's attack on the militant suffragists and their motives 'as an indignity to the rank and file of the ILP'.¹⁸¹

Between March and April 1913 the Home Secretary Reginald McKenna drew up, and rushed through Parliament a 'Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Bill', which became known as the 'Cat and Mouse' Act. This was intended to deal with hunger-striking prisoners: when the latter's life was in danger, she/he could be released, but only to be re-arrested when her/his health permitted.¹⁸²

ILPers' reactions were initially rather muted. 'J.J.M.' condemned the bill as 'feeble'¹⁸³ and as motivated by McKenna's desire to 'save appearances':

When he releases hunger-strikers in future and is abused for his pusillanimy he will find his answer in the plea that he is going to run them in again.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ F. Smith to editor of *The Daily Chronicle*, 27 June 1912, George Lansbury Collection. Note the emphasis on the militants' passivity.

¹⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 1 August 1912. The Middlesbrough ILP also passed a resolution of protest at MacDonald's actions. Middlesbrough ILP Minutes, 1 July 1912.

¹⁸² Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, p. 191.

¹⁸³ *Labour Leader*, 20 March 1913.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 10 April 1913.

Hardie introduced an amendment to the bill, proposing a postponement to any strengthening of the law against hunger striking suffragettes until the government had made itself responsible for a suffrage measure which had passed its Second Reading. He clearly attempted to elide the question of militancy by emphasizing that a vote for his amendment would not be one of approval for suffragette tactics, but rather 'a protest against the breach of faith committed by the government in regard to the movement for the enfranchisement of women'.¹⁸⁵ The amendment was, though, defeated. Only eight Labour Party members voted with Hardie. These included Snowden, Charles Duncan, James O'Grady and Tom Richardson, Will Crooks actually voting in the opposite lobby.¹⁸⁶

It was evidence of the effects of the act upon Emmeline Pankhurst, who in April 1913 had been condemned to three years' penal servitude,¹⁸⁷ which apparently changed the party's attitude to one of outrage: once more, militants could be portrayed as the passive victims of government inhumanity. In June, the Middlesbrough ILP had circularised the party on the issue, and soon the *Labour Leader* announced that it had been receiving branch resolutions condemning 'the cruel treatment meted out by the government to Mrs. Pankhurst'. The suffrage leader's vulnerability was emphasized. She was described as 'distinguished' and 'determined', but also

¹⁸⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 2 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 51, cols 423-4. See also *ibid*, 8 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 51, col. 1121; 21 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 52, cols 141-2.

¹⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 10 April 1913.

¹⁸⁷ Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, p. 191.

as 'aged and ailing', while resolutions condemned the way she was dragged in and out of prison as 'torture' and called for 'a speedy stop to such inhumanity'.¹⁸⁸ As Alf Hunt wrote to Hardie, 'I can imagine no worse case of refined barbarism it is torture brought up to date'.¹⁸⁹ Resolutions were passed by South-West Ham, York, Marple,¹⁹⁰ Brixton,¹⁹¹ and a considerable number of other branches.¹⁹² Throughout July the *Labour Leader* also continued to receive resolutions condemning the Act as a whole. The Colchester ILP for example organised a public meeting, where a motion was passed defining the Act as 'a disgrace to the House of Commons and to the country'.¹⁹³

In the summer of 1913 the ILP could still rally round the militants when it was perceived that they were being victimised by the government, both through the harsh sentences imposed upon them and the treatment they received once they had been committed to prison. Nevertheless, there were already signs that attitudes towards militancy had hardened. Throughout the period under consideration, the ILP's bottom line policy was clear: the only

¹⁸⁸ *Labour Leader*, 19 June 1913.

¹⁸⁹ A. Hunt to J.K. Hardie, 16 April 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

¹⁹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 19 June 1913.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 26 June 1913.

¹⁹² See also *ibid*, 3 July 1913; 10 July 1913; 17 July 1913; City of London ILP Minutes, 12 June 1913, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive; East Ham ILP Minutes, 18 June 1913, ILP Archive.

¹⁹³ *Labour Leader*, 24 July 1913. See also 10 July 1913; 31 July 1913; 18 September 1913.

way to deal with political violence was to remove the injustices which were at the root of the discontent. According to the *Labour Leader* 'Notes' writer, the inevitable outcome of 'tyranny', where the sufferers had no means of 'constitutional redress' was 'violence and outrage'.¹⁹⁴ As Hardie was still impressing upon the House of Commons in June 1914,

... you may approve or disapprove, of this agitation for women's votes... but it will go on until this House does justice to these women... thereby removing the cause which leads to these disturbances.¹⁹⁵

A resolution on these lines was passed by the 1914 Conference: it pointed out that the only way of dealing with militancy and 'the attendant horrors of the hunger strike and of forcible feeding, is to remove the cause of same', and for the government to introduce a suffrage measure.¹⁹⁶

The government's responsibility in fostering the violence was emphasized. Instead of recognising women's claim 'to the rights of citizenship' it had '... exasperated many of them into acts of violence and lawlessness'.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, though, the militants' tactics were also condemned as counterproductive, however great the provocation. A *Labour Leader*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 17 April 1913.

¹⁹⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 11 June 1914, 5th series, vol. 63, col. 542. See also *ibid*, 28 June 1912, 5th series, vol. 40, col. 714.

¹⁹⁶ ILP Conference Report, 1914, pp. 122-3. See also *Labour Leader*, 5 June 1913; 23 April 1914.

¹⁹⁷ *Labour Leader*, 4 July 1912. See also 12 September 1912; 15 January 1914; Hansard Commons Debates, 2 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 51, col. 423.

editorial of August 1912, after suggesting that 'a hot sense of wrong' had affected the militants' judgement, admitted that the latter were '... being exasperated into violence and crime' by 'the tricks of legislators and the delays of Parliament'. Nevertheless, 'in some of their later manifestations the so-called militant methods have, we are certain, been the enemy of the women's movement'.¹⁹⁸

Anderson stated in July 1912 that 'the ILP has wisely refrained from either defence or blame, and has remained loyal and true to the cause itself'.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, 1912 saw ILP men take an increasingly strong stance against militancy. Those MPs who used 'the mistaken tactics of a few of those labouring under a... sense of intolerable wrong' as an excuse to vote against a suffrage measure they were pledged to support, were viewed with 'the utmost scorn and contempt',²⁰⁰ although MacDonald was also by the summer of 1912 obviously provoking concern on this score among suffrage activists.²⁰¹

'The extreme militants'²⁰² by their 'mistaken tactics'²⁰³ were, though,

¹⁹⁸ *Labour Leader*, 29 August 1912. See also 15 August 1912; 2 July 1914. But see also John Edwards' emphasis on the effectiveness of militant methods in history, 28 November 1912.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 18 July 1912.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 29 August 1912. See also 15 March 1912.

²⁰¹ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 84-6.

²⁰² *Labour Leader*, 25 July 1912.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 5 September 1912.

also upbraided for playing into those men's hands.²⁰⁴ The 'futile outrages' of the WSPU were condemned as counterproductive by the *Labour Leader* 'Notes' writer: 'if we were unscrupulous opponents of Woman Suffrage we should organise in every town in Great Britain pillar-box outrages such as the militants have recently committed...'.²⁰⁵ Even when the campaign of violence against property was limited to window-smashing, suffragettes were warned that public opinion was turning against them.²⁰⁶ Bruce Glasier observed in his diary in March 1912 that 'the tide is turned. The window smashing has roused great hostility against the women. No greater blunder could be conceived'.²⁰⁷ By 1914, the 'Review' was mentioning 'the bitter antagonism aroused by the militants in the country'.²⁰⁸ In 1913, in the context of the *Labour Leader*'s relative silence on the subject, 'J.J.M.' made quite clear his own opinion, echoing wider condemnations of militancy as 'pathological'.²⁰⁹

The truth about the military set in the Commons is that like the militant suffragists, they have lost their wits, and cannot any longer distinguish between ends and means. They are

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 4 July 1912.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 26 December 1912. See also 12 December 1912.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 8 March 1912.

²⁰⁷ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 4 March 1912, Glasier Papers.

²⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 18 June 1914.

²⁰⁹ Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, pp. 192-205.

By 1912, Bruce Glasier was making clear his hostility to militancy, both privately and through *The Socialist Review*. In an editorial of August 1912, he emphasized not only that the progress of women's suffrage was being threatened by 'the recent excesses of its too impatient advocates', but, most notably, also that the militants' 'violent methods' were 'wrong, and in their nature reactionary and anti-social'.²¹¹ In response to L.B. Warden's assertion that the women had simply 'resorted to the only weapon left',²¹² he crushingly stated that suffrage militants were

claiming a right to themselves as individual women to terrorise the community or the State - a claim which is fundamentally undemocratic, illogical and oppressive, and which... is calculated... to disprove their claim and to justify every form of personal and political tyranny under the sun.²¹³

His belief that 'the cause of women's suffrage is being quite suffocated by

²¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1913. See also 1 August 1912. For John S. Davies' solitary defence of militancy, and his emphasis on the latter's positive impact on the NUWSS' membership figures, see 23 January 1913.

²¹¹ 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, August 1912, p. 403.

²¹² *Ibid*, p. 78.

²¹³ *Ibid*, p. 11.

all these fantastic escapades'²¹⁴ was supported by MacDonald.²¹⁵ In a letter to *The Daily Chronicle*, he characterised the WSPU as 'a caucus which has never had the decent numerical proportions of the seven tailors of Tooley Street'.²¹⁶ Despite his continued championship of suffragettes in Parliament,²¹⁷ there are indications that Hardie's own attitude was hardening. His response to a WFL activist who in July 1914 wished to chain herself to a pillar of the House of Commons and give a speech, was that 'it is by work not by antics that the vote is to be won'.²¹⁸

Although the WSPU was only very rarely mentioned by name, it seems clear that it was at this organisation that critiques concerning militant tactics were mainly directed. The WFL was only very rarely noticed. Occasionally one of its speakers was reported as having addressed an ILP branch: Anna Monroe for example was received 'very sympathetically' by Manchester Central.²¹⁹ In 1912 the *Labour Leader* mentioned that the WFL had held a very successful summer campaign in Scotland,²²⁰ while in connection with the Holmfirth by-election Arthur Peters (the Labour Party's election

²¹⁴ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 5 April 1913, Glasier Papers. See also 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, June 1913, pp. 245-8.

²¹⁵ Hansard Commons Debates, 5 November 1912, 5th series, vol. 43, col. 1119.

²¹⁶ *The Daily Chronicle*, 25 October 1912.

²¹⁷ See for example Hansard Commons Debates, 18 March 1913, 5th series, vol. 50, cols 9118-9.

²¹⁸ E. Rushbrooke to J.K. Hardie, 29 July 1914, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²¹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 22 December 1911.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 29 August 1912.

agent) vaguely mentioned that 'I believe the WFL came in to help during the last two or three days'.²²¹

Suffrage activities of other organisations hardly received more attention. Snowden was present and made a speech at the first Congress of the Men's International Alliance for Women's Suffrage, held in London in October 1912.²²² The seventh Conference of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, held in Budapest in June 1913, was mentioned by the *Labour Leader*. Hardie took part as a guest of the Organising Committee.²²³ He seems to have been in touch with a variety of suffrage organisations: in April 1913 he agreed to present a petition to the House of Commons on behalf of the Actresses' Franchise League, WLL and WCG, requesting that women should be allowed to stand at the bar of the House and plead for their enfranchisement.²²⁴ In June 1914 he had met, together with other Labour Party MPs, Arthur Henderson, Charles Duncan and Charles Smith, a deputation from the East End Federation of Suffragettes.²²⁵

²²¹ *Ibid*, 27 June 1912. See also 9 January 1913.

²²² *Men's League for Women's Suffrage*, November 1912.

²²³ *Labour Leader*, 30 January 1913; 12 June 1913; 3 July 1913. See also 24 April 1913.

²²⁴ W. Mayo to J.K. Hardie, 9 April 1913; 12 April 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²²⁵ S. Pankhurst to J.K. Hardie, 2 July 1914; J.K. Hardie to S. Pankhurst, 3 July 1914, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. Originally promoted by Sylvia Pankhurst in 1912 as a branch of the WSPU in London's East End, and formally established in 1913, it developed a distinctive form of militancy, based upon the organisation of large-scale demonstrations of popular support for women's suffrage. Particularly after its severance from the WSPU in 1914, it developed close links with the 'rebel' section of the labour

Adult suffrage organisations fared no better, although the Adult Suffrage Conference organised by the PSF, and held in the Essex Hall in London in June 1912 was advertised by the *Leader*, and Snowden and Anderson were among the speakers. Branches were called upon to send speakers, but local response was not always necessarily positive.²²⁶ Herbert Morrison and the Divisional Council Secretary attended on behalf of the London and South-Eastern Counties Division,²²⁷ while the City of London branch not only refused to send a delegate, but also issued a protest against being defined by the PSF letter of invite as a 'men's organisation'.²²⁸

The one suffrage organisation with which the ILP developed extensive links in this period was also the one with which hitherto it had had little to do: the NUWSS. The defeat of the 1912 Conciliation Bill had brought to a head the growing disillusion within the NUWSS with the Liberal Party's attitude towards women's suffrage.²²⁹ Two months earlier, the Labour Party

movement, particularly Lansbury's *Daily Herald* League. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 416-20; 438-9; 465-87. See also Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst*, pp. 65-6.

²²⁶ *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912; 13 June 1912.

²²⁷ No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Minutes, 13 June 1912, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

²²⁸ City of London ILP Minutes, 30 May 1912, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. Eventually, thirty seven branches seem to have sent delegates. *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1912.

²²⁹ Originally, the Conciliation Bill was supposed to be a fall-back measure should the government's Reform Bill fail, but Cabinet disunity meant the latter's postponement, and the Conciliation Bill was introduced first. As a result, support for the all-party measure was undermined. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 66-75.

Conference had committed itself to vote against any franchise measure which did not include women. In May, the NUWSS announced its intention of supporting 'candidates who were not only themselves in favour of women's suffrage, but belonged to a party which also identified with it'.²³⁰ The Holmfirth by-election in June 1912 was the first occasion in which the electoral alliance was put into operation, the NUWSS supporting William Lunn, the Labour candidate.²³¹ Peters acknowledged the 'splendid help' received from the women representing the NUWSS. They '... contributed much to our success... the women succeeded in holding meetings in many cases of immense size, and did such yeoman service canvassing that it simply astonished us all'.²³² This pattern was repeated at all by-elections held throughout this period, praise being reserved particularly for suffragists' ability to hold large and enthusiastic meetings.²³³ Looking back upon the election campaigns of 1912, Peters emphasized that the Labour Party 'had no more enthusiastic supporters and workers than the members of the

²³⁰ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, p. 80. For the establishment of the NUWSS/Labour Party electoral alliance, and the work of the Election Fighting fund, see *ibid*, pp. 76-115. In April 1912, the MLWS declared its intention of supporting Labour candidates when standing against anti-suffragists, while in May the WFL had decided to support Labour candidates at three-cornered elections where this would damage the Liberal Party. See *ibid*, p. 80.

²³¹ *Labour Leader*, 13 June 1912.

²³² *Ibid*, 11 July 1912.

²³³ See for example *ibid*, 22 August 1912; 13 March 1913; 30 October 1913; 15 January 1914; ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 18; *ibid*, 1914, p. 27.

NUWSS. All their work and cooperation was purely voluntary in its nature'.²³⁴

By 1913, NUWSS speakers were regularly addressing ILP branches, and joint Labour and Suffrage meetings were being organised. In January 1913, for example, Mrs. Muter Wilson of the NUWSS gave the fourth of a series of suffrage lectures at Tib Street, the location of the Manchester Central branch.²³⁵ In July, Selina Cooper was reported as having addressed two meetings in Cudworth,²³⁶ while in March Margaret Robertson (the NUWSS organiser, and probably the most regular speaker at ILP branches) had given a lecture to the Cwm Avon ILP.²³⁷ In March 1913 a joint ILP and NUWSS meeting was organised in Manchester's Platt Fields, in connection with the ILP Conference. Speakers included William Stewart, Hardie, Egerton Wake and Fenner Brockway.²³⁸ On May Day 'a public meeting in connection with the NUWSS' was held at South Hylton. The Newcastle vicar, Rev. W.E. Moll, was among those who delivered 'eloquent and stirring

²³⁴ *Labour Leader*, 9 January 1913. See also 12 September 1912.

²³⁵ *Labour Leader*, 30 January 1913; Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 4 February 1913.

²³⁶ *Labour Leader*, 3 July 1913.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 5 March 1914. Most weeks, at least one NUWSS speaker was reported as having addressed an ILP branch. These meetings do not seem to have been limited to the most enthusiastic branches. Even the East Ham ILP, not particularly noted for its activities in support of women's enfranchisement, decided in September 1913 to invite a NU speaker. See East Ham ILP Minutes, 3 September 1913; 24 September 1913, ILP Archive.

²³⁸ *The Common Cause*, 28 March 1913; Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 20 February 1913; 4 March 1913.

addresses'.²³⁹ There were other signs of the increasing closeness between the ILP and NUWSS. In January 1913, for example, a committee established by the suffrage organisation prepared a special suffrage supplement to the *Labour Leader*,²⁴⁰ while NUWSS fraternal delegates were present at, and addressed both the 1913 and the 1914 ILP Conferences.²⁴¹ The NUWSS's Pilgrimage of the summer of 1913, when processions of women from all over the country marched to London, where a mass demonstration took place, was strongly supported, and branches were called upon 'to render all possible assistance to the pilgrims'.²⁴²

Initial reactions to the new NUWSS election policy were unambiguously positive. In May 1912 the *Labour Leader* 'Review' optimistically expressed the hope that

the united efforts of Suffragists and Socialists may result in gaining political liberty for women, and that when the right of citizenship has been recognised we may still work hand in hand for that economic emancipation without which there can

²³⁹ *Labour Leader*, 8 May 1913. See also 17 July 1913. Between 1913 and 1914 more than twenty joint labour and suffrage meetings were reported in the *Labour Leader*. See also Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp. 33-4.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 9 January 1913.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 27 March 1913; 2 April 1914. Admittedly, in 1913 Margaret Ashton had to solicit an invitation. See NAC Minutes, 23 March 1913, ILP Archive.

²⁴² *Labour Leader*, 19 June 1913. See also 10 July 1913. The NAC's refusal to be represented at a NUWSS demonstration at the Albert Hall on 14 February 1914, though, seems to show a desire to keep a certain distance between the two organisations. See NAC Minutes, 26-27 January 1914, ILP Archive.

In December 1912 the East Ham ILP had passed a potentially significant resolution, stating that neither Labour candidates nor Labour MPs should 'accept the support or patronage of politicians not members of the Labour Party...'.²⁴⁴ No explicit reference was, though, made to any suffrage organisation. The first open critique of the cooperation came in March 1913. George Barnes wrote to *The Daily Citizen*, condemning what he saw as the NUWSS's attempt to dominate the Labour Party with its money. In a strongly worded letter, which nevertheless, according to Bruce Glasier represented 'a wide-spread feeling in the movement',²⁴⁵ he dismissed the suffrage organisation as composed of 'rich dilettante [sic], many of them disgruntled politicians who have fallen out with their own folk'.²⁴⁶ It was Richard Wallhead, though, who became the harshest critic of the Labour Party/NUWSS cooperation. In a series of letters to the *Labour Leader*, he first of all condemned what he perceived as the suffrage organisation's opportunistic support of the party. He believed that as soon as the Liberal Party included women's suffrage in its programme, the NUWSS would switch allegiance. 'I object to our party being used as a tool to be cast aside

²⁴³ *Labour Leader*, 24 May 1912. See also 27 June 1912.

²⁴⁴ East Ham ILP Minutes, 11 December 1912, ILP Archive.

²⁴⁵ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 11 March 1913, Glasier Papers.

²⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, 13 March 1913.

as useless as soon as a better one is forthcoming'.²⁴⁷ Wallhead made clear that he saw the ILP and NUWSS not only as separate organisations, but as fundamentally antagonistic. Their only point of contact was support for women's enfranchisement.

It is extremely probable that in everything else we should meet their most strenuous opposition... As a Socialist organisation... [the ILP] becomes anathema to them.²⁴⁸

The suspicion that the NUWSS was ultimately an organisation sympathetic to the Liberal Party underlay the concern expressed over the cooperation by other ILPers. Writing in November 1913 to the *Labour Leader*, Egerton Wake²⁴⁹ asked why the NUWSS had decided to maintain a neutral position at the Keighley by-election. Although he expressed his concern in terms of the NUWSS' supposed 'patchwork policy' not being 'fair play', the real issue at stake was the presence in the society of 'women who are Liberals first and suffragists a long way after'.²⁵⁰

Supporters of the cooperation emphasized that during elections the help of

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 23 April 1914. It is interesting to note that Wallhead's daughter Muriel had been for a brief period one of the NUWSS' organisers. See *ibid*, 18 September 1913. Also, in January 1913 he had participated with Brockway at a week-long NUWSS/ILP campaign in Blackburn. See *ibid*, 30 January 1913.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 14 May 1914. See also 11 June 1914.

²⁴⁹ Originally a Liverpool printer, from 1908 Wake was active in Barrow. Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 430.

²⁵⁰ *Labour Leader*, 13 November 1913. See also 2 July 1914.

other non-socialist organisations such as peace societies, was not refused.²⁵¹ Most importantly, however, although Robert Cooper stated that the two organisations shared a common objective, ‘the abolition of injustice and inequality’,²⁵² no attempt was made to disguise the non-socialist nature of the NUWSS. As Anderson pointed out, all that was aimed at was ‘... a friendly unfettered cooperation between forces having a common rallying point in the political freedom of women’.²⁵³ The NUWSS had not attached any condition to its support, and the Labour Party ‘had not adopted its present attitude on Woman Suffrage because it wished to secure such support’.²⁵⁴ Speaking at the 1913 ILP Conference, he denied that the party had received any money from the NUWSS, although quickly adding that ‘the money of women who are fighting for their freedom was as clean and honest as any that could come from any section of the community’.²⁵⁵ Supporters of cooperation were satisfied with the NUWSS’ pledge to the NAC that even if the Liberals were to include suffrage in their programme, it would not support a Liberal candidate against a Labour one, if the latter’s attitude was considered satisfactory.²⁵⁶

Significantly, although the issue at stake was the relationship between the

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 7 May 1914.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 30 April 1914.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 7 May 1914. See also 20 November 1913.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 13 March 1913.

²⁵⁵ ILP Conference Report, 1913, p.54. See also NAC Minutes, 19 September 1912; 12 December 1913, ILP Archive.

²⁵⁶ NAC Minutes, 26-27 January 1914, ILP Archive.

ILP and a non-socialist organisation, opponents of the cooperation were by no means enthusiastic supporters of women's suffrage. As Tom Gibb stated, although 'the logic of the women's argument' made it imperative for an 'honest mind... to support their claims' he did not believe that women's suffrage (or, at least, equal suffrage) was a necessary precondition for the establishment of socialism, but rather would mean 'the stagnation of progress... for generations'.²⁵⁷ Anderson, on the other hand, emphasized how women's voteless status was 'poisoning the whole of our political life; it will more and more impede the progress of the other causes we care for...'.²⁵⁸

It is impossible to judge the feeling of the party as a whole on the issue. In February 1914, a joint conference on the relations between ILP and NUWSS was held in Nelson, the Coopers' home area. Even at such a local level, the feeling was difficult to gauge. One commentator stated that 'judging by the applause, the majority of the audience' agreed with Mrs. Penny, who spoke against closer cooperation between the two bodies.²⁵⁹ Two weeks later, though, a letter by B. Ingham, the Education Secretary of the Nelson ILP appeared in the *Labour Leader*: he considered that the majority of the meeting had backed Annot Robinson, who had spoken in support of the cooperation.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ *Labour Leader*, 2 July 1914. See also 14 May 1914; 11 June 1914.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 7 May 1914.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 5 February 1914.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 19 February 1914. See also 22 January 1914.

If the party was to some extent divided over the question of cooperation with the NUWSS, there seems to have been a general consensus over the policy to adopt in relation to the Reform Bill, even if individuals such as George Barnes may have been rather less than enthusiastic.²⁶¹ After the defeat of the Conciliation Bill in April 1912, defined by the 'Review' writer as 'one of the most shameful incidents in the history...' of Parliament,²⁶² and with the exception of Snowden's attempt to move a women's suffrage amendment to the Irish Home Rule Bill in November 1912, the ILP's attention was focused on the government's Reform Bill. 'We must... spare no effort to secure the extension of the franchise to all women as well as all men'.²⁶³

When the government bill was finally introduced in June 1912, it was judged by the *Labour Leader* editor to contain 'much that is excellent, much with which we agree', but also to possess 'one fatal defect': the exclusion of any provision for women.²⁶⁴ The ILP's position was seen as clear: the 1912 Conference had passed a resolution calling upon the Labour Party to vote against a Third Reading of a Reform Bill which did not include women. Hardie had emphasized that the ILP intended to stick to this policy even if

²⁶¹ G. Barnes to A. Mattison, 15 July 1912, Mattison Papers, Symington Collection, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds.

²⁶² *Labour Leader*, 5 April 1912.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 June 1912.

it meant a government defeat.²⁶⁵ The support of the Nationalist Party was seen as essential for the success of the women's suffrage amendment: in October, three ILP MPs, MacDonald, Snowden and Lansbury were reported as having contacted John Redmond, and been 'much encouraged by the sympathetic reception accorded them'.²⁶⁶ In January 1913, Hardie wrote to Redmond, requesting his party's support for a women's suffrage amendment, and making an appeal to the Nationalist leader's own political passion:

All that Home Rule stands for to every leal hearted Irishman, the vote stands for to millions of women in Great Britain and Ireland. It is longed for with the same passionate desire...²⁶⁷

In December 1912, having just returned from a journey to America, he issued a 'call to action' to the ILP. He appealed to the party to undertake 'a few weeks of glorious effort' in order to ensure the passage of a women's suffrage amendment to the Reform Bill. Street demonstrations and meetings were to be held, and both individuals and organised workers were to send petitions to their MPs, to make them understand that 'the nation is behind the demand of the women...'.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 19 September 1912. The Labour Party's attitude was not quite so straightforward: its Conference had only declared that no extension of the franchise would be 'satisfactory' if women were not included.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 31 October 1912. See also 14 November 1912.

²⁶⁷ J.K. Hardie to J. Redmond, 17 January 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²⁶⁸ *Labour Leader*, 12 December 1912. See also 9 January 1913.

In January 1913 the NAC issued a special letter to branches, urging them to action on the lines advocated by Hardie.²⁶⁹ As early as June 1912, the Kensington (Liverpool) ILP had passed a resolution urging the NAC to 'instruct the branches to hold meetings of protest against the Government's Reform Bill' because it contained no provision for women.²⁷⁰ In September, the Ealing branch called upon the Labour Party to place women's enfranchisement in the forefront of its programme for the forthcoming session, believing that the government would then 'be compelled to incorporate women in the Suffrage Bill'.²⁷¹

The greatest share of the party's attention was devoted to the issue of Labour's tactics in Parliament, and in particular in the event of the defeat of the women's suffrage amendments. The debate over suffrage at the 1912 Conference was, thus, dominated by a discussion of the NAC's declaration 'that any franchise reform which does not confer citizenship upon women should be opposed'.²⁷² Both Snowden and Lansbury spoke in favour of the declaration, the former emphasizing that 'nothing in the history of the Party

²⁶⁹ Circular from F. Johnson, January 1913, No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 12 December 1912; 2 January 1913; 9 January 1913.

²⁷⁰ *Labour Leader*, 20 June 1912.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 19 September 1912. See also 13 June 1912; 11 July 1912; 19 December 1912.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 31 May 1912. See also Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 229-30.

was more to its credit than the fact that it had always stood by the women...'.²⁷³ Lansbury pointed out that to go back on the declaration would brand ILPers 'as hypocrites and humbugs with the other politicians'.²⁷⁴ The support for the declaration proved overwhelming, only four votes (or six, according to the Conference Report) being recorded for the reference back. The dissent, voiced by Armstrong, (the Holbeck representative and National Union of Clerks and Leeds Labour Party president²⁷⁵) and Spencer, (the Uxbridge representative), emphasized that Labour 'should take every extension of the franchise they could get', and that manhood suffrage 'would greatly strengthen Socialist representation'.²⁷⁶ They felt that they were being asked 'to sacrifice the cause of progress in the interests of the women'.²⁷⁷ In a letter to the *Labour Leader* two months later, J. Lloyd took up a similar position, although for different reasons. Why vote against a manhood suffrage measure, he asked, which offered the chance of establishing 'an electorate undeniably far more favourable to women's suffrage'?²⁷⁸

Opinion within the party, though, seems to have been overwhelmingly in

²⁷³ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 53. See also *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912.

²⁷⁴ *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912. See also ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 54.

²⁷⁵ Bellamy, Saville, (eds), *DLB*, vol. V, pp. 8-10.

²⁷⁶ *Labour Leader*, 31 May 1912.

²⁷⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 54.

²⁷⁸ *Labour Leader*, 18 July 1912.

favour of the official position. Thomas Rogers, therefore, was more typical in calling upon the party to have ‘the courage, the nobility, the wisdom to rise to the occasion’ and warn Redmond ‘fearlessly... that unless women are included... [in] the Franchise Bill, the party will put the government in danger by voting against the Third Reading’.²⁷⁹ A considerable number of resolutions from branches were published by the *Labour Leader*, requesting the party to vote against a third reading of a bill which did not consider women. These included Bolton,²⁸⁰ Leyton,²⁸¹ Wadsworth²⁸² and Market Harborough.²⁸³

Of the ILP MPs, Hardie and Snowden had also made clear their position. Speaking at Heanor in June 1912, Hardie had emphasized his belief that ‘The Bill to give votes to more men whilst women were still unenfranchised was adding insult to injury...’.²⁸⁴

Privately, though, the ILP front was not entirely united. According to Bruce Glasier’s diary, while having lunch with Benson, Anderson and Bruce Glasier in July 1912, MacDonald asserted that he had not committed himself to voting against a reform bill if women were excluded, and denied that that

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 29 August 1912. See also 13 June 1912; 22 August 1912.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 18 July 1912.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, 5 September 1912.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 10 October 1912.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 24 October 1912. See also 12 September 1912; 23 January 1913; East Ham ILP Minutes, 27 November 1912, ILP Archive.

²⁸⁴ Anon, *To Men and Women of the Labour Party*, (National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, London, 1912), n.p..

had been the meaning of his Albert Hall pledge in February 1912. 'I am not going to do a foolish and wrong thing in order to please anyone... the suffragettes have by their conduct defeated their amendment...'.²⁸⁵

Publicly, the 1913 Labour Party Conference was also called upon to back the ILP position. Among the resolutions sent by the NAC was one committing the Labour Party not only to 'the full enfranchisement of all adult men and women', but also 'to fight strongly for this in the Government's Reform Bill' and in the case of the women's suffrage amendments' defeat, 'to oppose further passage of the measure', a rather more definite commitment than the previous year's.²⁸⁶ Already the 1912 ILP Conference had discussed the attitude of ILP MPs should the policy of the Parliamentary Labour Party not include opposition to a manhood suffrage measure. Hardie emphasised that as far as ILP MPs were concerned, 'the policy of the ILP... would find its voice and vote in the division lobbies of the House of Commons'.²⁸⁷ Eventually, the Labour Party Conference decided to oppose further extensions of the franchise for men if no provision was also made for women.²⁸⁸

It seems clear that the party was prepared to accept a policy of opposition

²⁸⁵ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 5 July 1912, Glasier Papers. See also MacDonal, *Labour Party's Policy*, p. 7: he certainly made no commitment to voting against the government.

²⁸⁶ *Labour Leader*, 7 November 1912. See also 16 January 1913.

²⁸⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1912, p. 95.

²⁸⁸ 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, March 1913, p. 6. See also Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 235-6.

to a bill which did not include women. In August 1912, an article in the *Labour Leader* showed that this was still also Lansbury's position.²⁸⁹ By October, though, he had taken up the WSPU's challenge, and called upon the Labour Party to vote consistently against the government until it granted women's suffrage or was driven from office.²⁹⁰ The *Labour Leader's* editorial position was one of virulent opposition to the proposal. The 'Notes' writer emphasized both that a Conservative government would hardly have been more sympathetic to women's suffrage than a Liberal one, and that there were measures, such as the reversal of the Osborne judgement, against which the Labour Party would have to vote, even though this was for it 'a matter of life and death'. He also pointed out the 'fiendish delight' with which the Conservatives would introduce resolutions in favour of 'compulsory arbitration, compulsory military service, a bigger navy, tariff reform...'.²⁹¹

A week later, the editor went further, and emphasized that by following Lansbury's suggestion, The Labour Party, representing

the trade union and Socialist movements and... all the interests of the working-class, is to be made the cat's paw of a section of the women's movement... [who] have seriously prejudiced

²⁸⁹ *Labour Leader*, 15 August 1912.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 10 October 1912. But see also Schneer, *George Lansbury*, pp. 97-102 for a similar proposition on the part of Lansbury as early as May 1912.

²⁹¹ *Labour Leader*, 10 October 1912.

Writing to Emmeline Pankhurst, Hardie also condemned the WSPU's new policy. He emphasized that 'You speak and write as though the party had been returned by the WSPU'. He warned that

if the WSPU, its newspaper, and its leaders, have no better policy to offer than a carping criticism of the Labour party and a parrot-like reiteration of the policy of violence, then not only are its days of usefulness numbered, but so are also those of the influence of its leaders.²⁹³

The *Labour Leader* 'Notes' writer had emphasized that women's enfranchisement remained 'a socialist fundamental', and that 'Socialism will not be a masculine state, nor a feminine state. It will be a human state'.²⁹⁴ David Thomas, though, writing in support of the editorial position, was more consistent. He too considered that there were measures the Labour Party could not vote against, but also emphasized that 'however important' women's suffrage may have been, it was 'not one of the primary objects for which the Labour Party was brought into existence'.²⁹⁵

Despite the strength of the *Labour Leader*' position, feeling within the

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 17 October 1912.

²⁹³ J.K. Hardie to E. Pankhurst, 7 November 1912, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also J.K. Hardie to F. Drummond, A. Kenney and J. Baines, 29 January 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

²⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 10 October 1912.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

party seems to have been rather more ambivalent. Writing in support of Lansbury's suggestion, both James E. Phillips and Thomas Rogers emphasized the power of the Labour Party in Parliament, and its good chances of defeating the government. Phillips asked whether it was worth keeping a Liberal government alive, 'with its... forcible feedings, and its Llanystumdwy savageries', while Rogers side-stepped the issue of the Labour Party being forced to vote against measures it supported, by emphasizing that it could choose a time and an issue on which to defeat the government.²⁹⁶ Louis Fenn, on the other hand, speaking as the Birkenhead representative at the 1913 conference, took the bull squarely by the horns and emphasized the 'primary importance' of women's suffrage.²⁹⁷

Resolutions received from the branches also show a remarkably mixed picture. The Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme ILP for example had voted against Lansbury's proposal²⁹⁸ as had the Lincoln branch²⁹⁹ and the Annual meeting of the Number 2 Divisional Council.³⁰⁰ On the other hand, support was expressed by the Kensington (Liverpool), Paddington and Queen's Park, Wolverhampton, Middlesbrough branches and a number of

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 24 October 1912. See also J. Edwards to G. Lansbury, 25 June 1912, George Lansbury Collection.

²⁹⁷ ILP Conference Report, 1913, p. 90.

²⁹⁸ *Labour Leader*, 21 November 1912.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 9 January 1913.

others.³⁰¹ Significantly, some branches attempted to work out a compromise. The Thornton Heath ILP, for example, called upon the Labour Party in Parliament to vote upon all issues on their merits, independently of expediency. This was meant 'to cover Mr. Lansbury's motion as it does not bind the party to any purely negative policy'.³⁰² Ultimately, though, the 1913 Conference voted against adoption of the policy by the large margin of 235 to 17.³⁰³

In November 1912, Lansbury resigned his parliamentary seat in Bow and Bromley, 'in order to test the feeling of his constituency on the policy he desires the Labour Party to adopt in relation to Woman Suffrage'.³⁰⁴ As he emphasized in his election address, he believed that the only way to ensure women's inclusion in the provisions of the Reform Act was for suffrage supporters to inform the government that they would not support other measures 'until this reform is absolutely secured'.³⁰⁵ Significantly, he added that 'on every question that really affects the well-being of Labour... I shall be in the front rank fighting for the side that needs

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 24 October 1912. See also 21 November 1912; 28 November 1912; 19 December 1912.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 21 November 1912. See also 24 October 1912.

³⁰³ ILP Conference Report, 1913, pp. 89-91.

³⁰⁴ *Labour Leader*, 14 November 1912. See also Schneer, *George Lansbury*, pp. 104-117.

³⁰⁵ *Labour Leader*, 21 November 1912. Interestingly, in his autobiography, Lansbury stated that he had resigned because he believed the Labour Party should vote against a purely manhood suffrage measure. Lansbury, *My Life*, pp. 120-1.

assistance'.³⁰⁶ Although not endorsed by the ILP (or the Labour Party), Hardie, Snowden, Will Thorne and O'Grady gave him their support, as did also the various suffrage organisations. Nevertheless, he was defeated by the Unionist candidate.³⁰⁷

Predictably, the *Labour Leader's* editorial position was disapproving. Lansbury's 'moral passion and pure enthusiasm' were emphasized,³⁰⁸ a view echoed by Hardie's belief that he 'had allowed his good nature and unselfishness to be imposed upon by irresponsible and ill-informed advisers'.³⁰⁹ At the same time, it was pointed out that as an ILP MP it had been his 'obvious duty' to consult the NAC before resigning.³¹⁰ At this point, the issue became not simply a difference over the best policy to adopt in relation to women's suffrage, but over internal party organisation. Lansbury emphasized MacDonald's control over the Parliamentary Labour Party, as well as the ILP's NAC. His own idea of Parliament was of 'a place where every kind of opinion is fairly represented by men and women with freedom to speak and freedom to vote'.³¹¹ In response, the *Labour*

³⁰⁶ *Labour Leader*, 21 November 1912.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 28 November 1912. Fred Jowett had also intended speaking for Lansbury. NAC Minutes, 28-29 January 1913, ILP Archive.

³⁰⁸ *Labour Leader*, 14 November 1912. See also 28 November 1912.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 12 December 1912. See also Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 257-60.

³¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 14 November 1912. See also 28 November 1912; ILP Conference Report, 1912, pp. 18-9.

³¹¹ *Labour Leader*, 5 December 1912.

Leader editor pointed out the extent of the freedom granted to Labour MPs, and emphasized the fact that Lansbury's views on tactics over the issue of women's suffrage differed not from those of the executive, but from those expressed by the Labour Party's annual conference: 'Mr. Lansbury's quarrel is in reality with the decision of the rank and file'.³¹² Significantly, *The Socialist Review*'s editorial saw his defeat not as a vote of non-confidence in the Labour Party, or even on women's suffrage, but rather a condemnation of 'the substitution of a purely personal hotch-potch of political ideas for those of organised party opinion...'.³¹³

Once again, though, resolutions sent from the branches show a far from uniform picture. The Brentham ILP, for example, expressed its regret of Lansbury's attitude 'which has resulted in the loss of a seat for the Labour Party'.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, a greater number of branches sent resolutions of support. Just as the earlier 'Green Manifesto' and Victor Grayson's successful Colne Valley candidature, Lansbury's resignation became a focus for the discontent with what the Barnet branch for example described as 'the virtual absorption by the Liberals of the Labour Party and the consequent

³¹² *Ibid*, 5 December 1912. See also the discussion at the 1913 Conference, ILP Conference Report, 1913, pp. 55-8. This centred not on suffrage policy, but on the position of the Bow and Bromley ILP within the party.

³¹³ 'Socialist Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, January 1913, p. 329.

³¹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 26 December 1912. See also 12 December 1912.

betrayal of the woman suffrage cause',³¹⁵

Despite all the controversy, by the beginning of 1913 most male ILPers' position had remained unchanged. In January, Snowden was still emphasizing in the *Labour Leader* that the Labour Party Conference should again express its determination to vote against a Third Reading of the Reform Bill if women were excluded.³¹⁶ A week later, though, the bill had been withdrawn from Parliament. But before turning to the ILP's responses to the changed parliamentary situation, two legacies of the previous months' controversies must be considered.

First of all, in October 1912 the WSPU had announced that since the Parliamentary Labour Party had refused to adopt the policy of voting consistently against the government, Labour candidates would also be opposed at by-elections.³¹⁷ More immediately, Labour MPs' meetings started to be disrupted by militant hecklers. ILP MPs were not spared. The *Labour Leader's* editorial reaction was predictable. The 'Notes' contributor expressed his 'regret' at the WSPU's new policy, and mixed a condemnation of their tactics with an acknowledgement of their achievements: they had 'made the political enfranchisement of women a vital issue in modern politics'. Nevertheless, 'what has so often occurred in history is occurring

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 26 December 1912. See also 21 November 1912; 12 December 1912; 19 December 1912.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 23 January 1913.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 24 October 1912.

once again. Those who have made a movement are living to mar it'.³¹⁸

The editorial was more outspoken. He emphasized the WSPU's own lack of internal democracy, and the Pankhursts' control over the organisation.

How... could two women so obsessed with their own divine right to rule, brook the fact that the Labour Party in Parliament should decline to obey their will, or should consider that they possess any obligation to their constituents...³¹⁹

Throughout the period under consideration, ILP MPs' meetings were subjected to suffragette heckling and interruptions, particularly those of Hardie, Snowden and MacDonald.³²⁰ The campaign started in October 1912, during a 'War against Poverty' demonstration in the Albert Hall. A letter, signed by members and officials of London ILP branches, including the Brixton secretary,³²¹ had been sent by the WSPU to MacDonald, asking him to 'explain' the pledge he had given the year before in the same hall in regard to the Labour Party's attitude towards the Reform Bill and his absence, due to ill-health, was met by jeers that he was 'afraid to face the music'. The meeting, particularly Anderson's speech as chairman, was interrupted by suffragette interjections, although the reporter optimistically

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ See for example *ibid.*, 31 October 1912; 6 March 1913; 13 November 1913; 12 March 1914. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 436-7.

³²¹ *Votes for Women*, 18 October 1912.

stated that 'such emphasis was laid on the necessity of extending the franchise to women that their jeers were changed to cheers'.³²²

In public, at least, ILPers emphasized the party's 'forbearance' towards the suffragette hecklers. During the Albert Hall demonstration, for example, the *Labour Leader* reporter emphasized that both Anderson and the audience kept their 'temper admirably... scarcely a harsh word was spoken. One pictured the scene of fury and violence which would have occurred if it had been a Liberal gathering'.³²³ The reasonableness of speakers and chairmen was compared with the suffragettes' destructive tactics. At a meeting in Streatham, which was to be addressed by Snowden,

the chair's offer to allow questions and to give women time to state their case on the platform was scorned. Nothing would satisfy them but the wreckage of the meeting.³²⁴

The determination of speakers was also emphasized. At a meeting in Halifax, for example, MacDonald refused to be 'brow-beaten' or deflected from his 'line of argument... On several occasions he dealt out crushing replies to... interjections'.³²⁵ At the same time it was also pointed out (as

³²² *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1912. See also J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 11 October 1912, Glasier Papers.

³²³ *Labour Leader*, 17 October 1912. But compare with the account in *Votes for Women*, 18 October 1912.

³²⁴ *Labour Leader*, 23 October 1913. See also 30 January 1913; 20 November 1913.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 28 November 1912. See also 5 March 1914; 16 April 1914.

the 'Notes' writer did) that 'the women... seem so completely to have lost all sense of justice and all capacity to reason that they deliberately select the best champions as their victims'.³²⁶ Reporting on the ILP's annual demonstration of 1913, Allan S. Dobson significantly described Hardie's 'dignified rebuke' to hecklers as that of 'a kind and honoured father who was about to be reviled by the children for whose welfare he had sacrificed most of the joys of life'.³²⁷ Bruce Glasier, on the other hand, privately described Hardie's attitude in rather different terms. When he downplayed the interruptors' connection with the WSPU, Bruce Glasier considered it 'humiliating to think that our once rock-like palladin [sic] should suffer himself to kiss the rod that these mad feminists beat his grey head with'.³²⁸

Open hostility towards the hecklers' 'hooliganism'³²⁹ was occasionally clear. At a 'No-Conscription' meeting in Edinburgh, addressed by Hardie, the audience made clear its hostility 'by the impatience shown towards the interruptors by those present, and the applause that followed each ejection'.³³⁰

In 1914, MacDonald was informing the branches organising meetings at

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 20 November 1913.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 27 March 1913. But compare, for example, with *The Suffragette*, 28 March 1913. See also *Labour Leader*, 10 April 1913; 18 June 1914. Speakers also emphasized their own support for suffrage; see *ibid*, 16 January 1913; 6 March 1913.

³²⁸ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 26 November 1913, Glasier Papers.

³²⁹ *Labour Leader*, 18 June 1914.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, 27 November 1913. See also ILP Conference Report, 1914, p. 128.

which he was one of the speakers, that

The instant an interruption takes place the interruptor must be ejected. It is no good a steward's arguing, and explaining and talking, it only makes the meeting hopelessly unsettled.³³¹

Careful preparations were also made to avoid militant disruption of the 1913 party Conference. Eventually, it was decided to close the venue to the general public, to admit only people vouched for by delegates, and to give 'plenary powers... to the chief steward concerning admissions...'. The steward in question was Sam Robinson,³³² who, as a former sympathiser of the WSPU, was able to weed out militants from the audience since, in Bruce Glasier's words, he 'knows suffragettes by sight and smell so to say...'.³³³

Although in November 1913 the City of London ILP rejected a resolution condemning the WSPU heckling of Labour MPs³³⁴, branches showed little sign of sympathy for this latest militant development. Accounts of suffrage disturbances never stated the hecklers' background, other than to emphasize

³³¹ Secretary of Westminster ILP to H. Bryan, 3 March 1914, City of London ILP Correspondence Files, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

³³² NAC Minutes, 23 March 1913, ILP Archive.

³³³ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 24 March 1913, Glasier Papers. See also *ibid*, 23 March 1913. For the 1914 ILP Conference, see NAC Minutes, 10 April 1914, ILP Archive; J.K. Hardie to J.R. MacDonald, 4 March 1914, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive.

³³⁴ City of London ILP Minutes, 13 November 1913, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

their status as 'outsiders' especially ferried into a town where a meeting was to be held.³³⁵ In January 1913, though, the Preston branch expelled five women members who had been responsible for the disruption of a meeting addressed by Snowden.³³⁶ Apparently, the women were members of both the ILP and the WSPU, and 'voluntary severance from the ILP would have occurred some time ago, in several of the cases, had it not been for the well-meant tolerant advice of members'.³³⁷ Of course, it is impossible to determine how far the Preston women were typical of the hecklers at Labour MPs' meetings, but they certainly raise the question of how far the new WSPU's policy was determined or influenced by discontent from within the ranks of Labour.

By 1914, the emphasis was no longer on ILPers' patience or magnanimity, but rather on the need to ensure the right of 'free speech'. As the *Labour Leader* 'Review' writer pointed out,

... on no account must the right of public meeting be surrendered. To prevent the break-up of meetings is a disagreeable task for speakers and stewards alike, but it must be done.³³⁸

³³⁵ See for example *Labour Leader*, 5 March 1914.

³³⁶ *Ibid*, 30 January 1913; 6 February 1913.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, 13 February 1913. In the Summer of 1913 Mrs. Rigby, an early member of the Preston ILP, was arrested for attempting to place a bomb in the Liverpool Exchange Buildings. See Fulford, *Votes for Women*, pp. 256-7. Apparently, she received the assistance of ILPer Albert Yeadon. Hesketh, *My Aunt Edith*, pp. 74-5. For divisions within the West Riding labour movement, see Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 154.

³³⁸ *Labour Leader*, 12 March 1914.

In these terms ejections and the use of the police were justified, while the hecklers were dismissed as 'irresponsible hooligans who howled, scratched and kicked'.³³⁹ The decision to appeal to the right of free speech was by no means a casual one.

It is now necessary to consider a second event (or rather, series of events) in the relationship between ILP and WSPU, which also formed part of the background to the party's attitude towards women's suffrage in Parliament.

In April 1913, the news broke that Lansbury was being prosecuted under an old Act of Edward III and that the WSPU had been banned from holding meetings in the London parks.³⁴⁰ Two weeks later, it became known that the manager of the Victoria House press had been arrested for printing *The Suffragette*, the WSPU's organ. The *Labour Leader* emphasized that the issue in question had not contained any incitement to violence. If it had, the government's action would have been justified. As it was, an editorial asked '... what right has the Government to forbid the publication of a newspaper before it is aware of its content?'³⁴¹ On 8 May *The Suffragette* was printed by the National Labour Press, the *Labour Leader*'s press. Despite the engagement of a solicitor to ensure that the paper contained nothing illegal,

³³⁹ *Ibid.* See also 5 March 1914; 9 April 1914; 16 April 1914.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 April 1913. Lansbury had resigned from the NAC in December 1912, although he retained membership of the party. NAC Minutes, 28-9 January 1913, ILP Archive. For his pre-war suffrage activities, see Schneer, *George Lansbury*, pp. 117-29.

³⁴¹ *Labour Leader*, 8 May 1913.

on 9 May Edgar Whiteley, the manager of the press, was arrested.³⁴² MacDonald, Hardie and other Labour MPs were described by the *Labour Leader* as swiftly offering to act in rotation, if necessary, as managers of the press. Behind the scenes, though, ILPers seem to have been rather less than enthusiastic about the whole matter. On 7 May, according to Bruce Glasier's diary, Hardie, Benson and Bruce Glasier met at a London restaurant for supper. Benson mentioned the Labour Press' intention of publishing *The Suffragette*. Glasier 'expressed indignation', and, to Benson's surprise, so did Hardie. Only after discussing the matter, did they concede that 'on principle it was perhaps the right thing to do. The government must not be allowed to suppress papers in "advance"'.³⁴³ The impact of the Press' decision was watched by Bruce Glasier with a bemused eye: 'The Labour Press acclaimed! We are all become heroes! and so cheaply! MacDonald stands forth as stalwart! Its [sic] droll'.³⁴⁴ ILPers were also involved in the Free Speech Defence Committee (originally set up to defend prosecuted syndicalists). Hardie presided over a Conference organised in London in June 1913 to protest against the prohibition of WSPU meetings in London parks, the suppression of *The Suffragette* and the prosecutions of John Scurr and Lansbury.³⁴⁵

³⁴² *Ibid*, 15 May 1913. See also Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 459-61.

³⁴³ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 7 May 1913, Glasier Papers.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 14 May 1913. See also 15 May 1913.

³⁴⁵ *Labour Leader*, 12 June 1913. The City of London ILP also for example sent a delegation, City of London ILP Minutes, 12 June 1913, H.B.

The government's contention was that it was not attempting to suppress the paper per se, but that the issue printed by the National Labour Press had contained incitements to violence.³⁴⁶ Eventually, in July 1913 Whiteley was found guilty at the Manchester Assizes of 'incitement to the committal of crime', but the nominal sentence imposed by the judge was perceived by the *Labour Leader* correspondent as 'a complete vindication of the attitude we have taken up'.³⁴⁷

Male ILPers emphasized that the party's actions were not motivated by sympathy with militancy, but by a belief that the rights of free speech and of free press were at risk. In private, Bruce Glasier considered that 'in this country' the right of free speech was only questioned when there was a 'presumption' that this was really 'the claim on behalf of some section to set the law at defiance or to advocate lawless methods'.³⁴⁸ Concern, though, does seem to have been genuine. As Hardie emphasized in a letter to Stephen Sanders, the honorary secretary of the Free Speech Defence Committee, the rights of free speech and free press,

will be upheld at whatever cost necessary, since thereby lies

Papers, ILP Archive.

³⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, 10 July 1913.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 10 July 1913. See also J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 9 May 1913; 10 May 1913; 13 May 1913; 20 May 1913; 7 July 1913, Glasier Papers; NAC Minutes, 28-9 July 1913, ILP Archive.

³⁴⁸ J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 5 May 1913, Glasier Papers. The days of Boggart Hole Clough seemed very far away. But see also J. Bruce Glasier, 'The Review Outlook', in *The Socialist Review*, June 1913, pp. 248-53.

our greatest hope of overthrowing the capitalist system with all its tyranny and oppression, and ushering in the reign of freedom.³⁴⁹

When in July, after his appeal had failed, Lansbury was condemned to three months' imprisonment, the same arguments in defence of constitutional freedom were expressed. It was not doubted that Lansbury had issued an incitement to violence, but the danger was emphasized of giving 'Justices of the Peace the power to use their own discretion in binding over whom they will'.³⁵⁰

ILP men did not neglect to point out that the WSPU had not

... much right to complain of the suppression of freedom of speech and Press. More than any other body it had endangered liberty of utterance by attempting to prevent speakers delivering their message at public meetings. The ILP has suffered in this regard to a greater degree than any political party.³⁵¹

Nevertheless, it was emphasized (with rather more than a hint of self-righteousness) that 'the question is bigger than the particular organisation

³⁴⁹ J.K. Hardie to W. Stephen Sanders, 28 June 1913, F.J. Corr., ILP Archive. See also *Labour Leader*, 24 April 1913; 15 May 1913; 12 June 1913.

³⁵⁰ *Labour Leader*, 7 August 1913. Having gone on hunger strike, Lansbury was quickly released under the Cat and Mouse Act, but was not rearrested. Lansbury, *My Life*, pp. 121-2.

³⁵¹ *Labour Leader*, 15 May 1913.

concerned'.³⁵²

On this occasion, the branches seem to have wholeheartedly endorsed the leadership's position. Resolutions in support of a free press were sent in by Birmingham, Cathays, Dulwich, Marple,³⁵³ and a considerable number of others.³⁵⁴ An even greater number of resolutions 'protesting against the imprisonment of any person not convicted of any crime, and for expressing views distasteful to those holding "brief authority"', possibly reflecting Lansbury's popularity, were passed, including by Barnsley, the energetic Brixton, Gillingham, Westminster³⁵⁵ and Erith.³⁵⁶ In August, the Stepney ILP took part 'in one of the largest demonstrations that ever left the East End of London' to demand Lansbury's release.³⁵⁷

Between the withdrawal of the government's Reform Bill in January 1913 and the outbreak of the war, then, the background to the ILP's attitude towards women's suffrage became one of tense relations with both the WSPU and (to a lesser extent) the NUWSS. On the one hand the electoral cooperation with the NUWSS was clearly creating friction within the party. On the other hand, despite its action in support of the principles of free

³⁵² *Ibid*, 8 May 1913.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, 22 May 1913.

³⁵⁴ See also for example, *ibid*, 29 May 1913; 5 June 1913; City of London ILP Minutes, 15 May 1913, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

³⁵⁵ *Labour Leader*, 7 August 1913.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 14 August 1913. See also 21 August 1913; 11 September 1913; City of London ILP Minutes, 11 September 1913; No 6 Divisional Council of the ILP Minutes, 4 September 1913, both H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

³⁵⁷ *Labour Leader*, 7 August 1913.

speech and a free press, the relationship with the WSPU had developed into one of hostility.

In January 1913, the Speaker had ruled that the adoption of suffrage amendments to the Reform Bill would transform it into a new measure, necessitating its re-introduction. The Prime Minister then announced the withdrawal of the Bill, and the government's intention of providing facilities for a private member's bill in the next session.³⁵⁸ 'J.J.M.' declared himself quite optimistic about the chances of success of such a bill,³⁵⁹ but in this differed from the *Labour Leader's* editorial position. The fact that the government had been taken aback by the Speaker's ruling was accepted. It was 'its refusal to make amends for their mistake which is more serious. It can only be described as a dishonourable and contemptible betrayal'. The offer of facilities for a private member's bill was 'inadequate'.³⁶⁰ As figure 48 shows, the attempt to 'smuggle' women's suffrage in by 'the back door' was strongly condemned.³⁶¹ The way for the government to truly redeem its pledges was to make itself responsible for a measure which included the enfranchisement of women.³⁶²

The paper's position was backed by a number of resolutions from branches, including some written to the same formula, suggested by Lansbury in a

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 30 January 1913.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*. See also 30 October 1913; 15 January 1914.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, 15 January 1914.

³⁶² *Ibid*, 30 January 1914.



MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE (?)

FIGURE 48. 'MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE?'

circular,³⁶³ which attacked the government's 'most despicable breach of faith and... most dishonourable betrayal... and records its conviction that the enfranchisement of women can never be secured except by means of a government measure'. These included the City of London,³⁶⁴ the Manchester City, the Bedlinog and the Leyton branches.³⁶⁵

The party also maintained its commitment to vote against franchise measures which did not include women. The same arguments were used as in the previous year. As the *Labour Leader*'s 'Review' writer pointed out in response to the Labour MP Stephen Walsh's threat to resign if forced to vote against a manhood suffrage bill, it had been the women's suffrage agitation which had forced to the front the question of the franchise. Also, to abolish a sex disqualification was more important than to simply extend the franchise.³⁶⁶ It was upon this issue that the ILP decided to concentrate its attention during the franchise debate at the 1913 Labour Party conference. Dubery, therefore, moved an amendment calling upon 'the Labour Party in Parliament to oppose any Franchise Bill in which women are not included'.³⁶⁷ According to Brockway (not the most unbiased of observers),

³⁶³ City of London ILP Minutes, 13 February 1913, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Labour Leader*, 27 February 1913. See also for example 6 February 1913; 20 March 1913.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6 February 1913. Arguments against opposing manhood suffrage were also the same. See for example *ibid.*, 13 February 1913.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 February 1913.

it was Snowden's speech which carried the day:

... if travail of soul is prayer, and prayer can give words power, it is possible to understand something of the power of conviction which Snowden's words carried to the minds and hearts of his hearers.³⁶⁸

The amendment was eventually carried by 850,000 votes to 437,000.³⁶⁹

The following year, according to Brockway, opposition to the same amendment 'was so slight that a division was not necessary'.³⁷⁰

On the whole, although there were individual critics, the policy of opposing any extension of the franchise which excluded women seems by 1913 to have been generally accepted by male ILPers. In January 1914, the Midland Council's Conference witnessed a phenomenon which bordered on the paranormal, when

the faces of the delegate 'wisably [sic] swelled' at Comrade Spiers' naive suggestion that if the franchise were extended to young men, women would get the vote quicker because they had more influence with the young men...³⁷¹

The issue of the attitude to take in relation to plural voting, though, was controversial. A government bill to abolish this was introduced in

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1914.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 29 January 1914.

Parliament in April 1913.³⁷² Hardie was at the forefront of those championing its opposition. He emphasized that the measure would not bring any extension of the franchise. 'At every election our electoral agents are heartbroken at the number of supporters who... have no vote'. These would still remain unenfranchised, but, more importantly, Plural Voting would also do 'nothing for women'. He believed that 'the disfranchised man and the unenfranchised woman' were being sacrificed to the interests of the Liberal Party, which was seen to be harmed by plural voters, while fearing 'a fully enfranchised people'.³⁷³

The *Labour Leader* editor supported Hardie's position. It was recognised that the Plural Voting Bill was a registration, not a franchise bill, and therefore not covered by the Labour Party's resolution of opposition to all franchise measures excluding women. Nevertheless, against the background of Asquith's perceived refusal to honour his pledges on women's suffrage, it was emphasized that 'any self-respecting woman must be indignant that Parliament should spend its time in amending the basis of the male franchise while refusing to end her humiliation'.³⁷⁴ The bill itself was dismissed as 'a puny measure' applying only to general elections.³⁷⁵ As Snowden told Parliament during the Second Reading of the bill in April 1913, he would

³⁷² *Ibid*, 10 April 1913.

³⁷³ *Ibid*.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*. See also 17 April 1913; 11 June 1914; ILP Conference Report, 1913, p. 86.

³⁷⁵ *Labour Leader*, 17 July 1913.

oppose the measure first of all because it did not ‘conform to the oft-repeated pledge of the Prime Minister in regard to... Women Suffrage’, secondly, because it did not even, ‘indeed, abolish plural voting’.³⁷⁶

At the 1913 ILP conference, the suffrage resolutions included a call upon the government to make itself responsible for a Women’s Enfranchisement Bill ‘framed on broad and democratic lines’, as well as a commitment to opposing all franchise and registration measures which made no provisions for women. As the reporter stated, ‘the Plural Voting Bill foreshadowed by the government is thus brought within its scope’³⁷⁷ and it was on this last issue that the debate eventually centred. Egerton Wake considered that ‘to reduce the number of men’s votes could in no sense be described as deepening the stigma under which women suffer’, a view which was supported by Wallhead, while Russell Williams emphasized the advantages to the Labour Party of abolishing the plural vote.³⁷⁸

Hardie responded by ‘a magnificent appeal to disinterested courage’.³⁷⁹ He accepted that the abolition of plural voting would benefit the Labour Party, but ‘They should resist having more benefit for themselves at the expense of their sister comrades’.³⁸⁰ Eventually, an amendment excluding

³⁷⁶ Hansard Commons Debates, 30 April 1913, 5th series, vol. 52, col. 1249.

³⁷⁷ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1913.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ ILP Conference Report, 1913, p. 88.

references to registration reform was defeated by 188 votes to 105.³⁸¹ According to Joseph Wake, the resolution did not reflect the true feeling of the branches, since 'the eloquence of Mr. Hardie had aroused the Conference to a high pitch of enthusiasm' and 'emotionalism gained supremacy over discrimination'.³⁸²

In any case, in May 1913, of the ILP MPs only Hardie, Snowden and O'Grady voted against the Second Reading of the Bill. Parker and Richardson voted in favour,³⁸³ despite the fact that, as Crooks put it, 'some people feel a little sore' that women were not included.³⁸⁴ The same three also voted against a Third Reading.³⁸⁵

Feeling within the party as a whole on the issue is quite difficult to gauge. In April 1913 the NAC was expressing concern at the number of resolutions that were being passed by branches concerning 'the action of the ILP MPs on the Plural Voting Bill', although it did not specify whether disapproval was being voiced about the conduct of Hardie and Snowden or of the others. In any case, it was decided to discourage branches from passing such resolutions, and most remarkably, to suggest to the *Labour Leader* and *The*

³⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, 27 March 1913. The same resolution was allowed to stand by the 1914 Conference. ILP Conference Report, 1914, p. 122.

³⁸² *Labour Leader*, 29 May 1913.

³⁸³ *Ibid*, 8 May 1913.

³⁸⁴ Hansard Commons Debates, 1 May 1913, 5th series, vol. 52, col. 1461.

³⁸⁵ *Labour Leader*, 17 July 1913.

Daily Citizen not to insert them.³⁸⁶

As early as April 1913, when the government had introduced its Plural Voting Bill, Hardie had called for the organisation of a 'rattling big Adult Suffrage Campaign'.³⁸⁷ By September, Brockway saw the whole of the labour movements as 'ranged on the side of woman's suffrage, not merely theoretically, but as an issue of practical politics'. The ILP had declared its opposition to all franchise and registration measures which excluded women, the Labour Party was prepared to oppose the former at least, while the TUC had just 'asserted that the Plural Voting Bill is no substitute for a measure enfranchising women'.³⁸⁸ In February 1914, the *Labour Leader* 'Review' writer declared that the Labour Party was ready to introduce an Adult Suffrage Bill: 'we should like to see a national campaign organised in favour of adult suffrage'.³⁸⁹ In March, the Electoral Reform Bill introduced by Henderson was welcomed, although it was recognised that it had no chance of passing through all its stages in the present session. Again, the 'Review' writer looked forward to the organisation of an 'Adult suffrage campaign in preparation for the general election'.³⁹⁰ In April, the party conference endorsed (after amendment) a City of London motion calling upon the

³⁸⁶ NAC Minutes, 24-25 April 1913, ILP Archive.

³⁸⁷ *Labour Leader*, 17 April 1913.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 11 September 1913. For the NUWSS' campaign among miners, see Liddington, *The Life and Times*, pp. 237-41.

³⁸⁹ *Labour Leader*, 26 February 1914.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 12 March 1914.

government to introduce in the course of the present Parliament a 'measure to enfranchise all adult men and women with a three months' qualification'.³⁹¹

In 1913 it was still possible to find expressed within the party the view that economic reform was more important and should take precedence over any form of 'political' reform. As a *Labour Leader* editorial pointed out,

an underfed man with a stunted mind, doomed to drudging toil by day, and ugly, overcrowded hovel by night, almost inevitably becomes dependent and servile. His manhood is crushed... It is cant to speak of him as a citizen. Before political democracy... can be established in reality the economic minimum necessary to a civilised life must be granted to all.³⁹²

The party's 'Coming of age' leaflets, published in 1913, assumed that the workers the ILP appealed to had 'a vote for the control of the state, but... no vote for the control of the industry in which you are employed'.³⁹³

At the same time, a new trend was observable by the end of the year, one which took up again the theme of the importance of political (and in particular, electoral) reform. An anonymous *Labour Leader* contributor considered in January 1914 that it was now realised that for Labour to gain

³⁹¹ ILP Conference Report, 1914, pp. 121-2. See also City of London ILP Minutes, 13 November 1913, H.B. Papers, ILP Archive.

³⁹² *Labour Leader*, 13 March 1913. See also 23 October 1913.

³⁹³ Anon, 'The Socialist Ideal', (ILP 'Coming of Age' Campaign Leaflet, no 5, London, 1913). See also Anon, 'By Way of Introduction', (ILP 'Coming of Age' Campaign Leaflet, no 1, London, 1913), both Pamphlets and Leaflets Collection, ILP Archive.

a greater share of parliamentary power it was necessary to obtain 'a reform of our electoral laws'.³⁹⁴ Three months later, Bruce Glasier pointed out that

It has been customary on our Socialist platforms to speak of the nineteenth century as the century of political reform, and of the twentieth century as the century which is to see a great accomplishment of social change. But... the battle of political freedom is only beginning; and the struggle intensifies just in proportion as the workers seek to use political power for their industrial freedom.³⁹⁵

The reasons for this renewed trend are unclear, but it seems likely that it was due to a variety of influences, including, alongside the pressures of the suffrage movement, the increasing disillusion with the effectiveness of industrial militancy, as well as a reaction against the anti-parliamentarian sections of the labour movement, and attempts to find a 'democratic' solution to the 1913 Ulster crisis.³⁹⁶

It was Hardie, possibly at Sylvia Pankhurst's instigation,³⁹⁷ who brought the renewed interest for electoral reform to its logical conclusion. Considering what in July 1914 was believed to be a forthcoming general

³⁹⁴ *Labour Leader*, 8 January 1914.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 26 March 1914. See also 16 October 1913. Brockway's concern that a universal franchise would not be sufficient to ensure the truly democratic control of a socialist state does not seem to have been widely shared. See *ibid*, 12 March 1914; 19 March 1914.

³⁹⁶ Barrow, Bullock, *Democratic Ideas*, pp. 285-9.

³⁹⁷ Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 587.

election, he sought a question 'which the Labour Party could force to the front as a big fighting issue' and which, 'next to militancy, the Socialist and Labour parties in Europe have in the forefront of their programme'. The answer was franchise reform. On the one hand, he stated that the example of the rest of the world had shown 'that a fully enfranchised democracy is essential to success in the fight for socialism', while on the other hand he emphasized the issue as an election-winning one, and as being able to arouse the 'fighting instincts' of both the electorate and of the party activists.³⁹⁸

Most significantly, Hardie's proposal did not remain simply an article among many others in the *Labour Leader*. Two weeks later the NAC took up his proposal that during the next general election

The Party should especially emphasize the need for the enactment of adult suffrage.... Simultaneously the social and economic programme of the Party will be pressed forward, and the importance of democratising the franchise will be emphasized as a measure of securing the Right to Work, the Living Wage and the eight-hour working day.³⁹⁹

This was a truly remarkable shift away from the party's early years, when electoral and 'political' reforms were dismissed as Radical irrelevances. Of course, the easy reversal to 'anti-political' rhetoric with the outbreak of the industrial unrest just a few months previously leads one to question how far

³⁹⁸ *Labour Leader*, 2 July 1914. See also A. Mattison, Notebook 'B', 18 July 1914, Mattison Collection, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

³⁹⁹ *Labour Leader*, 16 July 1914. See also NAC Minutes, 14-5 July 1914, ILP Archive.

the shift was a thorough one. It certainly never had the chance of being put to the test: less than a month after the NAC's declaration, war broke out.

CONCLUSION

‘THE PROMOTION OF SOCIALISM IS THE SUPREME DUTY OF THE ILP...’.

Keith Laybourn has warned against simplistically viewing the ILP as a whole during the 1914-1918 conflict as a pacifist organisation, a stereotypical image fed by a hostile Liberal and Tory press.¹ An analysis of the ILP's wartime stance is the work I willingly leave to other historians, though the activities of the men who have featured prominently in the thesis are hardly a strong challenge to the stereotype. By the time of the party conference in April 1918, Hardie had already been dead for three years, but Bruce Glasier remained as one of the older generation committed to pacifism. Brockway was in prison as a conscientious objector, while Richard Wallhead had only recently been released. Eight months later MacDonald (one of the moving forces behind the establishment of the Union of Democratic Control in 1914²) and Snowden, ‘now perhaps two of the most unpopular men in England’³ would lose their parliamentary seats because of their anti-war activities.

The NAC Report to the 1915 conference had stated that because of the war,

¹ Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism*, pp. 74-8. Laybourn does not mention the pacifist activities of ILP women. See Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 162-87; Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, pp. 252-63.

² Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 166.

³ R. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1957, first edition 1929), p. 234.

‘women’s enfranchisement, like many other urgent claims, has been put aside for the time being’.⁴ It certainly seems that, at least on the conference floor, the issue failed to attract the amount of attention it had generated before the outbreak of hostilities. Adult suffrage resolutions were passed by both 1916 and 1917 conferences. In 1916, though, suffrage resolutions and amendments came up too late for discussion, and were simply passed as an omnibus measure.⁵ In 1917, despite the party’s continued commitment to adult suffrage, both NAC and ILP MPs signalled their intention of supporting the recommendations of the Speaker’s conference on electoral reform, including its women’s suffrage provisions. When challenged by P.J. Dollan, one of the Scottish representatives, as to whether the latter were not ‘in conflict with the programme of the Party’, Snowden emphasised that his position had remained consistent: ‘... without receding at all from the demands for universal suffrage, they always said they were prepared to take any measure of women’s suffrage it was practical to get’.⁶ Both NAC and parliamentary reports were endorsed by the conference, suggesting that complete adult suffrage was hardly a burning issue.⁷

Speaking to the 1918 conference as party chairman, Snowden emphasised that the war was indeed at present attracting all ILPers’ attention.

⁴ ILP Conference Report, 1915, pp. 14-5. See also p. 56.

⁵ *Votes for Women*, June 1916. I am grateful to A.V. John for the reference.

⁶ ILP Conference Report, 1917, pp. 51-2.

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 15-6; 35; 67-8.

Nevertheless, he did mention the final passing into law in February of a measure enfranchising men over twenty one and women over thirty. He stated that

It is a matter of keen satisfaction to those of us who have helped the women in their struggle for political enfranchisement to be able to congratulate them upon the achievement of a substantial, if incomplete, measure of enfranchisement.⁸

That some male ILPers had ‘helped the women’ was something that historians of the suffrage movement, starting with Sylvia Pankhurst, would eventually acknowledge. My contention throughout the thesis has been that such help was based upon a mass of ambivalent, contradicting and shifting ideas.

It is certainly the case that most ILP men had been keen to express, indeed to emphasise, their credentials as supporters of ‘women’s equality’. The ILP was also the only pre-war party which committed itself to equal suffrage, the form of enfranchisement favoured by most suffrage societies. The ‘respectable’ working-class men who formed the majority of the ILP’s membership had little in common with the ‘antis’ described by Brian Harrison, many of whose background lay in the elite clubs of London.⁹

At the same time, though, while seeking a radical change in the economic organisation of society, to be achieved through the independent

⁸ *Labour Leader*, 4 April 1918.

⁹ Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, pp. 97-104.

representation of 'labour' in Parliament (and in local government), most ILP men remained committed to the ethos of working-class 'respectable' masculinity. This meant that except to a certain extent in the very earliest years, when both working-class men and women were portrayed as waged workers, male ILPers did not ultimately challenge widely held beliefs about the appropriate roles of men and women within the workplace and the home. Men's responsibility was to provide financial support for their families, women's to provide domestic services and nurturing.

I have argued in chapter 2 that such a lack of challenge was connected to the desire to form a closer link with trade unions, particularly after 1895: the notion of a male wage-earner (or, more precisely, of a family-wage earner) was central to trade union discourses. The 'labour' whose independent representation was being sought became increasingly identified with male wage-workers, and in some cases, male trade unionists. While not entirely disappearing, women wage-workers were progressively marginalised, as the category of 'women' came to be seen as separate from that of the 'workers', and as an essentially domestic one. It is of course arguable that such tendencies were already present within the pre-1895 ILP: they certainly acquired greater potency after this date.

This strategy made it possible for ILP men to express support for the enfranchisement of women, while scorning the importance of 'political' reforms for 'workers' as the relic of old-fashioned radicalism: the two were seen as essentially separate categories. Unsurprisingly, therefore, before suffragists became active within the ILP's own ranks, women's

enfranchisement (or, indeed, adult suffrage) was not perceived as a necessary precondition to the establishment of the independent representation of labour and through it, of socialism.

At one level, considering the emphasis placed on the role of women as wives and mothers, ILP men showed remarkably little interest in working-class women's domestic problems. Nevertheless, as chapter 1 has shown, especially in the party's early years, ILPers' understanding of socialism was not limited to an emphasis on changes in the workplace, but involved a belief in the need for moral and personal changes. This provided the space where issues relating to 'women' could be considered. There was a recognition that women suffered from distinctive disabilities, centring in particular on their sexual relations with men, both within and outside marriage. But although problems were identified, proposed solutions were rare, mostly being limited to a vague belief that 'true' sexual relations would be established with the achievement of socialism. Male sexual practices were not generally placed under scrutiny. Individuals such as Alf Mattison may have been influenced by the ideas of Edward Carpenter, whose *Love's Coming of Age* pamphlets were published in the 1890s by the ILP, but there is little evidence of sexual radicalism among ILP men in general. Rather, there seems to have been a general concern not to be associated with anything that could be construed as approval of sexual licence.

Chapter 2 has explored the way in which by the beginning of the twentieth century, furthermore, issues of personal politics were increasingly marginalised, as ILP men shifted the focus of their attention to women's

‘public’ endeavours to enter professions, to achieve educational qualifications or to be elected to local government. At the same time, concentration on ‘non-economic’ issues came to be seen by at least one strand of thought within the party as ‘faddish’, and as irrelevant to the real aims of socialism. The role of the family as the central unit of society, and the notion of women’s primarily domestic function within it, was not challenged.

In July 1914, in a letter to the *Labour Leader*, ‘Prometheus’ could still state his belief that

... a woman in the future socialist state will be treated as a *woman*... I am still old-fashioned enough to believe with Ruskin that in the home lies ‘the woman’s true place and power’. As a Socialist I stand for absolute freedom of women... I believe that only through Socialism will a woman come into her true queenship...¹⁰

‘Prometheus’ was not here stating anything which had not already been repeated ad nauseam by ILP men over the past twenty years. The significant feature of his intervention was that he saw it as a response to ‘the few man-hating persons who petulantly refuse to be happy until every man sinks his manhood and grovels at the feet of the Amazons’.¹¹ In this particular case the reference was to Ellen Wilkinson, at the time actively engaged in the suffrage cause, who had written a *Labour Leader* article warning against the dangers of establishing a socialism defined in purely masculine terms. All

¹⁰ *Labour Leader*, 9 July 1914. See also 23 July 1914; 30 July 1914.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 9 July 1914.

the same, it is difficult not to see suffrage activists at the back of his mind.

Few ILP men reacted in such vitriolic (and revealing!) terms to advocates of women's rights, but in another way, 'Prometheus' was quite typical of the dynamics of ILP men's relationship with the suffrage movement: an overwhelmingly reactive, rather than pro-active one. Despite the more long-term commitment of individuals such as Hardie, ILP men's involvement and interest in the suffrage campaign were characterised by spurts of activity in response to various outside events, such as the gathering pace of the radical suffragists' campaign, the beginning of the WSPU's own activities, or Asquith's announcement of the government's intention to introduce a manhood suffrage measure, and so on.

Bruce Glasier could state in 1913 that 'the women's political agitation, like the political labour movement, may be said to have been cradled in the ILP...'¹² but this was at best only a partial view. Although (mostly) supportive attitudes had already been expressed in an earlier period, it was the campaigns of suffragists active within the labour movement which raised the profile of the issue and forced ILP men to fully articulate their beliefs.

At one level, as chapter 3 has shown, suffrage activists were able to challenge the complacency with which ILP men dismissed 'political' and franchise reforms as of secondary importance in comparison with the real aim of achieving workers' economic and industrial emancipation. The expression of such sentiments became increasingly rare, although by no means disappeared.

¹² Quoted in Hannam, 'Women and the ILP', p. 205.

Nevertheless, radical suffragists and the early WSPU were ultimately unsuccessful in challenging the gendered basis of ILP men's attitudes. Although there always were exceptions, as chapters 2 and 3 have illustrated, suffrage was supported not because of women's needs as waged-workers, as suggested by radical suffragists, but first of all as a right of citizenship: a gendered citizenship which in the case of men was also connected to their role as wage-workers, but in that of women, only to their status as voters. Secondly, suffrage was advocated because of the distinctive contribution women could make to politics through their domestic expertise and maternal role. With some individual exceptions, male ILPers refused to relinquish the association of femininity with maternal, domestic qualities, upon which, after all, their own socialist world-view and masculine identities were based. In 1918, while warning that women would not 'at once effect a revolution in the political and social life of the nation', Snowden still emphasised that now that they had the vote, most women would 'quickly learn to appreciate its value and use it as an instrument for further domestic, industrial and social reforms in which women are particularly and closely interested'.¹³

By 1905, arguments concerning suffrage had settled into well-established patterns, and new ones were not developed. This does not mean, of course, that unanimity of opinion reigned on the issue. On the contrary, differences continued to be expressed throughout the period, both at the level of

¹³ *Labour Leader*, 14 February 1918. See also 21 March 1918. For a valuable study of the relation between women and the labour movement in the inter-war period, see P.M. Graves, *Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994).

individuals and of branches, the most serious issue being of course the adult versus equal suffrage debate. It is impossible to assess with any precision the strength of adult suffrage opinion. Indeed, individuals' positions may well have shifted over the period: Snowden for example abandoned his earlier commitment to adult suffrage to become an enthusiastic equal suffragist, while Bruce Glasier's trajectory was the opposite. The *Labour Leader's* sharp response to the number of branches joining the PSF suggests that the strength of adultist feeling was stronger than historians have usually allowed. On the whole, though, the issue was hotly debated by conferences, but equal suffrage resolutions seem to have won relatively comfortably. It is only a number of detailed regional studies which will show what made one branch support adult and another equal suffrage, but the presence of committed individuals clearly had an impact: the Pankhursts in Manchester Central, the Coates Hansens in Middlesbrough, or the adultist H. Jennie Baker in Stockton. It is more important at this stage, though, to note the extent to which the ILP's ideology could accommodate both an equal suffrage and an adultist position.¹⁴

Chapters 2 and 3 have explored how equal suffragists could appeal to ILPers' understanding of socialism as implying not only economic, but also wider changes in human relations, as well as to rejections of notions of class war: they emphasised the importance of extending the franchise to women as a way of abolishing a 'sex disability'. At the same time, while denying

¹⁴ The ambiguities in ILP thinking also made possible the development of 'anti' attitudes: these were, though, only rarely taken up.

the relevance of issues of class to the debate, they underscored the benefits specifically to working-class women of an extension of the franchise even on a limited basis. Adultists, on the other hand, played on the ILP's efforts to identify itself as a party representing the interests of the working-class, and poured scorn on equal suffrage as merely a way of extending the propertied vote. Both sides could use the language of 'citizenship' and of 'rights', and there is no indication that adult suffragists rejected the notion of women's primarily domestic nature.

Ultimately, both an equal and an adult suffrage position could be made to fit within the ILP's ideology: neither challenged established beliefs about the natures of men and women and their role in society. It was the militant suffrage campaigns, considered in chapters 3 and 4, which eventually brought to light the ambiguities and instability of an ideology which positioned the cause of 'women' as a worthy, but separate one from that of the 'workers'.

Condemnations of militancy, particularly of its more supposedly 'aggressive' aspects, may well have contained an element of dislike for actions which seemed to contradict prevailing notions of caring, nurturing womanhood. Nevertheless, it seems clear that ILP men by no means disapproved of women's political activities and entry into the 'public' arena per se. Albeit with all the constraints imposed by pre-conceived notions of activities considered particularly suitable for them, women were encouraged to join the party. At the same time, ILP men were able to develop strategies to deal with the militant acts themselves: they could portray the suffrage activists as the victims of an illiberal government, judiciary, or prison system,

while creating an image of themselves as manly defenders of the women's bodies from the violence of police or of 'mobs'.

The term 'militant' of course covers a whole range of political tactics and objectives. The aspect which eventually soured relations between ILP and WSPU, at least at a national level, and made impossible the development of a close relationship with the WFL, was the militant insistence on independence from all political parties, alongside its anti-government policy.

At one level, the issue was one of loyalty towards the party to which most of the early WSPU members belonged, and whose support for women's enfranchisement was emphasised (male self-criticism being extremely rare). Most importantly, though, it brought to the fore ILP men's ambiguity in their thinking about women: just how important was women's emancipation, and women's suffrage in particular, in the wider scheme of socialism? The final chapter has shown how in 1913 it had seemed that a number of ILP men had been prepared to respond to the challenge by emphasising the importance of women's suffrage as the necessary precondition to the establishment of a true socialist society. Hardie's position, for example, had by this time shifted considerably from his earlier rejection of 'political' reforms as an irrelevant relic of radicalism.

Writing in May 1913, he stated that

... the cause of women is the cause of humanity. Political equality will as in the case of men, precede economic equality. Votes for women will not only be a recognition of the equality of the sexes, but will also enable women to stand with men in

the greater fight for economic freedom.¹⁵

The same image is also suggested by figure 49, which appeared on the special 'suffrage' issue of the *Labour Leader*.¹⁶

On the whole, though, this seems to have been a minority position. Bruce Glasier was more representative of ILP men's position in emphasising that however worthy, the suffrage cause was not itself part of socialism. Looking back from the significant vantage point of 1926, Joseph Clayton (himself an active suffragist in the pre-war period) remarked that whatever its achievements, ultimately the suffrage movement had deflected

both men and women from the socialist movement, and the women thus diverted did not for the most part return. Their energies spent in the years of the struggle for votes for women could not be recovered.¹⁷

This is a rather partial view of events. I suggest that if suffrage activists left (temporarily or permanently) the party, they did so because it provided them with insufficient room for manoeuvre. ILP men were prepared to recognise the justice of women's claim to enfranchisement, and to undertake a certain amount of action to support this claim. Under pressure from

¹⁵ *The Labour Woman*, May 1913. See also A.F. Brockway, *What the ILP Wants*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, n.d., c.1913), pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ *Labour Leader*, 9 January 1913.

¹⁷ J. Clayton, *The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924*, (Faber and Gwyer, London, 1926), pp. 157-8.



BRAVELY SHE STRUGGLES UPWARD
 TO THE HEIGHT,
 WEIGHTED WITH CARES OF MOTHER-
 HOOD, & BARRED
 BY TANGLED GROWTH OF CENTURIES.
 O MAN,
 THOU WILT NOT LET HER STRUGGLE
 THUS ALONE,
 STRONG, BUT OERWEIGHTED; BRAVE,
 BUT WEAPONLESS.—
 WIELDING THE WEAPON THOU THY-
 SELF HAST WON,
 HEW DOWN THE BARRIERS THAT
 BLOCK HER WAY,
 THAT SHE & THOU TOGETHER
 MAY BE STRONG.
 Jessie Mothersole

FIGURE 49. 'WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT'.

suffrage activists, there was a general retreat from the easy dismissal, common in the 1890s, of the importance of 'political' reforms. Individual ILP men were prepared to go further, and to acknowledge women's emancipation in general, and suffrage in particular, as an inherent part of the march towards socialism. The majority, though, were not. When the priorities of individual (mostly women) ILPers changed, and the suffrage issue became the main focus of their activities, they had to face accusations of putting suffrage before socialism. Although the WSPU remained the focus of hostility, an electoral agreement with a non-socialist organisation like the NUWSS could also be seen as detrimental to the party's 'real' interests. Ultimately, for somebody like Brockway, 'at that time the equality of women with men' may have been 'a principle stronger... than the principle of class'.¹⁸ But for most ILP men active in the party during its first twenty one years of existence, Margaret McMillan's observation remained deeply true:

The Independent Labour Party was not formed to champion women... It took that battle in its stride, and might drop it in its ardour. It was born to make war on capitalism and competition.¹⁹

¹⁸ Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 34.

¹⁹ Quoted in Liddington, Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p. 131.

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A series of spirited feminist readings of the historical parameters of masculinity, *The Men's Share?* is an exploration of the complex meanings of men's support for women's struggles for the vote. It serves as an important reminder that not all men have opposed the cause of women's representation. Philippa Levine, *University of Southern California*

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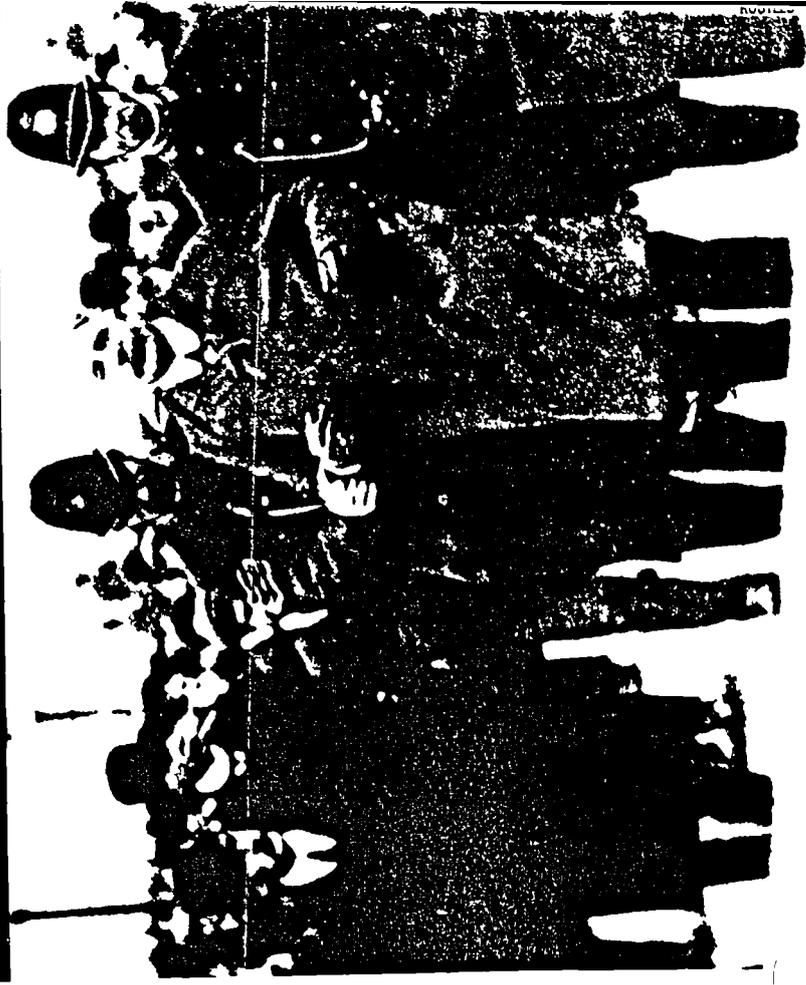
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in Britain, 1890-1920

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ROUTLEDGE

'By all means let the ladies have a chance'

The Workman's Times, independent labour representation and women's suffrage, 1891–4

Laura Ugolini

During its life-span *The Workman's Times* struck a responsive chord among its audience. Inaugurated only a few years before the better-known *Clarion*, it was, admittedly, neither as successful nor as long-lived. Lasting only five years, between 1889 and 1894, it was hardly ever out of financial difficulties. It can best be described as the poor relation of successful northern papers such as the *Cotton Factory Times* and *Yorkshire Factory Times*, whose owner it shared until 1892.¹

Yet, most notably, it could boast that it was the appeal to its readers to send in names pledging support to the principle of independent labour representation which set into motion the events which led to the Bradford Conference and the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893.²

Edited by Joseph Burgess, a Lancashire piecer and poet turned journalist (and between 1885 and 1889 sub-editor and then manager of the *Yorkshire Factory Times*), *The Workman's Times* represented one of a number of attempts in the early 1890s to establish a national labour paper.³ Although the columns of the paper were open to socialists and Burgess considered himself to be one, the paper's editorial policy was not distinctively socialist: a wider audience was clearly hoped for.⁴

It is impossible to calculate with any precision the extent of the paper's readership. It seems that on 9 January 1891 *The Workman's Times* was receiving 10,077 orders, increasing to 13,464 by 5 June, and then suddenly jumping to 51,284 on 3 July. The last given figure was that of 62,517 on 2 October. Apparently, though, circulation continued to grow until the time of the 1892 general election, after which it started to fall (although the rate was not revealed).⁵

On more than one occasion *The Workman's Times* was defined as

a 'family paper'. Moreover, the presence of a column on 'Household hints' and serialized romantic fiction was presumably designed to attract a female readership. Nevertheless, the paper's main audience was clearly meant to be not only one of waged workers, but also of those among them who were already members of a trade union. Burgess himself did not believe that many unorganized workers read his paper.⁶

It was the shift from a concentration on purely trade union to political matters, and the advocacy of labour's political action independently of either Liberal or Tory parties (particularly from 1892), that marked the beginning of the paper's difficulties. Ironically, the fundamental contribution of *The Workman's Times* to the establishment of the Independent Labour Party ultimately served to spell its own destruction, as support from the party was not sufficient to allow it to survive.⁷

Although many causes were advocated, or merely discussed, in the columns of this paper – for example, trade unionism, the eight-hours day and co-operation – it is in its guise of independent labour representation advocate that I shall consider the attitude of its male contributors towards women's suffrage.

The involvement of labour activists within the women's suffrage movement has already attracted considerable attention from historians. Early suffrage historians chose to place varying degrees of emphasis on Labour's role within the campaign, according to their own sympathies: in Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Suffragette Movement* the labour and suffrage movements appeared almost inseparable, while in Ray Strachey's *The Cause* the former was far less in evidence.⁸ More recent works have taken the shape of detailed studies, recognizing the geographical, organizational and ideological variations within the labour movement. Quite understandably, considering their neglect within standard labour histories, these works have tended to concentrate on women activists.⁹ None the less, they point the way for a study of male activists. Just as such studies demonstrated the need to explore the female activists' backgrounds rather than regarding their involvement in the suffrage movement in isolation, so the men's attitudes towards women's suffrage cannot be divorced from their identities as male labour activists. Although these identities were clearly made up of other factors apart from their masculinity, it is with issues of gender that this chapter is centrally concerned.¹⁰ The construction of a particular masculine identity by labour activists through media such as *The Workman's Times* was

central to the development of an ideology which aimed at the empowerment of 'workers' through independent labour representation. Attitudes towards women's suffrage cannot be considered in isolation from such efforts.¹¹

This chapter does not concentrate exclusively on the male contributors' arguments in favour of women's suffrage, but adopts a broader approach. An investigation of the paper's aims in advocating independent labour representation reveals the primary importance of the association of the 'worker' (whose representation was being sought) with a masculine identity. Not all men may have belonged to the category of 'workers', but all women were excluded. It is necessary to reassess the extent to which the achievement of women's own enfranchisement and political emancipation could be accommodated within this ideology. The picture which emerges does not simply highlight the support (or lack of it) for women's suffrage within *The Workman's Times*, but rather throws new light on the nature of the terms upon which support was given.

The paper's male contributors were remarkably supportive of women's right to vote. Although the paper was not always above caricaturing suffrage activists, it welcomed the introduction in Parliament of Haldane's suffrage bill in April 1891, and warned that politicians could not be trusted. Furthermore, although in some cases women's suffrage was advocated within the context of adult suffrage, this was by no means always the case: Haldane's bill, for example, would have granted women the vote on the same limited terms as men.¹²

And yet, when one turns to the question of independent labour representation, it seems that the claims of women to political representation were forgotten. By 1891, the paper was strongly advocating the representation of workers independently of the main political parties in both Parliament and local government. This was symptomatic of a growing feeling of discontent towards working-class MPs such as Henry Broadhurst, who were characterized as 'men who masquerade in Labour garb and dance obedience to party whips'. It was felt that MPs should have been able to act in the interests of workers, irrespective of either Liberal or Conservative party lines.¹³

It is clear that class issues were central to such aspirations. The opposition of interests between 'workers' and those who controlled the main political parties was emphasized. In some cases the latter were explicitly identified with capitalists, while it was thought that

genuine working-class MPs would naturally legislate in the interests of their own class.¹⁴ Very occasionally, a commitment to socialism was explicitly proposed as the distinguishing feature of a new party.¹⁵

Much more often, though, the emphasis was on the difference between those who had experience of work and those governing the country who lived in an 'intellectual heaven'.¹⁶ The main parties were dominated by 'men of wealth' and 'parasites', while the workers were those who produced all the wealth of the country and who had, at least at some point in their lives, experienced the harshness of the labour market. The true representatives of labour would thus 'deal with public questions from the point of view of those who have to work with their hands for scanty pay, and who know where the shoe pinches'.¹⁷

And yet, if one considers the extent of the franchise as late as 1911, when only roughly 59 per cent of the adult male population was registered to vote in parliamentary elections, it can hardly be said that the proposed party of workers would have represented the working class as a whole, unless one wished to define the latter as exclusively male, and selective at that.¹⁸ Contributors to *The Workman's Times* thus called for a type of empowerment for workers which depended on the possession of the vote, and from which women (and some men) were in fact debarred. And while women's right to the vote was recognized, franchise reform was never advocated as a preliminary step towards independent labour representation.

Quite the opposite: *The Workman's Times* was more likely to emphasize the power of the working class at the ballot-box and the adequacy of the contemporary franchise; an editorial of May 1891, for example, pointed out that a change in the personnel of government should come before a change in the system.¹⁹ Even when the limitations of the present franchise were lamented, no mention was made of women's suffrage. Joseph Burgess himself, writing under the pseudonym of 'Autolycus', emphasized that the great number of non-voters were welcome to join the Independent Labour Party, but then simply advocated a reform of the registration laws. On the whole, independent labour representation as envisaged by *The Workman's Times* seems to have left little space for women's own political representation.²⁰

An understanding of such apparently contradictory attitudes towards women's claims to political representation lies in the meaning

attached to the terms 'workers', 'toilers', 'labour' and so on, as used when advocating independent labour representation. Although these had an obvious class connotation, they also carried gendered understandings developed in relation not only to the paper's contributors' own views, but also to those of its readership. As this was assumed to be comprised mostly of trade unionists, it is clear that despite the recent advances in so-called 'New Unionism', it would have represented not only a minority of the working population, but also a minority from which, outside the cotton industry, women were virtually absent. It is thus necessary to assess how the 'workers' to whom *The Workman's Times* appealed, were in fact defined.

I shall start by examining the ideas expressed by the male contributors to *The Workman's Times* in relation to what was perceived to be the 'proper' role to be played by women within society, the fundamental question being whether women were in fact included in the category of 'workers'.

There was no blanket condemnation of women's work anywhere on *The Workman's Times*. Their participation in the labour market was often taken for granted and in February 1892 a section of the paper on 'Women's work, wages and organisation' was started, proposing to cater for their special needs. In the case of young or single women such participation was even commended. For example, in a short story entitled 'Two Girls' Plans', the girls were described as they discussed their plans on leaving school. Both were mechanics' daughters, but the mother of one of them had told her that it was not genteel for women to work, while the other wanted to become a dressmaker to help her family's finances. In the end the first one died miserably, having become unfit for any activity, while the second started a prosperous dressmaking business, later in a telling twist giving that up to marry an even more prosperous manufacturer.²¹ By the 1890s it was considered the norm for such girls to go out to work before marriage. Shop-work in particular provided working-class girls with a relatively high-status occupation without requiring more than an elementary education, although, as the story indicates, marriage continued to be considered girls' ultimate goal in life.²²

Occasionally the necessity (if not the advisability) of married women's work was admitted. Contemporary social commentators had increasingly come to the conclusion that married women's work was not an evil *per se* but the result of evil circumstances. Similarly *The Workman's Times* recognized that women such as the London

matchbox makers worked because, for various reasons, the bread-winning husband could not provide for the family.²³ Much emphasis was placed on the importance of forming strong trade union organizations among working women, in sympathy with the trend towards mixed, general unions, rather than the exclusive practices of many craft societies: united, women would 'be the better able to command proper respect due to labour of all sorts, and gradually but surely elevate themselves socially, morally and politically'.²⁴ The work of women such as Lady Dilke of the Women's Trade Union League was warmly praised.²⁵

And yet, underlying most discussions of women's waged work was the belief that while the latter may at times have been a necessity, and in the case of young girls even a praiseworthy activity, work was essentially a masculine right and duty. A division of labour was seen as desirable whereby the men could support their families with married women not being forced to seek work outside the home. In this *The Workman's Times* reflected the increasingly wide acceptance, at least among certain sections of the working class, of the desirability for the male worker to be able to support a family on his sole earnings, while at the same time securing the wife's domestic services.²⁶ Despite the fact that investigations such as those carried out by the Women's Industrial Council in the first decade of the twentieth century show that for vast sections of the working class this remained only an aspiration, historians such as Sonya Rose and Keith McClelland have shown that apart from its economic rationale, considerable emotional investment was placed in the equation between notions of 'respectable masculinity' and status as family provider.²⁷

It is impossible to assess exactly how widespread was acceptance of these ideas, but they certainly found ready expression among the trade union respondents to the Royal Commission on Labour of 1891-4. Thomas Homer, the president of the Cradley Heath and District Branch of the National Amalgamation of Chain-Makers' and Chain-Strikers' Associations, lamented that his was the only part of the country where women worked alongside the men in the trade, and as a result

everything is being neglected at home, all little domestic duties are neglected, and when the man goes in his little place, his little castle as it should be, there is nothing clean and tidy. It drives him off to the public-house and all that kind of thing in our country, which would not be if the women were better domesticated.

Even more significant, perhaps, was the view expressed by William Mullin, the representative of the Amalgamated Society of Card and Blowing Room Operatives. Despite the fact that the majority of his society's membership consisted of women, with 18,500 against 6,500 men, he stated that his union was actively working to obtain 'a man's wage for the men', so that they would be able to support a family on their own earnings.²⁸ Thus, ideally, men and women's roles were clearly distinguished: '[Men] have no more right poking [their] . . . nose into the kitchen than [women] . . . to walk into . . . [the men's] place of business and give them directions.'²⁹

Understandably, contributors to *The Workman's Times* considered women's competition in what was perceived as 'men's work' to be particularly obnoxious. As Harriet Bradley has shown, although by the 1890s the masculine nature of trades such as fishing was firmly established, others like hosiery and pottery were experiencing feminization and shifting gender divisions. She considers the 1880s and 1890s to have been central decades in the redefinition of gender roles in the workplace, causing a widespread sense of crisis among many sections of the male workforce, presumably including the readership of *The Workman's Times*.³⁰ The paper clearly reflected such concerns, although an attempt was made to soften the condemnation by emphasizing that the objection was to the 'unfairness' of women's competition:

By all means let the ladies have a chance. But . . . no woman ought to take work previously done by a man at less wages than the man was wont to receive. If she does . . . she is neither more nor less than a blackleg.³¹

And yet there was a clear distaste for what was perceived as a reversal of proper gender roles, which resulted in men standing idle while women were engaged as cheap labour to the benefit of the employer and detriment of the family. Thus it was suggested that if women were excluded from chain-making there would have been more work and higher wages for men. It was largely because of female competition that this was the 'worst paid skilled industry in the world'.³²

Such an ambivalent attitude towards women's work was often bound up with (and possibly at the same time rationalized by) an emphasis on the 'unsuitability' for women of certain types of

employment. *The Workman's Times* tended to place particular importance on the strength necessary to perform tasks such as chain-making, a strength which men, but not women, were considered to possess.

This issue was raised in an article by a J. W. Gardner, dealing with the problem of unemployment in the mining industry. Among the various suggested solutions, such as reducing hours of work or abolishing royalties, can be found the abolition of the work of women on the pit brow. Although the author's central concern was clearly to increase male employment opportunities, he still felt the necessity of rationalizing his demand for the exclusion of women from surface work by emphasizing the unsuitability for women of work which involved using heavy hammers, wheeling barrows and pushing wagons full of coal.³³

Only a little more than a month after the appearance of Gardner's article, *The Workman's Times* published a rather startling challenge to such ideas in a piece whose aim was to refute the 'physical force' argument against women's suffrage. This stated that men such as the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, had obviously never

seen the women in the white-lead works carrying great loads up and down ladders on their heads, nor the poor girls cleansing the dirt out of their lordships' garments in damp cellars; nor the girls in countless factories, warehouses and shops preserving the divine ideal of the politicians' 'woman' at high pressure through a 60 or 70 hours week.

If political representation were a case of physical force, women could hold their own.³⁴ A note of pride in the strength of working-class women can certainly be detected here, but none the less the work itself was hardly portrayed as a possible source of pride. Furthermore, this piece was unique: women's employment in 'unsuitable' trades, especially those requiring masculine attributes of physical strength, was otherwise always seen as both degrading to women and a threat to men.³⁵

It is also interesting to note the extent to which neither women's trade unionism nor equal wages were advocated exclusively (or in some cases even primarily) in order to improve the well-being of the women themselves, but rather to minimize their competitiveness towards men.³⁶

A good deal was written about women's role and responsibilities as wives and mothers. They were supposed to be confidantes,

advisers and makers of a 'little domestic sphere so bright and cheerful that . . . [the] husband and children will not want to spend their evenings away from it'.³⁷ Although a contributor writing under the *nom de plume* of 'Proletarian' looked forward to a time when women would no longer be 'domestic drudges', and motherhood and domestic work received a state payment, he did not question the association of women with these activities.³⁸ Burgess chose to emphasize the power wielded by women in their capacity as housekeepers and consumers. He pointed out that no co-operative venture could be successful without enlisting the support of those in charge of buying household goods. He himself had taken great pains to explain to his wife Sarah why, on coming home in the evening, he did not wish to see 'certain articles' on the tea table. It seems clear that the Burgess household also operated on the basis that the husband's role was to provide financial support, that of the wife to care for house and numerous offspring.³⁹

Nevertheless marriage and motherhood were not always seen as the only future open to women, although it is doubtful whether many of the paper's readers would have gone as far as the correspondent who advocated birth control in order to safeguard women's health.⁴⁰ For those who did not meet the 'right man', earning their own livelihood was emphasized as a perfectly acceptable alternative. The useful and fulfilling nature of 'old maids' lives was stressed, whilst most of the court cases reported in the paper's columns and describing incidents of violence between spouses, must effectively have subverted any idyllic image of domestic life, especially among the poorer sections of the population.⁴¹

On the whole, though, the image of womanhood represented by *The Workman's Times* was connected only in a very limited sense to waged work: a woman was by no means always also a 'worker'. Women's work was accepted, or even commended in the case of single women, although even here only so long as it was considered 'suitable' and did not interfere with men's employment, while married women's domestic role, at least as an ideal, if not always a reality, was emphasized.

It is necessary now to consider the ways in which independent labour representation was advocated and the gender assumptions expressed, particularly in relation to the use of the term 'workers'. Was the latter gender-neutral in its meaning, thereby including both men and women?

With very few exceptions, the tone of the language used when

advocating independent labour representation was uncompromisingly masculine. It was the election of 'working men' that was almost invariably sought.⁴² This may well have been the result of linguistic convention, whereby the feminine was simply implied within the masculine: the use of 'working men' may have been a convenient short-hand for 'working men and women'. 'Frances' certainly thought so: she started her regular feature on women workers in the belief that the paper's editor and contributors wished *The Workman's Times's* title to be 'parsed "common gender"' and understood *Workers' Times's*.⁴³ Nevertheless, it is my contention that we are dealing not with linguistic convention, but with the construction of a notion of 'worker' associated with a masculine identity, the latter contributing an essential characteristic to the 'labour' whose independent representation was being sought.

In many cases, the independent representation of workers was suggestively portrayed as a masculine affair. A particularly interesting symbolism was proposed, for example, by John Trevor, who compared capitalists and their parties to a bad mother who tried to control Labour, her son, first by kicking and then by 'wooing' him, until eventually the latter achieved his 'manhood' by starting to despise her and then breaking off relations with her.⁴⁴

The drawing which marked the 1893 Conference of the Independent Labour Party is also revealing, and certainly seems to confirm Eric Hobsbawm's suggestion that by the 1890s a 'masculinization' of socialist and trade union imagery was taking place, with the naked muscular male torso now taking centre stage. The drawing was provided by an artist working under the pseudonym of 'Leon Caryll', and obviously sympathetic to the cause of independent labour representation. He portrayed the insurgent Labour as a male, muscular and bearded figure, reminiscent of a Saxon warrior (Plate 1).⁴⁵ Most often, though, the masculine nature of labour was suggested by the use of the ambiguous term 'working man'. While women were seen only in a very limited sense as 'workers', the image of the male worker was generally much more positive, despite some deprecation of the excessive identification of the working-class man with the 'worker'. This may have reflected the shift away from an exclusively work-centred masculine culture, observed by some historians, as even well-paid manual workers tended to find less satisfaction in their work. Writing about Salford in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Robert Roberts scorned the romanticization of men's attachment to their work. As he succinctly put it, 'they

toiled on through mortal fear of getting the sack'.⁴⁶ It was stated in *The Workman's Times* that the labour movement stood not only for improvements in workplace conditions. As a contributor writing under the *nom de plume* of 'Bronterre' pointed out: 'the toiler has discovered that he is also a man, and demands a man's necessities: health, clothing, housing, culture.'⁴⁷ The emphasis placed by some commentators on the importance of 'honest toil' was considered to be a mockery under the present system, seeing that all the advantages of labour went to the capitalists. The drudgery of workers such as alkali operatives was stressed.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, in general, waged work was considered to hold a distinctively positive role in a man's life, to the extent that it could be stated that 'not only, in the case of most men, does daily work get daily bread, but the daily work is as necessary for health and happiness as daily food'. Conversely, unemployment was almost invariably portrayed as a masculine calamity. Thus, although 'Jean Val-Jean' emphasized the right not only of men but also of women and children to live by their labour, he saw unemployment, pauperism and the consequent disfranchisement as making 'the man . . . an outsider; he has no place among his fellows except such as they choose to accord him'.⁴⁹

The drawings of workers provided for the paper from May 1892 by 'Leon Caryl' are also revealing. Not only were the workers portrayed invariably male, but their 'maleness' was also greatly emphasized. Although some effort was made to depict these as intelligent men (for example, two agricultural labourers were portrayed as reading the paper), greater stress was placed on their muscular arms and bodies and the fact that they were obviously engaged in hard, manual labour (Plate 2).⁵⁰ By the end of the century the performance of physically demanding work was a central route to the achievement of a successful working-class masculinity within the workplace, and one more easily realizable than the ability to support a family, especially by unskilled/casual workers. In his autobiography, Will Thorne remembered the pride in their physical strength common among navvies. Being called 'thick leg' was the highest accolade a man could receive. 'I have known them to wrap pieces of calico around their calves to make them bulge and give them a "thick-legged" appearance.' There are very interesting parallels with the imagery used in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century by the International Workers of the World (the 'wobblies'), which focused on the male workers' 'brute

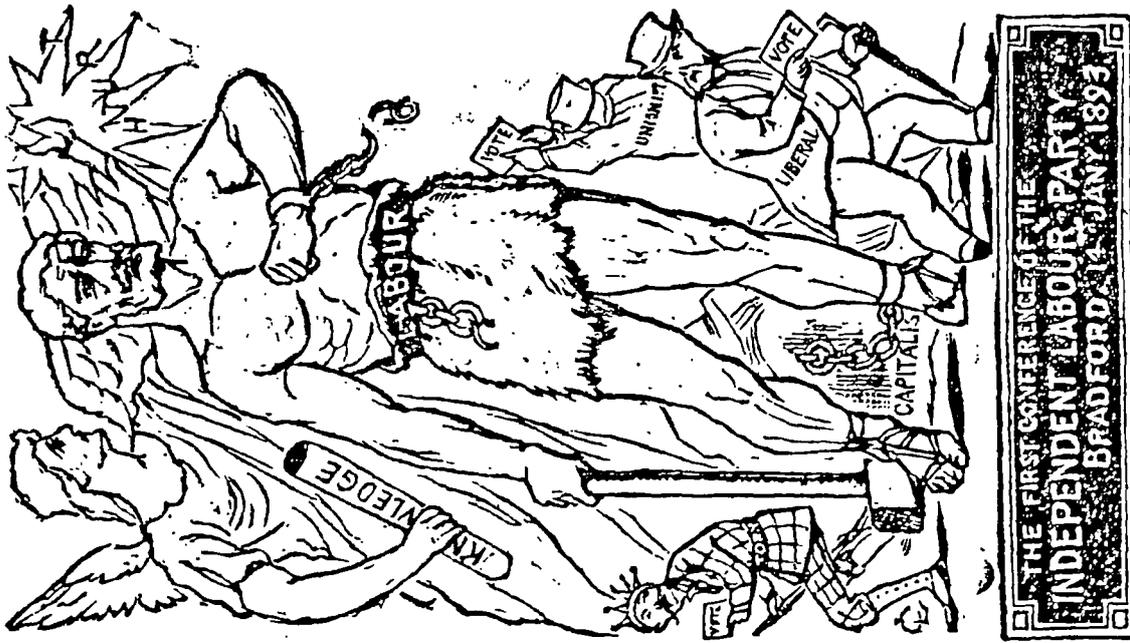


Plate 1 Leon Caryl's commemorative drawing of the first conference of the ILP, *The Workman's Times*, 1893. By permission of the British Library

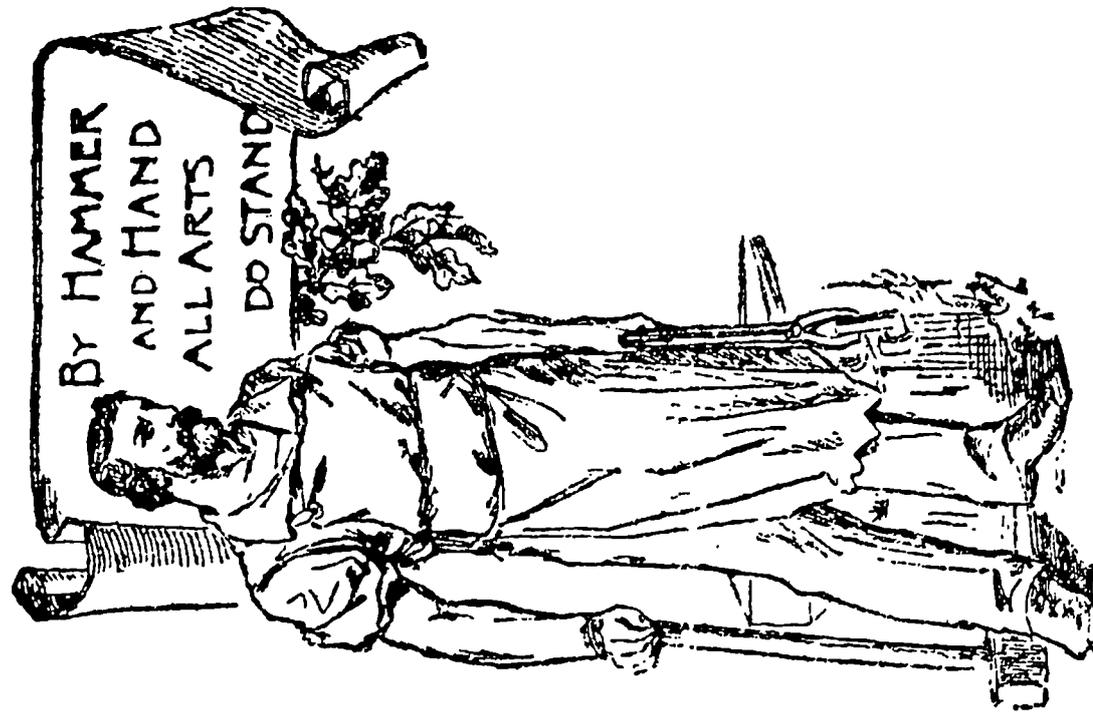


Plate 2 Leon Caryl's representation of labour, *The Workman's Times*, 1893. By permission of The British Library

strength'. The aim was to emphasize the union's inclusive policies and desire to represent a broader constituency than that of skilled workers. Nevertheless, one of the consequences was to ignore (mostly female) workers such as domestic servants and textile operatives. Equally, within *The Workman's Times*, labour requiring physical strength was portrayed as a masculine prerogative only occasionally usurped by women, such as in the case of the Cradley Heath chain-makers.⁵¹

Efforts to broaden the ranks of Labour did not include women, but rather those men who did not conform to such images of muscular, manual labour. This can be seen in a number of different instances: for example, in the need felt to justify the inclusion of those who laboured not only by hand, but also by brain, and in the calls made to clerical and shop workers to abandon their pretensions to gentility, recognize that 'they are no better off than unskilled labourers' and join the ranks of labour. Very little importance was placed on the notion of 'respectability' and excessive attachment to it among workers was condemned.⁵²

In some ways, therefore, *The Workman's Times's* 'worker' seems to have been quite different from Keith McClelland's 'independent' and 'respectable' artisan of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, as the earlier language of respectability was rejected and the importance of physical strength given greater prominence. Sonya Rose has located a shift in definitions of masculinity among organized workers in the 1880s, with the rise of 'new unionism'. Nevertheless, the continuities were just as significant: the sexual division of labour and the family wage, themselves central gender components of earlier working-class 'respectability', remained unchanged. Thus, when white-collar workers' 'respectability' was being condemned, the reference was not to its basis in family arrangements, but rather to its manifestations within the workplace: the deferential attitude and the aping of middle-class habits, symbolized by the wearing of the black coat.⁵³

It is possible to conclude that *The Workman's Times's* advocacy of independent labour representation for 'working men' was no simple linguistic short-hand, but rather represented a more or less conscious association with masculinity of workers for wages outside the home: this was often a new type of uncompromising, 'muscular' masculinity, although still based upon domestic authority. Both the paper's male readership and contributors would have been able to identify with this.

It is clear that the terminology used to advocate the independent representation of labour was a class-bound one, serving to emphasize the opposition between the 'workers' and the 'non-workers' who controlled the main political parties. It was also a gendered one. Women were perceived primarily *not* as workers, but rather as domestic beings (although the distinction was never quite so clear-cut). They could thus be ignored when advocating independent labour representation because their role within society was seen as different from that of the masculine worker: women's claim to political empowerment was a separate, if equally just, cause.⁵⁴ Once obtained, this would lead to their separate interests being represented on political bodies, although at least one contributor to the paper felt there were limits beyond which women's separate interests should not be allowed: he condemned the situation where both husbands and wives could be enfranchised while holding different political opinions.⁵⁵ He, though, was a lone voice. As 'Cunctator' pointed out, enfranchised women would be able to look after the interests of all women and to legislate for working women in particular. The latter did not necessarily imply a recognition of women's role as 'workers'. Burgess, for example, considered that one of the first acts of politically powerful women to safeguard the interests of working women would have been to prohibit their employment in chain-making.⁵⁶

It was also emphasized that women's own brand of 'domestic' expertise and distinctive 'female' character could be made use of in the political sphere. As 'C. G.' pointed out, home certainly was the proper sphere for women, but the conception of the home had to be widened to encompass the whole world: 'and here, in her own home, amongst her own children, shall woman, the mother of the race, exercise those qualities of heart and mind that shall raise man from a grovelling savage to a God.'⁵⁷

A pamphlet of 1892 by Mrs Fawcett, later to become president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, provides an interesting counterpart to these ideas. She shared the view of 'Cunctator' that votes for women would serve to safeguard their interests, but made scant reference to women's domestic expertise. She believed that women's industrial position would improve with the vote, by enabling them to end male trade unionists' restrictive practices, which kept women relegated to the worst paid and least skilled trades, an argument to which she returned frequently. Although Mrs Fawcett and *The Workman's Times* were both supportive of women's suffrage, their positions had clearly little else in common.⁵⁸

The nature of women's participation in the early Independent Labour Party was obviously influenced by notions of their 'special role'. In 1894 a number of women's sections were formed. Sarah Burgess was elected president of the Hightown Branch of the North Salford women's section of the Independent Labour Party. In her hearts and friends of the members of the North Salford Independent Labour Party', had decided to organize separately and to exclude men from their meetings, as they found that men had a tendency to dominate all discussion. Unfortunately *The Workman's Times* gives little information about this or other similar bodies, and yet it is difficult not to consider them a product of the conflict in the early days of the party between those men and women who genuinely wished for the participation of women within the movement and the women who had reservations about its relentlessly masculine tone. Sarah Burgess's own experiences may serve to indicate the difficulties encountered by a woman burdened with domestic responsibilities, who nevertheless desired to participate actively in the movement: Joseph vividly described her excitement on returning from the Women's Party's weekly meetings. Eventually, though, her growing domestic and family responsibilities meant that she had to give up political activism. There was nothing within *The Workman's Times* which challenged the assumption that it would have to be she who gave up her political work to dedicate herself to the care of her family.⁵⁹

Not all were happy with the establishment of separate groups for women. Marion Coates of the Middlesbrough ILP (and later active in the Women's Freedom League) wrote to express her concern at the establishment of a separate women's organization in Newcastle:

Should [women] ... not join hands with their brothers and work together for a common cause? Have not the women been long enough separated in public matters from the men? No party, in my estimation, can succeed which excludes men or women. Each needs the other's presence to refine and inspire.

The reply by Florence Nightingale L. Harrison, secretary of the Newcastle Women's Labour Association, is particularly revealing of the obstacles in the way of women's integration within the Independent Labour Party and of its essentially masculine nature. Although her intention was to deny any desire or need to form an organization separate from the masculine party, she none the less

admitted to being the only woman member of the Newcastle Independent Labour Party and remarked on the fact that the latter's headquarters were not a suitable place for women (presumably a public-house).⁶⁰

A further example of the tension resulting from the desire to include women within the Independent Labour Party, but only on very specific terms, was evident in the modification to the design of a party banner presented in the autumn of 1893 by 'Leon Caryll'. The first version was dominated by the figures of two male workers holding their work-implements.⁶¹ Their bearded faces, large, muscular bodies and grim features, all pointed to the expression of a masculinity based on the undertaking of physically demanding, manual toil, whether within the context of industry or agriculture. In the background were further figures of masculine workers and the products of their labour. Together with the lettering, the design served to emphasize further the experience of 'masculine' work as a distinguishing feature of Independent Labour Party adherents (Plate 3).

A week after the publication of the design for the banner, though, Burgess published a letter by a B. Walter, whom he presumed to be a woman, protesting against the absence of female figures from the banner.⁶² The result was a modified version, in which two female figures sitting at the feet of the central male figures were introduced (Plate 4).⁶³ The artist had made an effort to portray these women as 'workers': the rolled up sleeves of one figure further suggested that such work need not always have been of a delicate character. Yet, these figures were much smaller and daintier than the male ones. Particularly notable is the much reduced emphasis on the size of arms and feet. The impression is that although the women may also have been 'workers', the nature of their work would have been different from the men's, and would not have required the same amount of physical strength: the sewing performed by one of the female figures would thus have been an example of 'suitable' work. Despite these reservations, the second banner shows that it would not have been impossible to elaborate a notion of 'labour' and of 'workers' without the masculine undertones to be found in *The Workman's Times* and thus possibly opening the way for women's fuller integration within the party.⁶⁴

Among the male contributors to *The Workman's Times* the only radically different position on the subject of women's political power was that taken by H. Halliday Sparling, at the time a member of the

LEON CARYLL'S I.L.P. BANNER.

SEE NOTES BY AUTOYLOUOS.

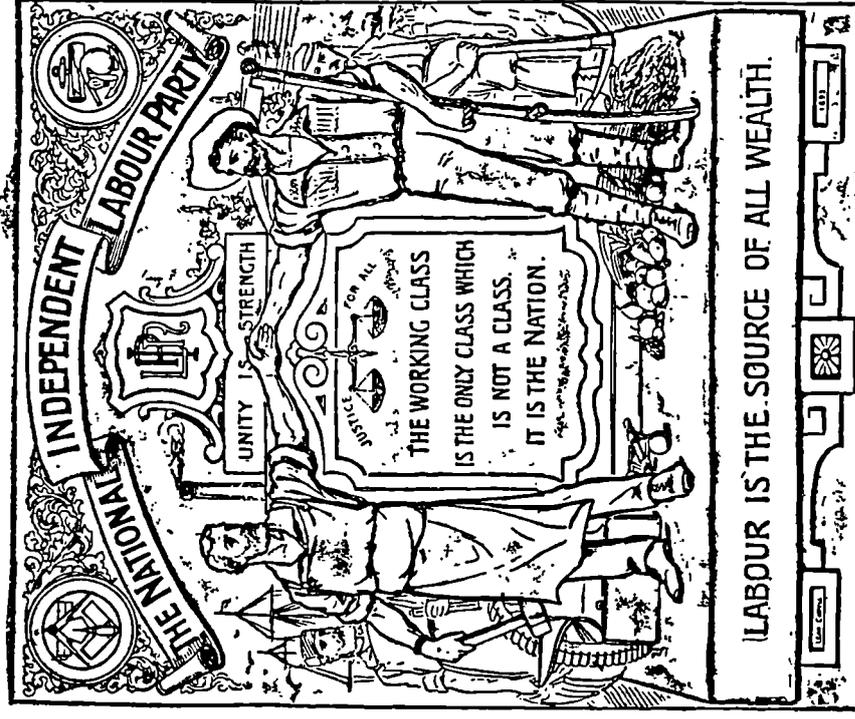


Plate 3 Leon Caryll's design for an ILP banner (first version), *The Workman's Times*, 1893. By permission of The British Library

Fabian executive. He did not emphasize the distinctiveness of the position of women within society. Sparling considered it a duty on the part of socialists to aim for the extinction of all privileges of sex, just as much as those of class, women's emancipation lying at the very heart of the labour movement, where it could not be dismissed with excuses about expediency. He concluded by stating that 'there must be no whittling away of the Democratic claim of equal political power, as a step towards equal economic freedom'. Of course, it is only too easy to read too much in one phrase, and yet it is possible that H. Halliday Sparling may not have been too enamoured of the 'domestic' argument in favour of women's political empowerment, and may have favoured a greater integration of 'women' within the ranks of 'workers'. If carried to its logical conclusion, this would then have subverted the notion of independent labour representation as a masculine entity.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the different rhetoric used by *The Workman's Times* throughout the period under consideration when advocating independent representation and women's suffrage, also lends weight to the argument that most of its male contributors continued to view the emancipation of women and of workers as separate causes. In the latter case, the two most commonly recurrent images were those of war and of slavery. The labour movement was on the one hand portrayed as engaged in battle, and a plethora of related images utilized: banners, marches, armours, strongholds and soldiers all served to lend vividness to the picture. On the other hand, workers were portrayed as slaves who would finally be able to throw off the chains of bondage only through the labour movement. 'Jean Val-Jean' combined both forms of imagery when he called upon the 'Spirit of liberty':

Rouse thou the toiler's bands.
Strengthen the toiler's hands
For victory.
Freedom our battle cry
Rending the vaulted sky
Hark! hear the dying sigh
Of slavery.⁶⁶

These images need not necessarily imply gendered overtones, although the language of war may have been more or less consciously associated with masculinity, since, very simply, slavery had never been the exclusively male institution which the army has been in the

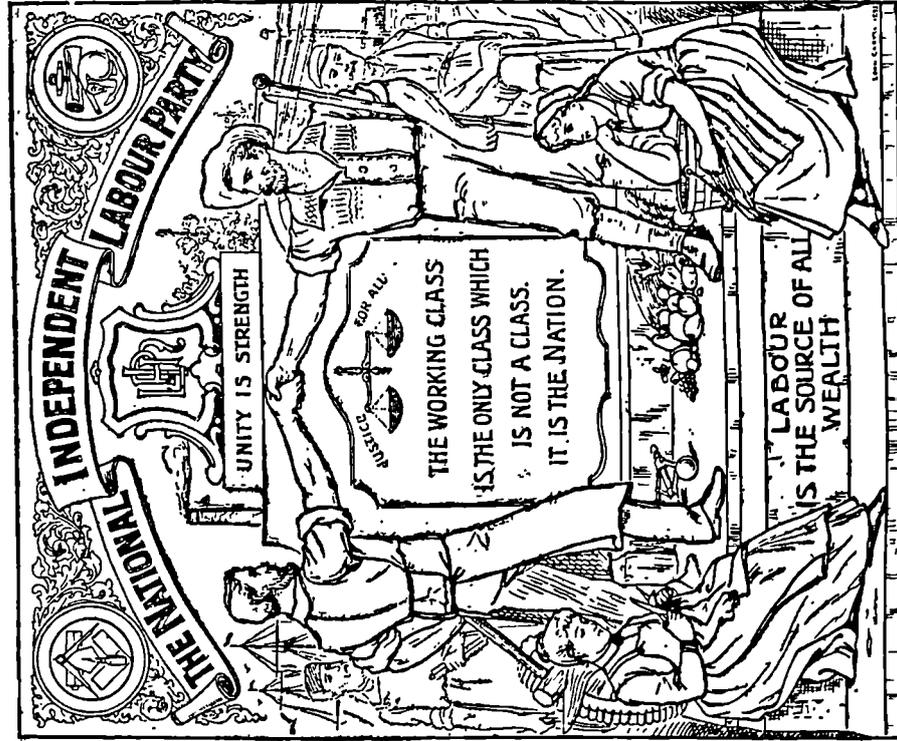


Plate 4 Leon Caryl's design for an ILP banner (final version), *The Workman's Times*, 1893. By permission of The British Library

labour representation, but also showed the way in which women were perceived to suffer from distinctive problems characteristic of their sex, particularly in their relations with men. Suffrage was thus often seen as part of a wider need to reform the unequal relations between the sexes.

Ultimately, the challenge presented to the latter by *The Workman's Times* was only limited. First of all, it did not lead to a critique of the male-dominated nature of the workplace. Furthermore, it did not lead to the theorization of a sphere of power centred in the home, despite women's identification with the 'domestic'. The emphasis placed on the desirability of a 'family wage' is symptomatic of how a family's economic dependence remained central to workers' masculinity. In practice, male power was never effectively challenged, neither in home nor workplace, the two remaining inextricably linked.⁷⁰

The conclusion must be that on the one hand women's suffrage was seen by male contributors to the paper as enabling women to contribute their particular brand of expertise to political life and to look after their own interests, while on the other hand it was a means of emancipating themselves from the position of slavery to the other sex. There was an awareness that the desired domestic idyll did not always correspond to reality. Nevertheless, the challenge to masculine power and the potential for change in the relations between the sexes were both limited. *The Workman's Times* continued both to construct a masculine identity for the 'independent labour' whose cause it championed and to identify men as 'workers' and as family providers.

NOTES

- 1 D. Hopkin, 'The Newspapers of the Independent Labour Party', University of Wales, College of Aberystwyth, PhD, 1981, pp. 11–12.
- 2 D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888–1906*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983, pp. 283–300; H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880–1900*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 99–124.
- 3 J. Burgess, *A Potential Poet? His Autobiography and Verse*, Ilford, Burgess Publications, 1927, especially pp. 143–9; J. Burgess, *John Burns. The Rise and Progress of a Right Honourable*, Glasgow, Reformers' Bookstall, 1911, especially pp. 1–4.
- 4 The tone of the paper did become increasingly outspoken, although it is impossible to pinpoint precisely a date marking the beginning of this shift.

western world. None the less, this rhetoric emphasized once more the masculinity of the workers whose independent representation was being sought. Thus 'The errand boy' stated that he would march under the banner of the 'sons of toil [and] . . . my brothers, my comrades shall march behind it . . . [against Capital]', and workers would escape from the condition of slavery into which they had fallen and regain their 'manhood' only through participation in the labour movement. 'Elihu' accused the landowning classes of having used the power derived from their monopoly of high office and possession of the land ' . . . to crush these men into helpless servitude . . . generation by generation you have brutalised and destroyed their manhood'.⁶⁷

These images were not used when the political empowerment of women was advocated. No significant generalization is, however, possible about the rhetoric used when advocating women's suffrage; often the articles dealing with the issue were quite short, while the longer ones differed widely in the arguments used. One only has to think of Halliday Sparling's emphasis on women's suffrage as a democratic right and the arguments of C.G. about women's distinctive contribution to political life. Yet it is clear that women were not appealed to as slaves of Capital and were not called upon to prepare themselves for battle.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the image of slavery was not completely absent when women's suffrage was advocated though such imagery was used to condemn contemporary relations between the sexes, rather than between employers and employees. Women were seen to have become 'the slaves of slaves', the latter often being identified with the figure of the husband. The development of a new type of relationship was advocated, whereby men and women would be 'free comrade(s)', rather than the woman being treated as a 'chattel'. 'C. G.', though, went further and emphasized how contemporary relations between the sexes were affecting political life, by ensuring the dominance of the masculine element:

Individualism . . . with its every man for himself maxims . . . its worship of strength and brutal contempt of weakness, is the natural outcome of an extreme development of the male principle in human affairs . . . never 'til man vacates his usurped powers . . . will the din of battle and confusion of strife cease.⁶⁹

The rhetoric employed by the (male) contributors to *The Workman's*

- 5 By way of comparison the *Clarion's* early circulation of around 30,000 seems to have established the paper as a 'reasonably high-selling weekly'. See C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1990, p. 147.
- 6 *The Workman's Times* (hereafter *W.T.*), 19 June 1891; 19 December 1891; 17 September 1892; 24 September 1892.
- 7 *W.T.*, 5 November 1892; 12 August 1893. See also D. Hopkin, 'The Socialist Press in Britain, 1890-1910', in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (eds), *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*, London, Constable, 1978, p. 297; Hopkin, 'The Newspapers', p. 13.
- 8 E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, London, Longman, Green, 1931; R. Strachey, *The Cause. A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (1928), London, Virago Press, 1978.
- 9 J. Liddington and J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us. The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, London, Virago Press, 1978; S. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-18*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986; J. Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- 10 Class is another obvious factor: this has been explored in relation to the debate over adult versus equal suffrage. See, for example, Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp. 53-75. The influence of race, ethnicity, age and so on has, though, still to be studied.
- 11 For a lucid discussion of the role of gender in culture formation and its influence in economic relations see S. O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods. Gender and Class in Nineteenth-century England*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 7-11.
- 12 C. Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1944*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 220; *W.T.*, 10 April 1891; 24 April 1891; 8 May 1891; 11 February 1893; 18 February 1893; 20 January 1894. In a fictional piece, a 'female agitator', for example, was described as a 'queer woman', and the suspicion was left to hang in the air that she might intend to steal the money collected at the end of the meeting. See *W.T.*, 28 November 1891.
- 13 *W.T.*, 11 March 1893. See also, for example, 9 October 1891.
- 14 *W.T.*, 24 July 1891; 8 October 1892; 11 March 1893; 29 April 1893; 3 June 1893; 5 August 1893.
- 15 *W.T.*, 10 July 1891; 15 July 1893.
- 16 *W.T.*, 6 January 1894.
- 17 *W.T.*, 2 January 1892. See also 3 April 1891; 8 May 1891; 26 June 1891; 2 April 1892; 30 April 1892; 3 September 1892.
- 18 N. Blewett, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918', *Past and Present*, 32 (1965), pp. 27-56. Although excluded from the parliamentary franchise, by the late 1880s unmarried women ratepayers represented between 12 and 25 per cent of the municipal electorate, and could both vote for and be elected to school boards and boards of guardians. In 1894 this eligibility was extended also to the newly established parish and district councils. See P. Hollis, 'Women in

- Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space', in J. Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different. Women's Politics 1800-1914*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 192-213.
- 19 *W.T.*, 8 May 1891. See also 31 December 1892; 6 May 1893; 16 September 1893.
- 20 *W.T.*, 3 December 1892.
- 21 *W.T.*, 6 February 1892.
- 22 H. Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work. A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989, pp. 175-87.
- 23 S. Meacham, *A Life Apart. The English Working Class, 1890-1914*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1977, p. 97; *W.T.*, 23 April 1892; 30 April 1892; 18 June 1892.
- 24 *W.T.*, 19 December 1891. See B. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions* (1921), London, Virago Press, 1984, pp. 26-43.
- 25 For a positive attitude towards women's work, see *W.T.*, 5 June 1891; 11 September 1891; 7 May 1892; 10 September 1892.
- 26 For the 'family wage' see, for example, W. Secombe, 'Patriarchy Stabilized: the Construction of the Male Bread-Winner Norm in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Social History* 11, 1 (1986), pp. 53-76.
- 27 C. Black, *Married Women's Work*, (1915), London, Virago Press, 1983; Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 126-53; K. McClelland, 'Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan" in Britain, 1850-80', in M. Roper and J. Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 74-81.
- 28 Royal Commission on Labour, XXVIII (1892); XXVII (1891). See also Meacham's description of the segregation of roles within the family in this period, in *A Life Apart*, pp. 64, 72-3.
- 29 *W.T.*, 6 February 1892. See also 1 May 1891; 17 July 1891; 10 September 1892; 18 March 1893.
- 30 Bradley, *Men's Work*.
- 31 *W.T.*, 1 May 1891.
- 32 *W.T.*, 3 April 1891. See also 20 February 1891; 5 June 1891.
- 33 *W.T.*, 18 March 1893.
- 34 *W.T.*, 30 April 1893.
- 35 *W.T.*, 15 May 1891; 14 August 1891; 2 April 1892.
- 36 *W.T.*, 5 June 1891; 21 August 1891; 5 November 1892.
- 37 *W.T.*, 19 December 1891.
- 38 *W.T.*, 27 February 1892. See also 20 February 1891; 12 December 1891; 10 September 1892; 17 March 1894.
- 39 *W.T.*, 19 December 1891.
- 40 *W.T.*, 13 February 1892.
- 41 *W.T.*, 30 January 1891; 24 July 1891; 4 September 1891; 8 October 1892; 19 August 1893.
- 42 See, for example, *W.T.*, 28 August 1891; 4 November 1893; 25 November 1893. An example of such language is Will Sprow's use of the term 'horny-handed sons of toil'; *W.T.*, 21 October 1893. Possibly as a counter to its overwhelmingly masculine tone, on 21 May 1892 the subtitle 'Everybody's paper' started to appear on the paper's front page.

- 43 *W.T.*, 13 February 1892.
- 44 *W.T.*, 5 December 1891.
- 45 See Plate 1. *W.T.*, 4 February 1893. E. Hobsbawm, 'Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography', *History Workshop Journal* 6 (1978), pp. 121–38. For the use of masculine imagery and rhetoric, see also *W.T.*, 31 July 1891; 3 September 1892; 31 December 1892; 10 March 1894. Joseph Burgess seems to have become aware of such a masculine bias. In an editorial in which he stated that the Labour movement 'is a movement in which the man asserts the dignity of man, and of labour as man's most divine attribute', he took pains to add that the movement at its best also embraced women and children. *W.T.*, 20 January 1894.
- 46 G. Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870–1900; Some Notes on the Remaking of a Working-Class', *Journal of Social History* 7, 4 (1974), pp. 485–6 (pp. 460–508); R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum. Salford in the First Quarter of the Century*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974, p. 88.
- 47 *W.T.*, 19 December 1891.
- 48 *W.T.*, 14 November 1891; 26 March 1892; 10 December 1892.
- 49 *W.T.*, 28 October 1893. See also 12 December 1891; 27 February 1892; 21 May 1892; 1 April 1893; 30 September 1893.
- 50 See Plate 2. *W.T.*, 1 April 1893.
- 51 Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, p. 130; W. Thorne, *My Life's Battles*, London, George Newnes, 1925, pp. 32–3; E. Faue, "'The Dynamo of Change': Gender and Solidarity in the American Labour Movement of the 1930s", *Gender & History* 1, 2 (1989), pp. 150–1 (pp. 138–58). For other 'Leon Caryl' drawings, see, for example, *W.T.*, 29 May 1892; 7 January 1893.
- 52 *W.T.*, 31 October 1891; 26 March 1892; 3 September 1892; 12 August 1893.
- 53 McClelland, 'Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan"', pp. 74–81; S. O. Rose, 'Gender and Labor History, the Nineteenth Century Legacy', *International Review of Social History* 38 (1993), p. 155 (pp. 145–62).
- 54 Such views were not necessarily common to the Independent Labour Party as a whole. Nevertheless, in her study of the West Riding Independent Labour Party, J. Hannam has observed a reluctance, similar to that of *The Workman's Times*, to recognize women's role as workers and a tendency to sentimentalize home life. "In the Comradeship of the Sexes lies the Hope of Progress and Social Regeneration". Women in the West Riding ILP circa 1890–1914", in Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different*, pp. 214–38.
- 55 *W.T.*, 23 April 1892.
- 56 *W.T.*, 10 April 1891; 1 May 1891.
- 57 *W.T.*, 12 December 1891; 31 October 1891.
- 58 M. Garrett Fawcett, 'A Reply to the Letter by Mr. Samuel Smith, MP, on Women's Suffrage', quoted in J. Lewis, (ed.), *Before the Vote Was Won: Arguments for and against Women's Suffrage*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, pp. 434–42.

- met Joseph when in 1888 he had joined the staff of the *Oldham Express*, where she herself worked. She was the daughter of the proprietor, William Wild. Burgess, *A Poetical Poet?*, p. 143; Burgess, *John Burns*, p. 91. The 'special commissioner' employed by *The Workman's Times* to tour the country (and plug the paper) in 1893 was particularly keen on the idea of a 'National Guild of Women', both to encourage women's participation in the Independent Labour Party and to involve them in activities suited to them. For example, he singled out for praise the Leeds women who had been feeding the families of striking miners. *W.T.*, 25 November 1893.
- 60 *W.T.*, 16 September 1893; 23 September 1893.
- 61 See Plate 3. *W.T.*, 4 November 1893.
- 62 *W.T.*, 11 November 1893.
- 63 See Plate 4. *W.T.*, 30 December 1893.
- 64 It is worth noting here that there was no inevitability about waged work as central to the development of a working-class masculinity either. For the development of a different type of masculinity see, for example, P. J. Walker, "'I Live But Not Yet I for Christ Liveth in Me": Men and Masculinity in the Salvation Army, 1865–90", in Roper and Tosh, *Manful Assertions*, pp. 92–112.
- 65 *W.T.*, 18 February 1893. 'R.B.C.' also suggested that men and women should work together, in this case in the forthcoming municipal elections, and protect their own interests 'against all would-be representatives of merely class interests', *W.T.*, 28 October 1893.
- 66 *W.T.*, 7 October 1893. For images of war, see also 9 July 1892; 7 October 1893. For images of slavery, see 12 December 1891; 4 February 1893; 10 March 1894.
- 67 *W.T.*, 9 July 1892; 4 February 1893. The use of a romanticized and 'heroic' rhetoric of violence by the American labour movement, and in particular by the Section 574 of the Minneapolis General Drivers' Union in the 1930s, provides an interesting comparison. Faue, "'The Dynamo of Change"', pp. 142–7. As Faue points out, there was no space for women within this rhetoric.
- 68 *W.T.*, 18 February 1893; 12 December 1891.
- 69 *W.T.*, 31 October 1891; 10 April 1891; 18 February 1893. Lucy Bland has observed how in the 1890s feminist debates were dominated by the issue of married women, their right to control their bodies and to change male sexual practices. It is possible that *The Workman's Times* was reflecting at least an echo of these debates. L. Bland, 'The Married Woman, the "New Woman" and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890s', in Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different*, pp. 141–64.
- 70 *W.T.*, 10 April 1891; 31 October 1891; 12 December 1891; 13 February 1892; 3 December 1892; 18 February 1893. A number of historians have observed the connection between status as male breadwinner and power within the family. See, for example, J. M. Bennett, 'Misogyny, Popular Culture and Women's Work', *History Workshop Journal* 31 (1991), pp. 166–88.

'By all means let the ladies have a chance'

The Workman's Times, independent labour representation and women's suffrage, 1891–4

Laura Ugojini

During its life-span *The Workman's Times* struck a responsive chord among its audience. Inaugurated only a few years before the better-known *Clarion*, it was, admittedly, neither as successful nor as long-lived. Lasting only five years, between 1889 and 1894, it was hardly ever out of financial difficulties. It can best be described as the poor relation of successful northern papers such as the *Cotton Factory Times* and *Yorkshire Factory Times*, whose owner it shared until 1892.¹

Yet, most notably, it could boast that it was the appeal to its readers to send in names pledging support to the principle of independent labour representation which set into motion the events which led to the Bradford Conference and the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893.²

Edited by Joseph Burgess, a Lancashire piecer and poet turned journalist (and between 1885 and 1889 sub-editor and then manager of the *Yorkshire Factory Times*), *The Workman's Times* represented one of a number of attempts in the early 1890s to establish a national labour paper.³ Although the columns of the paper were open to socialists and Burgess considered himself to be one, the paper's editorial policy was not distinctively socialist: a wider audience was clearly hoped for.⁴

It is impossible to calculate with any precision the extent of the paper's readership. It seems that on 9 January 1891 *The Workman's Times* was receiving 10,077 orders, increasing to 13,464 by 5 June, and then suddenly jumping to 51,284 on 3 July. The last given figure was that of 62,517 on 2 October. Apparently, though, circulation continued to grow until the time of the 1892 general election, after which it started to fall (although the rate was not revealed).⁵

On more than one occasion *The Workman's Times* was defined as

a 'family paper'. Moreover, the presence of a column on 'Household hints' and serialized romantic fiction was presumably designed to attract a female readership. Nevertheless, the paper's main audience was clearly meant to be not only one of waged workers, but also of those among them who were already members of a trade union. Burgess himself did not believe that many unorganized workers read his paper.⁶

It was the shift from a concentration on purely trade union to political matters, and the advocacy of labour's political action independently of either Liberal or Tory parties (particularly from 1892), that marked the beginning of the paper's difficulties. Ironically, the fundamental contribution of *The Workman's Times* to the establishment of the Independent Labour Party ultimately served to spell its own destruction, as support from the party was not sufficient to allow it to survive.⁷

Although many causes were advocated, or merely discussed, in the columns of this paper – for example, trade unionism, the eight-hours day and co-operation – it is in its guise of independent labour representation advocate that I shall consider the attitude of its male contributors towards women's suffrage.

The involvement of labour activists within the women's suffrage movement has already attracted considerable attention from historians. Early suffrage historians chose to place varying degrees of emphasis on Labour's role within the campaign, according to their own sympathies: in Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Suffragette Movement* the labour and suffrage movements appeared almost inseparable, while in Ray Strachey's *The Cause* the former was far less in evidence.⁸ More recent works have taken the shape of detailed studies, recognizing the geographical, organizational and ideological variations within the labour movement. Quite understandably, considering their neglect within standard labour histories, these works have tended to concentrate on women activists.⁹ None the less, they point the way for a study of male activists. Just as such studies demonstrated the need to explore the female activists' backgrounds rather than regarding their involvement in the suffrage movement in isolation, so the men's attitudes towards women's suffrage cannot be divorced from their identities as male labour activists. Although these identities were clearly made up of other factors apart from their masculinity, it is with issues of gender that this chapter is centrally concerned.¹⁰ The construction of a particular masculine identity by labour activists through media such as *The Workman's Times* was